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THESIS

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctorate in Science in Didactics of English and Applied Linguistics

INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF STUDENTS-SELECTED AND TEACHERS-ASSIGNED TOPICS ON EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' WRITING AND SPEAKING FLUENCY: THE CASE OF FIRST AND SECOND YEAR ENGLISH LMD STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BLIDA 2

Presented by :
Miss. MEGHESLI Souad

Board of Examiners :

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the substance of this thesis is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference and acknowledgement is made whenever necessary .

Souad MEGHESLI.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my dear father, mother, brothers and sisters.

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Abstract

The major objective of this thesis is to investigate the effect of topic control (topic-selection as counterbalanced between teachers and students) on EFL learners' fluency in the two language productive skills, namely speaking and writing. Relevant to this, the thesis contains two quasi-experimental studies in which topic control is considered as the independent variable and the productive skills as the dependent variables. As such, Study 1 examines the impact of topic control on a group of 121 EFL second year university students' fluency in speaking and Study 2 investigates the effect of the same independent variable on the written fluency of another group of 127 students enrolled at the English Department in the UB2, Algeria. In other words, the two studies' participants represented samples from the same population. Both studies were accomplished by means of two research instruments: pre and post-tests (speaking tests and writing tests), and post-study questionnaires developed by the researcher. The collected data was statistically analyzed using the SPSS software, Version 20. The findings of the two studies provided evidence that topic control is an effective teaching practice due to its numerous positive effects not only on the participants' spoken and written fluency, but also on their intrinsic motivation and situational interest. In the light of these findings, a set of pedagogical implications and recommendations were put forward to help teachers enhance their students' fluency through the use of topic control in the speaking as well as the writing classrooms.

Key words: EFL; teacher-assigned topics; student-selected topics; spoken fluency; written fluency.

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List of Abbreviations

CF: Corrective Feedback

CW: Collaborative Writing

CON: Control Group

ELT: English Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

EXP: Experimental Group

IMI: Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

IH: Interaction Hypothesis

L1: First Language

L2: Second/Foreign Language

MRQ: Major Research Question

NS: Native Speaker

NNS: Non Native Speaker

OH: Output Hypothesis

SRQ: Sub-Research Question

SCT: Socio Cultural Theory

Q: Question

SI: Situational Interest

SST: Self-Selected Topics

TAT: Teacher-Assigned Topics

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

UB2: University of Blida 2

WPM: Words Per-Minute

General Introduction

Becoming a fluent language user is the ultimate goal of many L2 learners. This interest in developing fluency when learning the L2 is, in fact, related to the connotative meaning of the term itself. In general parlance, "a fluent speaker" is a phrase used to describe a person's mastery of a given language. In this respect, Wood (2001) claims that when people utter the word fluency, they generally tend to mean an "effective spoken use of a language. It is frequently used to mean "native-like," having a high overall degree of proficiency, or having a "good command" (09). In the field of applied linguistics and ELT , fluency is considered as an essential aspect of performance, along with accuracy and complexity[1]. For instance, Nation and Newton (2009) consider fluency development as an important strand of a well-balanced language course[2] that should receive a roughly equal amount of time and energy by teachers in view that it aims at helping learners become effective users of the language being studied.

Relevant to this, researchers have described some critical factors contributing to L2 fluency development. These include, encouraging learners to make constructive errors, creating opportunities and activities to practice the language, assessing fluency not accuracy, and using meaning-focused, easy and interesting materials (Brown, 1996; Chambers, 1998; Nation, 2013, 2015; Nation & Newton, 2009; Wood, 2001). Nevertheless, despite these efforts, fluency has remained a challenging aspect for many

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[1] According to Skehan (1996), accuracy is "how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language". In other terms, accuracy is related to grammar correctness and it can be expanded to include correct pronunciation rules according to the target language norms. Complexity, on the other hand, is the extent to which a language user produces more elaborate, and greater variety of syntactic patterning (Foster & Skehan, 1996).

[2] According to Nation and Newton, a well-balanced language course should consist of four strands: (1) meaning-focused input, (2) meaning-focused output, (3) language focused learning, and (4) fluency development (For further details about the principles of these four stands, see Nation and Newton (2009).

foreign language teachers who find it difficult to balance the three aspects of language performance, namely complexity, accuracy, and fluency.

This difficulty lies in the trade-offs relationship between these aspects of language performance. According to Skehan (1998), these aspects draw on different language systems. While complexity and accuracy require learners to focus on linguistic rules to avoid errors, fluency is achieved by learners drawing on their memory-based systems, deploying ready-made expressions and communicative strategies while using the language. Therefore, the development of one aspect may result in a lower performance in one or both of the other aspects. In other terms, a solely focus on accuracy and/or complexity may lead to a reduction in learners' fluency level.

Furthermore, a focus on accuracy is a prevalent practice in many L2 classrooms, where teachers give great importance to helping learners produce error-free spoken utterances as well as written texts. This language-focused instruction may be attributed to many factors, including time-constraints, large classes, and willingness to enhance learners' attention to linguistic forms. Nevertheless, in spite of the numerous positive effects of this sort of instruction on language learning, it may have many sever negative effects on learners' fluency, especially in the productive skills, namely speaking and writing. This situation is even more critical in EFL contexts, where learners have very few opportunities to use the language out of the classroom.

With reference to the researcher's teaching experience at the English Department, the University of Blida2 (henceforth UB2), it can be noticed that students, at the BA as well as Mater levels, find difficulties to express their ideas and thoughts easily in speaking as well as writing. Most of them rarely speak the language without undue pausing or hesitation. They rarely produce lengthily writing pieces that are free from crossed words or self-

correction marks. Relevant to this, Bohlke (2014) states that "Many students, even after years of studying and an extensive knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, have difficulties achieving a desired level of fluency". Inevitably, many learners feel unable to use the language effectively. They do not feel themselves fluent speakers and writers of the foreign language. They may suffer from low motivation and loose interest in learning the language.

Recent fluency development research in the areas of speaking and writing has suggested that there exist some key practices, which teacher could use to promote students' fluency in the productive skills. Prominent to these is topic control. In the area of the speaking skill, researchers, such as Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005: 139) claim that fluency is likely to develop when learners prioritize meaning over form in order to perform a task. Furthermore, Ellis and Fotos (1999:224) suggest that promoting this form-focused instruction in the classroom can be facilitated by incorporating topic control as a teaching practice. In other words, speaking fluency can be promoted when learners have the opportunity to control the discourse topic because this enables them to engage in meaning-negotiation.

Indeed, a number of researchers have accepted to test this hypothesis in their studies, by investigating the effect of topic familiarity, as another aspect of discourse topic in the language classrooms. Such line of research studies (e.g., Change, 2002; Rahimpour and Hazar, 2007) have revealed that topic familiarity promotes speaking fluency because it involves learners in meaning-negotiation and encourages them to become active speakers of the target language. Similarly, in the area of the writing skill, researchers such as Bonzo (2008), Cohen (2013), and Dickinson (2014) have provided strong evidence for the incorporation of topic control in teaching L2 writing. These studies have argued that allowing learners to write about self-selected topics can positively influence their fluency.

Nevertheless, a closer look at the existing literature in the fields of speaking as well as writing research permits one to notice that past studies have accumulated a substance body on the effect of self-selected topics on students' fluency without taking into consideration the teacher-assigned topics. In other terms, the concept of topic control understood as a teaching practice wherein a topic is alternated between teachers and students has largely been unexplored.

In response to this research scarcity, the present thesis attempts to investigate the effect of teacher-assigned and self-selected topics (henceforth topic control) on EFL learners' fluency in the two productive skills, namely speaking and writing. Accordingly, the thesis comprises two quasi-experimental studies: Study1 and Study2.

The main objective of Study1 is to examine the impact of topic control on a group of second year EFL students' speaking fluency. In this respect, the researcher hypothesizes that topic control will enhance the students' speaking fluency. Therefore, the study revolves around one major research question (MRQ) and three sub-research questions (SRQs), which are stated below:

MRQ: What is the effect of topic control on EFL students' speaking fluency?

SRQ 1: How do students perceive the topic control practice in their speaking classes?

SRQ2: Will topic control influence the participants' perceived situational interest in their speaking classes?

SRQ3: Will self-selected topics result in higher intrinsic motivation of students in their speaking classes?

On the other hand, Study2 focuses on the effect of topic control on EFL students' fluency in writing. Similar to Study1, this study hypothesizes that topic control will increase the students' writing fluency. In this regard,

Study2 raises one major research question (MRQ) and three related sub-research questions (SRQs):

MRQ: What is the effect of topic control on EFL students' writing fluency?

SRQ 1: How do students perceive the topic control practice in their writing classes?

SRQ2: Will topic control influence the participants' perceived situational interest in their writing classes?

SRQ3: Will self-selected topics result in higher intrinsic motivation of students in their writing classes?

In order to conduct the above studies and answer their respective research questions, the researcher opted for the adoption of the quasi-experimental research design, using pre-tests, treatments, post-tests, and students' post-study questionnaires. The two studies comprised four groups of second year EFL students enrolled at the English Department, UB2, Algeria. It should be clarified at this level that because of many research and practical factors, the researcher was unable to include students from two academic levels, as it is shown on the title of this thesis. Accordingly, the 305 second year students formed the population of both study1 and Study2, with a sample of two groups in each study. In other terms, study1 included a sample of 121 students (assigned into experimental and control groups) and Study2 comprised a sample of 127 students (divided into experimental and control groups).

The results obtained from the studies' research instruments were analyzed using the SPSS software, version 20. The interpretation and discussion of the two studies' key findings indicated that topic control (the independent variable in both Study1 and Study2) yielded positive effects on the participants' spoken as well as written fluency. Similar positive

outcomes were found in relation to students' perceptions, situational interest, and intrinsic motivation in both studies.

The present thesis is composed of six chapters. The first one reviews the major theories and research studies interested in self-selection as a teaching practice and its impact on learners' performance. Self-selection as an instructional practice has emerged from the theories of social psychology and educational psychology, which have been advocating its paramount importance in enhancing students' performance, intrinsic motivation, and situational interest. This review helped the researcher to understand the positive as well as the negative aspects of self-selection as a teaching practice and come closer to the identification of the main characteristics of an effective self-selection teaching experience for the sake of conducting the thesis' two quasi-experimental studies.

The second chapter is devoted to highlighting the issues related to the learning of the productive skills, namely speaking and writing, in a foreign language. As such, the chapter begins by an examination of the role of the speaking skill in L2 learning. It also explores the major difficulties students encounter when learning this skill. In its second section, the chapter explains the importance of the writing skill in L2 learning and discusses the challenges faced by students in the process of learning this skill. The second chapter ends by presenting the differences between the speaking skill and the writing skill.

The third chapter reviews the existing literature related to the effect of topic control on students' fluency in speaking as well as writing. The first sections of this chapter examine the various definitions of the term fluency and describe the different measures used by researchers to analyze learners' fluency in the fields of speaking and writing. In the light of the information gathered in these two sections, the third section of Chapter Three summarizes the fluency measures adopted in this thesis. The last two

sections provide a review of the major research studies that investigated the impact of topic control on learners' fluency in speaking as well as writing.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the description of the research methods and data collection procedures, instruments, and analysis. In this respect, the chapter begins by explaining the quasi-experimental design adopted in the thesis' two studies. The second and third sections of Chapter Four present the experimental procedures followed in Study1 and Study2, and describe the instruments and methods used for collecting and analyzing data in these two studies.

The fifth and sixth chapters present, interpret, and discuss the key findings of the two studies included in this thesis. Relevant to this, Chapter Five provides a detailed description of the statistical findings obtained from the studies' research instruments, including the pre-tests, the post-tests, and the post-studies students' questionnaires. On the other hand, Chapter Six presents the researcher's interpretations of the key findings in both Study1 and Study2 and discusses these findings by taking into consideration the research questions raised at the beginning of this thesis. On the basis of the two studies' findings, the sixth chapter shows the pedagogical implications of this thesis' studies and concludes with a group of recommendations for the sake of enhancing learners' fluency through the use topic control as a teaching practice in L2 speaking and writing classrooms.

Chapter One

Self-Selection for Enhancing Learners' Performance: A Review of Theory and Research

Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between self-selection and learners' performance, with a particular emphasis on the major theories in the fields of social psychology and education psychology. Research coming from these fields considers self-selection an effective teaching practice due to its many positive effects on students' performance. In this respect, self-selection allows students to act according to their personal interests and preferences. Therefore, it enhances their perceptions of autonomy, competence, and control and leads to subsequent positive performance outcomes.

This chapter contains four main sections. The first one discusses the role of self-selection as discussed by the major social psychological theories, including the cognitive dissonance, self-perception, and self-determination theories. The second section reviews the literature related to self-selection as an instructional practice from the educational psychology perspective. The third section discusses the detrimental effects of self-selection on learners' motivation and performance. The last section identifies the main characteristics of an effective self-selection learning experience.

1. 1. Self-Selection in the Social Psychology Theories

Self-selection or choice-making has been widely discussed in the various foundational theories of social psychology, namely cognitive dissonance theory, self-perception theory, and self-determination theory. According to these theories, self-selection is a powerful motivator of behavior that has many positive effects, including attitude change, perception of control, and learning performance.

1. 1. 1. Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The theory of cognitive dissonance claims that an individual's opinions and attitudes exist in internally consistent clusters (Festinger, 1957: 1). For instance, a person who believes that reading is important as it develops the mind would certainly encourage his children to read books. This example suggests that the individual's behaviors are consistent with his cognitions. Nevertheless, the theory asserts that people are not always able to reveal a consistency between their cognitions and behaviors. This inconsistency, which forms the core of cognitive dissonance theory, is referred to as "dissonance".

Festinger (1957) uses 'smoking' to explain the nature of dissonance behaviors. He states that many people are strongly aware that smoking can cause them dangerous health problems. However, they continue to smoke because they may also feel that they enjoy smoking and it is worthy (2). Accordingly, individuals often try to find a sort of logical excuses to justify their dissonant behaviors. Nevertheless, when they fail to find such excuses, a gap appears between their cognitions and behaviors causing them a psychological discomfort (ibid). Consequently, this psychological discomfort leads the individual to strive towards reducing cognitive dissonance within him. This is what Elliot and Devine (1994) call "an aversive motivational state". When this aversive motivational state arises, the individual will be motivated to reduce dissonance. This assumption is explained in Figure 1. 1 below.
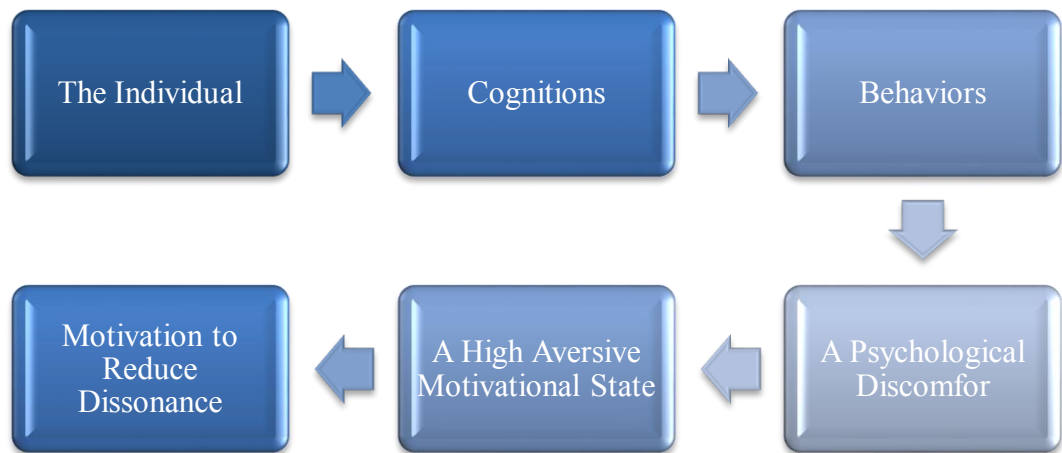
Figure 1. 1: The Nature of Dissonance Behaviors

A number of studies have suggested that self-selection can play a significant role in motivating the individual to change his attitudes or cognitions as a strategy to reduce dissonance. They reveal that the level of cognitive dissonance will be decreased when the individual perceives that he has the freedom to select to engage in an activity or a behavior. This freedom to choose can lead a person to change his attitudes and accept his responsibility towards his actions.

Relevant to this, Croyle and Cooper (1983) use two groups of undergraduate students in their experimental study. Participants from the first group (the counter-attitudinal group) were asked to write essays against their own attitudes towards the topic of banning alcohol from university campus. Students from the second group (the pro-attitudinal group) were permitted to write essays consistent with their own attitudes towards the same topic. The researchers put the counter-attitudinal group under two conditions: the first half of the group was not provided with any choice of whether to continue the task or to withdraw. The other half of the group received several reminders that their continued participation in the study was up to them. The findings of this study revealed that the pro-attitudinal group, compared to the counter-attitudinal group, demonstrated

grater physiological arousal signaling that the participants underwent a dissonant motivational state. Similarly, the students who perceived having the choice to write an essay that was totally against their personal beliefs changed their attitudes. The participants who felt that they were forced to write the counter-attitudinal essays did not change their attitudes.

In another study by Goethals and Cooper (1972), it was found that students changed their attitudes when they perceived that they had been permitted to select whether or not to engage in the counter-attitudinal behavior. In this experimental study, participants were asked to deliver a counter-attitudinal speech in order to convince their peers to believe in the position being advocated. The first group of students was allowed to select between declining and accepting the request. However, the second group was not given such an option. The findings of the study showed that the first group did not only succeed to convince their fellow students, but they also changed their opinion about the position. The second group did not show successful results at this task. Therefore, the researchers concluded that attitude change occurred when the students perceived that they made the counter-attitudinal speech under a high self-selection condition.

The same conclusion was reached in studies conducted by Sherman (1970) and Linder, et al (1967). The researchers observed attitude change following the writing of counter-attitudinal essays when their subjects were permitted to choose whether to do the task or to withdraw. In contrast, when the participants were offered no choice, they showed no attitude change towards the position they were asked to advocate in their essays.

These findings affirmed that dissonance is reduced when students are allowed to choose not to engage in a discrepant activity or behavior. However, this positive relationship will hold under no choice conditions. Accordingly, self-selection is considered a crucial motivator to reduce dissonance. When individuals perceive that they are forced to perform the

counter-attitudinal behavior, the gap between their cognitions and behaviors will be widened and they may be less motivated to overcome this psychological discomfort.

In brief, the cognitive dissonance theory considers self-selection an important motivational factor. When given choice, an individual experiencing dissonance may easily change his attitude towards an idea or an action that is inconsistent with his cognitions. In this way, self-selection's contribution to dissonance reduction is increasingly significant.

1. 1. 2. Self-Perception Theory

The significance of self-selection in human motivation is also recognized by Bem's self-perception theory. This theory challenges the notion that individuals experience cognitive dissonance situations, which lead to attitudes change. It rather claims that people infer their own behaviors because attitudes are determined by behaviors (Bem, 1972: 2). Bem (1972) argued that the individual cannot easily understand and interpret his internal cues (i.e., his preferences and beliefs) as one might imagine. He must rely upon those "external cues" (his behaviors) to infer his "inner states" (ibid: 5). As a result, the person observes what he does and infers from them his attitudes.

Similar to cognitive dissonance theory, Bem's self-perception theory praises the role of self-selection in motivating people to form attitudes that reflect their "overt behaviors" (Bem, 1972; Bem & McConnell, 1971). An individual who perceives that he has freely chosen to engage in an activity will observe that his actions are consistent with his preferences and beliefs. Therefore, he will conclude that his behaviors are the results of his own attitudes. In contrast, when the person feels that he is forced (i.e., forced by some social pressures, for example) to do a particular

task, he will not infer that his actions have implications for his own attitudes (Burger & Caldwell, 2003).

The discussion above has shown that the theories of cognitive dissonance and self-perception reasoned that self-selection is a key motivational factor. However, no one of the two theories has discussed the role of self-selection in influencing performance. This can be explained by the fact that the two theories emphases the relationship between choice provision and human motivation.

1. 1. 3. Self-Determination Theory

The self-determination theory holds that human motivation has two important sides, one is extrinsic and another is intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation is the propensity to perform an activity for some apparent external factors, such as attaining rewards or avoiding punishments (Vallerand, 1997). Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is "an energy source" that motivates a person to engage in an activity or a behavior (Ryan & Deci, 1985:11). In line with the self-perception theory, the self-determination theory suggests that external factors, such as rewards or punishments undermine intrinsic motivation because they diminish how autonomous a person feels. In this respect, Ryan and Deci (1985) claim:

> To be truly intrinsically motivated, a person must […] feel free from pressures, such as rewards or contingencies. Thus, we suggest, intrinsic motivation will be operative when action is experienced as autonomous, and it is unlikely to function under conditions where controls or reinforcements are the experienced cause of action (29).

This reveals that individuals are intrinsically motivated when they feel autonomous, competent, and in control of their environment or the outcomes of their own behaviors.

According to the self-determination perspective, intrinsic motivation entails two basic psychological needs: autonomy and competence.

1. The Need For Autonomy: Self-determination theorists define autonomy as an individual's need to perceive his actions to be volitional and self-initiated. Indeed, the need for autonomy is drawn from the concept of "perceived locus of causality" used by de Charms (1968) to discuss the notion of intrinsic motivation. de Charms claims that a person feels intrinsically motivated when "he experiences himself to be the locus of causality for his own behavior" (ibid). That is, following de Charms, autonomy is experienced when behaviors or actions are perceived as volitional and emanated from the self rather than controlled by sources external to the self.

Self-determination theorists suggest that the need for autonomy is not synonymous with the need to act independently from others' wishes (Ryan et al, 2005). The difference between the two needs is that the former implies that an individual may feel autonomous when he perceives a sense of choice and volition in acting, even though in doing so means complying with the wishes of others. In contrast, the former emphasizes the notion that a person must feel independent from all types of external forces.

2. The Need For Competence: Following White (1959), self-determination defines competence as an individual's innate need to perceive a sense of mastery and effectiveness in his interaction with the environment. In other terms, competence is viewed as a person's psychological need for experiencing opportunities to develop, exercise, express, and explore his capacities and skills (Deci & Moller, 2005; Ryan & Moller, 2016). When

such opportunities are not provided, the individual may feel incompetent and unsatisfied with his own capacities and skills.

Ryan and Deci (2000) believe that social settings (e. g. a classroom context) may promote intrinsic motivation when they satisfy these basic psychological needs for autonomy and competence. When the social setting does not support these needs, people may feel controlled and extrinsically motivated.

The self-determination theorists hypothesize that giving people choices will increasingly enhance their intrinsic motivation. This is because self-selection makes them feel a sense of volitional engagement in an activity (Ryan & Deci 2017: 151). For instance, allowing a university student to choose what activity to do in class or how to do it may leave him feeling more autonomous, more competent, and more in control of that activity. Accordingly, the self-determination theory considers self-selection an essential condition for prompting intrinsic motivation and subsequent academic performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This reveals that students will be intrinsically motivated to accomplish a task or learn a given subject matter when opportunities to make choices are provided. However, when the learning environment is perceived as controlling, students' sense of personal autonomy and intrinsic motivation may be reduced, leading to a decrease in their academic performance and learning in general.

Researchers have examined intrinsic motivational and academic performance outcomes under the condition of self-selection. In their seminal study Zuckerman et al, (1978) examined the effects of self-selection on students' intrinsic motivation and learning across two conditions. In the first condition, the participants were permitted to choose three out of six puzzles to work on during the activity. In the second condition, the participants were informed by the researcher which puzzles to undertake. The researchers found that the students who had the freedom

to choose the puzzles to work on and time allotment during the experiment reported a greater feeling of control, spent a significant amount of time engaged in the puzzle task, and expressed their "willingness to return to the laboratory to do additional puzzle-solving" (ibid). These positive intrinsic motivational findings were not displayed by the students who did not receive any self-selection options.

Another experimental study conducted by Cordova and Lepper (1996) provided evidence that self-selection is a powerful intrinsic motivator. Their study examined the role of self-selection when elementary school children worked on computerized math activity. In this study, the participants were allowed to choose some aspects of the activity, such as the name of the icon representing them on the game board and the name of their spaceship. The study's findings revealed that the experience of self-selection did have positive effects on the children's intrinsic motivation and performance. The researchers concluded that allowing children to make choices (even some trivial choices, such as selecting their game name or various icons in the math game) dramatically enhanced their intrinsic motivation, increased their engagement in learning the difficult mathematical concepts, the amount they learned in a fixed time period, and their perceived competence and levels of aspiration. They also revealed that self-selection did not have an important impact on the children's cognitive engagement. This is because the findings of their study showed that choice provision did not stimulate the children to use complex problem-solution operations during the game.

Reynolds and Symons (2001) put their participants under choice and no-choice conditions to examine the effect of self-selection on their intrinsic motivation and performance. The first group of participants was allowed to select which of the three assigned books to use in the activity. The participants in the second group were randomly assigned to the books.

The researchers found that self-selection is an important motivating factor for the students' information seeking. When the students were allowed to self-select their books, they showed a great ability to use efficient search strategies and were faster at locating information compared with the students who were assigned books. The researchers concluded that prior-knowledge and topic interest may also increase students' performance.

In the same vein, Patall et al (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 41 case studies in various settings with both child and adult participants. The aim of these studies was to examine the effects of self-selection on the participants' intrinsic motivation and other related outcomes. The results of the studies indicated that self-selection did have positive effects on participants' intrinsic motivation, effort, task performance, and perceived competence. Moreover, self-selection opportunities that allowed the participants to choose between two to four options in a single experimental manipulation were particularly powerful motivators. According to the results of the case studies, providing the participants with less than two or more than five options to select from decreased their sense of control and resulted in a cognitive overload.

In a recent study, Patal, et al (2010) offered their participants the opportunity to select whether to receive a choice of homework options or to be assigned an option for all homework by the researchers. Patal and his colleagues found that when students were allowed to select their homework tasks, they reported higher intrinsic motivation, felt more competent, and performed better on classroom tests compared with when they were assigned the homework without any options for choice. Therefore, the researchers concluded that self-selection does not only support the students' intrinsic motivation, but it also enhances their academic performance. They held that self-selection is a significant "component to

creating a classroom environment supportive of autonomy and intrinsic motivation" (ibid).

A more recent experimental study by Meng and Ma (2015 cited in Deci, 2017: 582) also confirmed the importance of self-selection in enhancing intrinsic motivation and performance. Meng and his colleague engaged university students in electrophysiological tasks of equal difficulty. Sometimes the students were permitted to select their tasks and sometimes the tasks were assigned to them. The researchers examined the effect of self-selection on the students' intrinsic motivation as well as performance using both behavioral and electrophysiological methods. The findings of this investigation showed that when the researchers provided self-selection opportunities, the students showed a greater intrinsic motivation towards the task, leading to a significant increase in task performance.

Thus, the different social psychology theories and the research findings reviewed in this section reveal that self-selection may increase intrinsic motivation, which in turn may enhance performance. These positive effects of self-selection are also adhered by the educational psychology theories, as it will be explained in the next section.

1. 2. An Educational Psychology Perspective on Self-Selection

Consistent with the different social psychology theories reviewed in the previous section, the significance of providing individuals with self-selection opportunities is also emphasized by the various educational psychology theories, including interest theory and academic achievement goal theory.

1. 2. 1. Interest Theory

Interest theory views interest as a psychological and motivational state a person experiences in his interaction with the environment. It is characterized by an increased level of cognitive concentration and positive emotions (Hidi & Renninger, 2006: 112). When an individual experiences interest, his actions are considered to be driven by enjoyment rather than external factors. Therefore, interest directs attention and enhances learning due to its critical role in increasing students' intrinsic motivation.

Researchers identified two major types of interest: individual (dispositional) and situational. Individual interest includes a personal deep connection and a willingness to reengage with a particular content, activity, task, event, or object over time (Schiefele, 2009; Krapp, 2000). This category of interest is often long-lasting because it develops slowly through repeated triggers provided by people in the educational environment (e.g., the teacher in his classroom), or by the student himself (a self-generated individual interest). Individual interest can be associated with positive feelings connected with the subject matter (e. g., the student enjoys writing in a given foreign language) as it may be linked with a significance created by the subject matter itself (e. g., the student is excited with his developing knowledge in writing). The development of knowledge contributes to the deepening of value, and, as value develops, it leads to continued engagement and yet more deepening of knowledge. (Schiefele, 1991).

In contrast, Situational interest is evoked often rapidly by an impulse in the environment that focuses attention to a particular content, event, or activity (Krapp et al., 1992). It represents an affective reaction that may or may not have a long-term effect on a person's knowledge and value systems (Murphy & Alexander, 2000). In other terms, a student may develop positive feelings towards a given content or a subject matter (e. g., writing in a foreign language) only because he has been sustained to set

goals or/and explore some strategies to work with. This enhanced situational interest in a particular content is maintained when the educational environment presents opportunities of triggered situational interest, such as providing students with a novel task, or information relevant to the learning goal (Renninger & Hidi, 2002). Thus, situational interest has a dual role: it increases intrinsic motivation towards learning and supports individual interest.

Some researchers argue that maintaining situational interest is more favorable in term of learning outcomes than individual interest. For instance, in a classroom of more than twenty students, a teacher often finds difficulties to support every student's individual interest. In this context, the teacher may rely on a situational interest lesson that acknowledges the individual interest of all the students equally (Hidi & Andersson, 1992).

Hence, regarding the motivational role of situational interest in learning, a number of theorists and researchers have examined the possible classroom factors that may support its development. Deci (1992) claimed that classrooms that promote autonomy and provide choice can enhance intrinsic motivation and foster situational interest. That is, teachers who provide self-selection opportunities do not only support their students' intrinsic motivation, but also their situational interest, which will lead to more positive educational outcomes.

Research by Schraw et al. (1998) supported this claim. The researchers designed two experimental studies to examine the effect of choice provision on students' reading engagement. In experiment 1, they used three groups of students: members of the first group (the free choice group) were allowed to select the reading texts for themselves; students from the second group (the forced choice group) were assigned a text and were informed that other readers had failed in reading it; and participants from the third group (the control group) were assigned a text without

receiving any additional information about its level of difficulty. Schraw and his colleagues found that the free choice group reported more situational interest compared with the forced choice group and the control group. In experiment 2, the researchers used a free choice group and a forced choice group. The findings of this experiment showed that under the free choice condition students reported increased levels of interest and satisfaction about their participation in the study. Therefore, Schraw et al concluded that self-selection is an important determinant of interest and motivation.

The phenomenological study of Flowerday and Schraw (2000) took into consideration teachers' beliefs about the role of self-selection in the classroom context. The results of this study demonstrated that teachers were increasingly convinced that self-selection of 'topics of study', 'reading materials', 'methods of assessment', 'activities', 'social arrangement', and 'procedural choices' is a popular motivational strategy. The interviewed teachers reported that self-selection has a range of positive effects on students' affective engagement, satisfaction, and interest; they claimed that choice provision helps students build some important skills like self-regulation. They also suggested that this motivational teaching method is particularly beneficial for students with low interest for a given task. Although the results of this phenomenological study revealed that there is a strong correlation between self-selection and the development of students' situational interest, Flowerday and Schraw did not claim that self-selection opportunities enhance learning and performance.

In their review of research, Shraw et al (2001) explored several ways to increase situational interest in the classroom. They suggested that choice provision is an important predictor of a high-situational interest classroom. Offering a wide variety of self-selection opportunities to students promotes a sense of self-determination and enhances situational interest. Shraw and

his colleagues added that teachers' feedback on the effectiveness of choices is necessary because it sustains students' confidence and autonomy.

1. 2. 2. Academic Achievement Goal Theory

Academic achievement theory is amongst the prominent theories in the field of educational psychology. It informs both educational research and classroom practices as it seeks to understand learners' engagement in academic settings (Sandra et al. 2012: 173). Goal theorists are generally concerned with explaining the reasons why students choose to engage with particular tasks. They examine two types of goals students adopt during the learning process, which are commonly conceptualized as mastery and performance goals (ibid).

Students who adopt a mastery goal approach to learning are often interested in mastering academic tasks. They exert effort to understand the task at hand and work towards personal improvement. Moreover, mastery-oriented students engage in learning tasks mainly for the enjoyment derived from learning new information. They consider their performances as a standard to evaluate their success at a task. On the other hand, performance-oriented students are believed to be less interested in self-improvement or enjoyment of learning. Rather, they focus mainly on outperforming their peers. This category of students engages in learning tasks primarily to demonstrate their ability and to appear more competent than other students (Pintrick, 1999).

In addition to these two personal goal orientations, goal theorists identified another construct, which is labeled as classroom goal structures. This latter was primarily developed to consider "students' perceptions of what is emphasized in their classrooms or schools in terms of reasons for engaging in schoolwork and the meaning of success" (Sandra et al. 2012: 174). Therefore, students' perceptions and interpretations of the goal

structure emphasized by their teacher are significantly related to the personal goal orientation they will adopt (ibid). For example, in a classroom where the teacher's messages focus mainly on grades, students are expected to invoke a performance oriented goal for themselves. In contrast, when the teacher emphasizes the value of learning, understanding, and personal improvement as indications of success, students are likely to adopt a performance goal orientation. Therefore, teachers have a paramount part in creating the goal structure in the classroom through their words and instructional practices (Ames, 1992).

From both theoretical and practical standpoints, a mastery goal structure classroom entails all aspects of engagement: emotional, cognitive, and behavioral. Since classroom mastery goal structure views personal improvement as a standard for judging success, students tend to adopt motivational beliefs, such as intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy (Murayama & Elliot, 2009) In this classroom environment, students are expected to develop many positive attitudes towards school and learning, such as satisfaction with their learning and the usefulness of learning strategies (Nolen & Haladyna, 1990). Subsequently, these significant motivational benefits tend to produce cognitively engaged students who are effectively trained to use their cognitive and meta-cognitive learning strategies, such as elaboration, planning, and mentoring (Wolters, 2004). A mastery goal structure classroom has also important positive forms of students' adaptive behavioral engagement. This classroom environment encourages students to expend their efforts while doing tasks and use adaptive help-seeking strategies like asking for clarification when they encounter difficulties (ibid).

Since these significant aspects of engagement cannot easily be attained in a performance goal structure, many goal theorists have recommended that educators emphasize a mastery goal structure

classroom. They theorized that providing students with self-selection opportunities must be an integral part of implementing a mastery goal structure While limiting students' choices is very consistent with a performance goal structure.

Although few studies attempted to prove this assumption in an empirical arena, the provision of self-selection is viewed as a strategy to encourage students to invoke a mastery goal orientation in their learning process. It is also regarded as a way to teach students the adaptive engagement behaviors discussed earlier in this section. In this vein, Ames (1992) claimed that allowing students to select tasks, materials, learning methods, or pace of learning in the classroom is an effective way to make them participate in the decision-making process. It enables them to develop a sense of responsibility, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and self-regulation.

Reviewing the literature related to the effects of self-selection suggests that both theorists and researchers have accepted the significant role that it plays in enhancing learners' intrinsic motivation, situational interest, and performance. However, there is another group of researchers who have questioned its effectiveness in the classroom context. This perspective will be discussed in the following section.

1. 3. Detrimental Effects of Self-Selection

Although self-selection has been increasingly related to motivation and performance, there is some debate over its effectiveness. A number of self-determination and educational psychology researchers have asserted that self-selection has little or even a negative effect on intrinsic motivation and performance.

In three studies, Reeve et al, (2003) investigated the three common qualities of self-determination: internal locus of causality, volition, and perceived choice. They constructed a series of nested conceptual models to assess and validate the importance of each of these qualities in the experience of self-determination and intrinsic motivation. The findings of the three studies suggested that internal locus of causality and volition constituted valid indicators of self-determination. Perceived choice, however, did reduce the relationship between self-determination and intrinsic motivation.

Reeve and his colleagues distinguished between option and action choice. Option choice occurs when the individual is permitted to select among a number of mandated options (e.g. the teacher asks his students to select one book from a box of six books). Action choice, on the other hand, occurs when a person is provided with ongoing choices as he engages in the activity at hand. This type of choice provision (which was used by Zuckerman et al, 1978 and Cordova and Lepper, 1996) allows the individual to be involved in the choice provision process of when, where, how, and with whom the activity is performed. Reeve and his colleagues concluded that action choices, rather than option choices, are effective for eliciting a sense of volition and internal locus of causality, which will in turn enhance intrinsic motivation. This conclusion indicates that Reeve et al did not deny the significance of self-selection in enhancing intrinsic motivation. They rather refer to an important point, which is not all types of choices have the power to elicit intrinsic motivation.

Another study by Assor et al (2002) examined three autonomy-supportive instructional practices: fostering relevance in learning, allowing criticism, and providing choice opportunities. They asked elementary school students from grade 3 to 8 (a sample of 862) to complete questionnaires to assess their perceptions of their teachers' autonomy-

support or suppress practices in class. Assor and his colleagues found that students identified three categories of autonomy-enhancing teaching behaviors: fostering relevance in learning, allowing criticism, and providing choice. The analysis of students' questionnaires allowed Assor et al to conclude that teachers can support students' autonomy by clarifying the personal relevance of schoolwork and accepting students' criticism of the teachers' practices or/and other aspects of the classroom situation. These teaching behaviors are particularly important because of their positive effects on students' engagement in class and attitudes towards learning in general. Providing choice opportunities is important, but cannot be considered as the major predictor of "behavioral and cognitive engagement" (ibid). According to Assor and his colleagues, when students are provided with meaningful choice opportunities[3], they will presumably perceive that their personal goals and interests are satisfied. In contrast, when choice provision does not take into consideration students' goals and interests, making choices will be perceived as an irrelevant and a meaningless school practice.

These detrimental effects of self-selection were also accepted by some studies using educational psychology paradigm. In two experimental studies, Flowerday and Schraw (2003) examined the effects of self-selection on students' cognitive and affective engagement in reading comprehension. In experiment 1, the first group of participants (the choice group) was allowed to select between two different tasks: writing an essay or solving a crossword puzzle. The second group (the no-choice group), however, was assigned to one of these tasks after completing reading a 900-word story.

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[3] According to Assor et al's study, meaningful choices are tasks that are highly relevant to students' interests and learning goals.

In experiment 2, the choice group was permitted to select the amount of time to spend in the study; such option was not given to the no-choice group. Findings from the two experiments revealed that while self-selection had some positive effects on students' interest and sense of control, it had no impact on their cognitive engagement in either the essay writing or crossword puzzle conditions. Furthermore, students in the no-choice group spent longer time and worked harder in the activity than did students in the choice group.

These findings do not support the claim that self-selection leads to greater engagement and effort on the learners' part by developing situational interest. According to Flowerday and Schraw (2003), self-selection had little positive effects on affective engagement (students' situational interest) and led to a poorer cognitive performance. Moreover, self-selection in the form of self-pacing (selecting the amount of time for doing the task) had a detrimental effect on students' reading comprehension (students' deeper learning), especially in terms of interpreting the text and constructing thematic inferences.

In another study, Flowerday, et al (2004) investigated the separate effects of self-selection and interest (both individual and situational interest were examined in this research) on students' attitudes, engagement, and learning. At the beginning of the study, the researchers asked their participants to select between two packets of topics without knowing the contents of the selected packet. Their rationale for this manipulation was to ensure that students' self-selection would not be confounded with their interest in the packet's topics. After this step, Flowerday and his colleagues examined the relationships among interest, self-selection, and performance. They used a number of outcome measures, including a multiple-choice test of facts and main ideas, two essay-writing tasks (one to measure cognitive

engagement and another one to assess personal reactions to the text), and a post-study scale to measure attitude.

The first result of this study indicated that interest and self-selection did not have any effects on students' performance in the multiple-choice test of facts and main ideas. The researchers attributed this finding to their participants' academic level. They claimed that college students are able to engage with the basic reading comprehension processes with high degree of decoding and comprehension automaticity. Therefore, allowing students opportunities for self-selection and interest will not affect their performance in reading comprehension. The second finding showed that the effects of situational interest on attitudes and engagement were more salient than that of individual interest. In comparing the effects of these two types of interest, the researchers concluded that individual interest is important to attract students' attention, but situational interest sustains attention in a way that increases their engagement while reading.

The third result revealed that self-selection had little impact on both attitude and engagement and a negative effect on performance. When students were permitted to select the packet with which to work, they performed very weak. The researchers concluded that this was mainly caused by the type of choice afforded to the participants. In line with Reeve, et al (2003), Flowerday et al (2004) claimed that unlike action choices, option choices have very little effect on attitude, engagement, and learning. They also indicated that time allotment may be an important factor that teachers (as well as researchers) should consider in providing choice to their students. They suggested that a "systematic program of choice" offered to students over time may result in positive attitude, engagement, and learning outcomes.

In conclusion, not all research examining the effects of self-selection has confirmed its effectiveness in enhancing motivation and performance.

Research findings reviewed in the above section have demonstrated that self-selection may have no impact, or even detrimental impact on intrinsic motivation, engagement, competence, and learning performance. Therefore, the diversity of results on the effects of self-selection (findings of studies reviewed in the previous sections of this chapter) suggests that the nature of this instructional practice is complex. On the one hand, self-selection has the potential to enhance intrinsic motivation, to promote situational interest and engagement, and to assort performance. On the other hand, it has the power to reduce motivation and performance.

This complex pattern of findings raises some important questions to this research work: under what conditions does self-selection result in positive motivational and performance outcomes? How can a teacher enhance his students' intrinsic motivation and performance through self-selection? These questions constitute the objective of the next section, which attempts to explore the characteristics of an effective self-selection classroom experience.

1. 4. Characteristics of an Effective Self-Selection Experience

Synthesizing findings of studies investigating the effects of self-selection demonstrates that there are characteristics teachers as well as researchers should take into consideration in designing research or learning tasks with self-selection provision manipulation. According to the self-determination perspective, self-selection as a powerful motivational factor is increasingly associated to the related constructs of autonomy, competence, and control. A self-selection experience that does not work to support some or all these constructs may lose its power to endorse intrinsic motivation and the related performance outcomes.

1. 4. 1. Self-Selection to Support Autonomy

As previously discussed, autonomy, as a basic psychological need, may be sustained by self-selection. When individuals experience choice provision in an activity (e.g. a classroom task), they may maintain an internal locus of causality, which will be translated into an increase in intrinsic motivation. In contrast, when choice provision is accompanied by some other external factors, such as rewards, people may perceive their locus of causality to be external (Deci and Ryan, 1980; de Charms, 1968). They may even interpret the use of rewarding as an attempt to control their behavior (Deci, et al, 1999).

Accordingly, using both self-selection and rewarding simultaneously in a single activity may impede students' perceptions of autonomy and diminish their intrinsic motivation. Therefore, in designing a self-selection activity, teachers as well as researchers should expect that rewarding may affect its positive effects. Furthermore, given the negative results of rewards on intrinsic motivation confirmed by a number of research studies, its presence in this sort of activities does not allow an effective examination of the effects of self-selection on intrinsic motivation and performance.

Indeed, rewarding is not the only contextual factor that may affect the utility of self-selection in supporting autonomy perception. Findings of many studies in the fields of self-determination and educational psychology previously reviewed in this chapter indicate that not all types of self-selection manipulation can have positive impacts on autonomy. Allowing students to select from among options failed to nurture their need for autonomy. This option choice manipulation did not involve students in the choice provision process. It, rather, focuses on increasing their perceptions of self-selection. For instance, when Flowerday et al, (2004) offered their participants the opportunity to write about topics which had been selected

by the researchers, they reported that self-selection did not have any positive effects neither on autonomy nor on performance. Similarly, Flowerday and Schraw (2003) did not find any significant results in their participants in terms of autonomy, engagement, and performance as a result of allowing them to select whether to work on a crossword puzzle or an essay-writing activity. Therefore, when students are asked to select from among pre-determined options, they generally do not experience autonomy. They rather feel that they are forced or pressured to make a choice (Moller, et al, 2006).

In contrast, providing action choices does generally elicit students' internal locus of causality and their sense of volition to do the activity at hand. This assumption was confirmed by a number of studies (e. g, Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Reeve et al., 2003). Findings of these studies concluded that when teachers offer open-ended self-selection opportunities about what and how to do the activity at hand, students will experience autonomy.

To a large extent, the design of the self-selection activity may determine the effects of self-selection on students' autonomy. Studies, whose findings confirmed the utility of self-selection in supporting autonomy, were designed in such a way that satisfied students' locus of causality and volition. The manipulation of ongoing action choices in these studies produced positive results because their participants were actively involved in the self-selection processes of what and how to do the activity at hand. On the other hand, studies, which were designed to increase perception of choice, generally neglected students' locus of causality and volition. The findings of these studies confirmed that self-selection had negative or no effects on autonomy because students were allowed to select among an array of experimenter-determined options (Option choices).

Considering how the self-selection activity is designed was also emphasized by Moller et al. (2006). In responding to Baumeister's self-regulation assumptions about choice, Moller and his colleagues distinguished between autonomous and controlled forms of self-selection. These self-determination researchers argued that in Baumeister et al (1998) study, participants were provided with a controlled form of self-selection; they were asked to select an option (selecting one of the two parts of a debate) under pressure. According to Moller and his colleagues, the findings of Baumeister et al. study revealed that choice had a negative impact on energy because the experience of self-selection was accompanied by obligations and control. Moller et al. (2006) suggested that to attain a real experience of self-selection, researchers as well as teachers should design activities that involve autonomous choice. This form of self-selection does not deplete the individual's inner resources and energy because it is accompanied by the experience of volition, which is an important aspect of autonomy.

Furthermore, Katz and Assor (2007) and Ullmann-Margalit and Morgenbesser (1997) used another terminology to express when the self-selection experience is autonomy-supportive by differentiating between 'picking' and 'choosing'. According to these researchers, the act of choosing offers an opportunity for 'self-realization'. That is, this form of self-selection is experienced as autonomy-supportive because it allows the individual to express his desires or preferences. On the other hand, the act of picking is often viewed as autonomy-decrement because it does not offer such self-realization opportunities.

This distinction between choosing and picking can be used to explain the detrimental effects of self-selection reported by studies reviewed in previous sections of this chapter. Experimental studies which claimed that self-selection may have negative or no impact on students' intrinsic

motivation (e.g. Flowerday et al., 2004) provided their participants with opportunities to pick among pre-determined options. In other terms, participants' sense of autonomy was not affected because they did not perceive the act of picking as reflecting their interests, goals, values, and volition (Katz & Assor, 2007). Therefore, for an effective self-selection experience, teachers as well as researchers should allow students an opportunity of self-realization to express their preferences through the act of choosing.

1. 4. 2. Self-Selection to Sustain Competence

Perceived competence is another important construct to consider in designing a self-selection activity. According to some self-determination research, self-selection increases students' perceived competence. The study by Tafarodi et al., (1999) found that self-selection did increase their participants' perceived competence. Although the type of self-selection provided in this study was trivial (students were allowed to select the names of the characters in the story), participants reported a high level of perceived competence in the task compared with those who were not allowed to choose.

In addition, some researchers agreed that the impact of self-selection may be less effective when the need for competence is ignored. For instance, Burger (1987) revealed that self-selection may lead to significant positive effects on performance when it offers an opportunity to demonstrate competence. In his two experiments, Burger's undergraduate participants performed better when informed that the experimenter would learn about their choice and performance compared with those participants who were give a choice, but were not led to believe that the experimenter would know about their choice and performance (in Burger (1989). That is, although the two groups of participants were given a self-selection opportunity, the effects of self-selection were more beneficial with the

group whose participants perceived that their performance could be assessed by the researcher because they perceived themselves highly competent on the task.

Moreover, the number of options or choices involved in a task may also affect perceived competence, which will, in turn, influence the effects of self-selection. The findings of the meta-analysis study by Pattal et al (2008) showed that when the number of self-selection options in a single manipulation is less than two or more than five, individuals may feel cognitively overwhelmed and incompetent on the task at hand. Thus, these findings challenge the idea that more choice provision opportunities lead to higher levels of perceived competence. For most part, it appears that "too much choices" is actually detrimental to perceived competence.

1. 4. 3. Self-Selection to Invoke the Sense of Control

As it has been discussed earlier in this chapter, self-selection has an important role in enhancing feelings of personal control. Self-determination theorists reasoned that individuals are determined to experience a sense of personal control over their external environments. Therefore, they are expected to enjoy, prefer, and persist at activities or experiences that offer them opportunities to make choices and help them satisfy their need for control. In line with this reasoning, Cordova and Lepper (1996) showed that even the provision of some trivial self-selection opportunities resulted in positive motivational and learning engagement effects. These positive findings were attributed mainly to the fact that when participants were permitted to choose their names in the math game, they developed the perception that events were controllable. This sense of control over the situation helped in enhancing children intrinsic motivation and learning.

An important number of studies have confirmed this self-determination claim. Participants in the study by Tafarodi et al., (1999) felt

that their internal control was increasingly stimulated when the researchers allowed them to select the names of the characters involved in the story at hand. Thus, although the type of self-selection provided in this study appears to be incidental, the participants perceived that they had an entire control over the situation; they felt that the task's outcomes were the results of their own choice. This high level of perceived control was, in fact, translated into an increase in intrinsic motivation.

In contrast, when a self-selection experience does not seem to invoke the sense of control, it may have negative or no effects. This view agreed with research findings of studies by Paterson and Neufeld (1995). These researchers reported that self-selection may be experienced as stressful when the individual feels insufficiently informed about the choices or pressed to make a decision in a limited period of time. Under such conditions, the motivational effects of self-selection may be viewed as detrimental because it is directly related to a reduction in the level of perceived competence.

Conclusion

This first chapter reviewed the major theories and research interested in studying the role of self-selection as an instructional practice in enhancing learners' performance. As such, the first sections of this chapter were devoted to the discussion of the theories of social psychology and educational psychology. These theories have praised the effectiveness of self-selection in enhancing learners' motivation, interest, and performance. In this respect, dissonance and self-perception researchers confirmed that self-   selection is a crucial motivator to reduce dissonance and to form positive attitudes. Furthermore, researchers in the field of self-determination have clearly demonstrated the strong relationship between self-selection as a teaching practice and students' intrinsic motivation. Findings from this line of research revealed that self-

selection has the power to enhance students' performance because it enables them to feel autonomous, competent, and in control of their learning environment. In line with these findings, the educational psychology theory, including interest and academic achievement goal theories, consider self-selection as a significant teaching practice due to its positive effects on learners' motivation and situational interest.

The third section of this chapter highlighted the negative effects of self-selection as a teaching practice. This section reviewed the research studies that considered self-selection as detrimental to learners' motivation, interest, and performance in class. The last section explores the characteristics of an effective self-selection classroom experience.

Chapter Two

Teaching and Learning the Productive Skills in a Foreign Language

Introduction

The previous chapter argued that self-selection can be an effective instructional practice due to its positive effects on students' motivation and performance. This chapter focuses on exploring the nature of the two language productive skills that form the interest of this thesis, namely speaking and writing. Therefore, the objective of this chapter is twofold. First, it examines the challenges of teaching and learning the skills of speaking and writing. Second, it identifies the similarities and differences between speaking and writing. The chapter covers three major points. The first one explains the importance of speaking as well as writing in learning a foreign language. This point will be explained by the first and third sections, respectively. The second point examines the challenges that students generally encounter when learning these two productive skills. This second point will be examined by the second and fourth sections. The third point presents the main differences between speaking and writing.

2. 1. Speaking as a Critical and Challenging Skill

2. 1. 1. The Importance of the Speaking Skill in L2 Learning

L2 researchers have revealed that speaking plays a crucial role in language learning. In her early foundational work on oral interaction, Hatch (1978) argues that speaking can facilitate the process of L2 development. She observes that "one learns how to do conversations, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures are developed" (cited by Ellis, 2015: 326). That is, speaking with more competent interlocutors (e.g. a teacher or a native speaker of the target language) provides a learner with opportunities to hear and produce the target language in a way that is more effective than the traditional assumption, which states that learning the structures then practicing them in communication tasks assists learners to develop fluency. This argument

reveals that oral interaction is necessary because it provides learners with the "comprehensible input" needed for successful L2 learning.

Furthermore, the role of speaking in L2 learning was emphasized by Long's Interaction Hypothesis (IH). This hypothesis suggests that oral input provided by a native speaker (NS) to a non-native speaker (NNS) may result in L2 acquisition. This is because in a NS-NNS conversation, there exists an "indirect causal relationship between linguistic and conversational adjustments and SLA" (Long, 1985: 388). That is, when talking to a NNS, a NS uses a variety of interactional adjustments, such as clarification requests, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and repetitions in order to solve ongoing communication problems. Accordingly, such "comprehensible input" will result in acquisition by the NNS. Long's IH did not find consistent support in research studies, and Long himself did not consider comprehensible input sufficient to promote L2 acquisition.

As a result, Long revised his IH (1996) by recognizing the role of feedback and noticing in L2 learning. In this amended hypothesis, Long claims that there is a direct relationship between the corrective feedback received by a learner during a conversation and L2 acquisition. Long asserts that when an interlocutor (he can be a teacher in a language classroom or a NS) gives information about the correctness or incorrectness of a learner's utterances, he will provide this learner with self-correction opportunities, which will lead to a more accurate language output. Thus, in this modified version of the IH, Long claims that adjusted input along with corrective feedback obtained through oral interaction result in L2 acquisition/development.

The role of speaking is also recognized by Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis (OP), which emphasizes the inevitable role of comprehensible output in L2 development. The OH suggests that speaking pushes a learner

to use his linguistic knowledge to achieve competence in the target language because it involves him in negotiations for meaning with other interlocutors. Such negotiations for meaning push a learner to use interactional strategies like reformulation, which will facilitate communication and language learning. In addition, when the learner experiences a communication failure, he will be stimulated to direct attention towards the incorrect utterances and to revise them in order to produce speech that is comprehensible to his interlocutors.

Therefore, the role of speaking (output in its oral form) in L2 development is potentially significant. According to Swain (1995), negotiating meaning allows a language learner to:

• *Notice gaps in his interlanguage system*. That is, in his attempt to speak the target language, the learner may notice that he cannot express precisely the message he wants to convey. This gape-noticing will trigger the learner to recognize his linguistic problems and revise them.

• *Test hypotheses about the structures and meanings of the target language.* The claim here is that speaking enables the learner to try the target language, leading either to accepting or rejecting his interlanguage hypotheses; and

• *Reflect on language use.* This claim suggests that speaking the target language provides a learner with opportunities to develop his meta-linguistic knowledge. In other terms, speaking a language helps the learner to reflect consciously on his language use.

The importance of speaking in learning a foreign language is also stressed by the Socio-cultural Theory (SCT), which considers social interaction as a causative force in language learning. The SCT argues that a learner develops an awareness of the target language's structures and

function by using it socially during interaction (Lantolf, 2000: 73). For such linguistic development to occur, the learner should interact with "a more knowledgeable other" (e.g. a teacher, a peer, or a parent) in the "zone of proximal development", which Vygotsky (1978) defines as:

> the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (86).

Eventually, this oral interaction enables the learner to achieve some communicative goals that he would be unable to attain alone (Lantolf 2011: 29).

Ellis (1985) illustrates this perspective with the following teacher-learner conversation.

> **Teacher:** I want you to tell me what you can see in the picture or what's wrong with the picture.
> **Learner:** a /paik/ (= bike)
> **Teacher:** A cycle, yes. But what's wrong?
> **Learner:** /ret/ (= red)
> **Teacher:** It's red, yes. What's wrong with it?
> **Learner:** Black.
> **Teacher:** Black. Good. Black what?
> **Learner:** Black /taes/ (= tyres)
> <div align="right">(Ellis, 1985:55)</div>

This conversation shows the significance of speaking in helping the learner to advance linguistically by learning to construct a syntactic structure in collaboration with his teacher. The oral interaction enables the student to depict a picture, a task that is beyond his linguistic knowledge. He succeeds to find the name of the missing item in the picture by

responding to his teacher's questions (e.g. Black what?). In other terms, the teacher "scaffolds" his student to produce and subsequently learn a new utterance (Black /taes/= tyres).

Accordingly, the SCT considers speaking as a necessary condition, through which scaffolding can be reached. According to Ellis and Fotos (1999), in the SCT, speaking is not only a means that facilitates learners' language development, but "a social event which helps learners participate in their own development, including shaping the path it follows".

In conclusion, the different language theories and hypotheses reviewed in the preceding sections have emphasized the critical role of the speaking skill in L2 learning. However, the learning of this important skill is not without difficulties, especially for foreign language learners.

2. 1. 2. Difficulties Encountered When Learning to Speak a Foreign Language

Speaking a foreign language is often considered as the most complex and challenging of the four language skills. This difficulty is mainly attributed to the cognitive, communicative, and affective demands a learner needs to respond to when learning to speak the target language. This section will focus on explaining the interference of each of these issues in learning the speaking skill.

2. 1. 2. 1. Cognitive Demands in L2 Speaking

Researchers in the field of applied linguistics discuss the complexity of speaking in term of the cognitive processes involved in its production. In their discussions, they have adopted the speech production models devised by Levelt (1989) and Kormos (2006). These speech production models represent speaking in terms of a series of complex-interrelated cognitive

stages through which a speaker proceeds when producing an utterance. As it is shown in Figure 2. 1., these stages are identified as: conceptualization, formulation, articulation, and a self-mentoring.
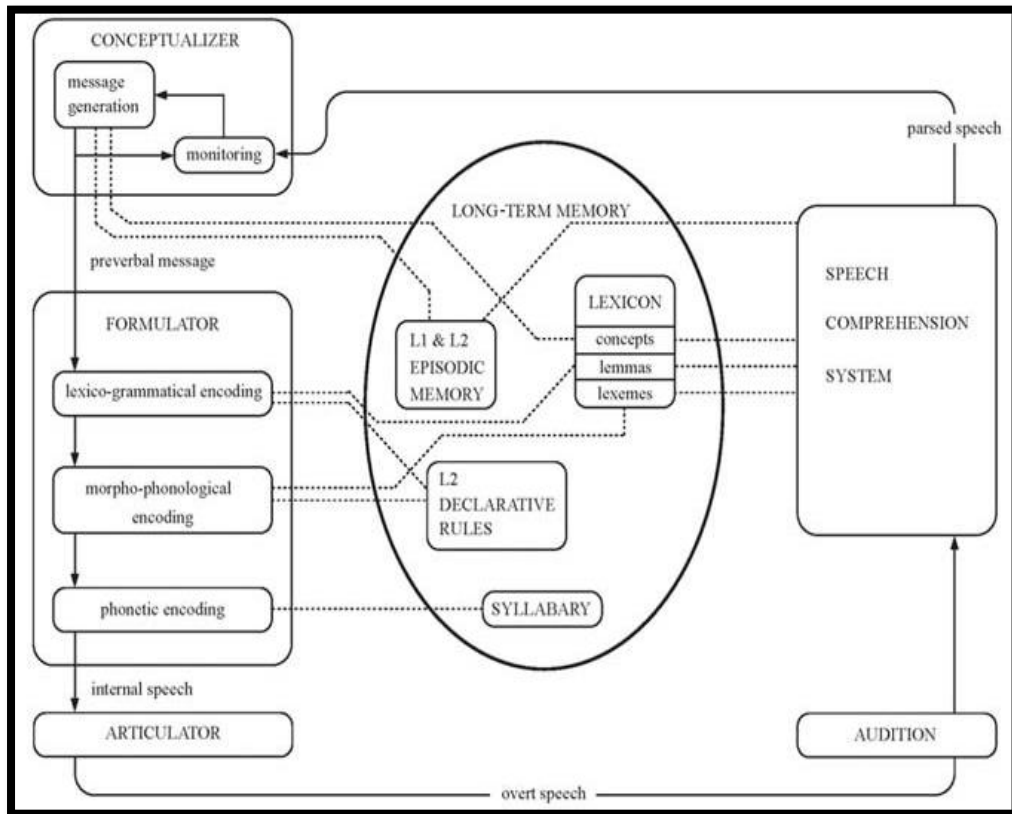
Figure 2. 1: Cognitive Demands on Language Learners When Producing Speech (Kormos, 2014: 168)

1. The Conceptual Preparation Stage: At this stage, a speaker generates both the content and form of the message he wants to express. In generating the message content, a speaker selects the information or the topic of the communicative situation. If he has already decided the topic, a speaker still needs to choose the relevant ideas to construct the intended message. According to Figure 2. 1., these ideas are found in the speaker's long-term memory that contains information about the communicative situation (e.g., the interlocutor's social status) and rules of discourse (ibid, 169). At the conceptualization stage, a speaker makes decisions about the form of the message, by selecting the language of the communicative

situation. These decisions have to take into account a wide range of social as well as individual factors, such as the social position of the interlocutor, speaker's self-confidence, and anxiety when speaking a second or a foreign language (Bygate, 2010:26). In the case of a language learner, the conceptual preparation stage is increasingly related to a learner's background knowledge, linguistic repertoire, and socio-cultural awareness. Burns and Goh (2012) claim that the more knowledge a speaker has in mind about the topic, the more choices are available for him to deliver the message (37).

2. *The Formulation Stage:* At this stage, a speaker translates the message he has already conceptualized into a linguistic form. This stage represents a real challenge for language learners, because they have to make various lexical as well as grammatical choices (ibid, 38). That is, a speaker has to select the individual words and put them together to construct the message utterances. In addition, a speaker has to select the appropriate forms of 'bounded markers' (e.g., bounded morphemes like –ed, -s, and –ing) to indicate the tense, number, mood, etc. To express these abstract concepts, a speaker has to rely on the lexico-grammatical knowledge he has about the target language. Nevertheless, foreign language learners' knowledge of the target language is rarely complete. As a result, they often find difficulties to express their messages in the form originally planned in the conceptualization preparation stage (ibid). This may be a source of anxiety for language learners because they feel unable to process their messages within the time-constraints of a real-life communicative situation.

3. *The articulation stage:* At this third stage of speech processing, a speaker uses his vocal organs (vocal cords, larynx, tongue, etc) to utter the message. In other terms, this stage involves turning the formulated words and utterances into sound waves to the listener(s). Although the articulation stage is a physical process, it is closely related to a speaker's long-term

memory and to his conceptualization as well as the formulation stages. That is, in articulating the message, a speaker has to pay attention to the phonological rules of the language (e.g., how to pronounce words and how to stress the key words in an utterance).

For many foreign language learners, however, the articulation stage is increasingly challenging. This is mainly because in articulating their messages, language learners have to recall the phonological rules stored in their long-term memory and make conscious attempts at executing them in their speech. Burns and Goh (2012) argue that the articulation stage is a source of anxiety for many language learners, especially those who are very conscious of their pronunciation. Learners may avoid speaking in the target language when they feel that "their pronunciation is not good enough or cannot be understood by others" (38-39).

4. The Mentoring Stage: It can also be called a self-mentoring stage because at this level, a speaker mentors his own speech production, by identifying errors and correcting them. At this meta-cognitive stage of speech production, the speaker evaluates his utterances for accuracy and acceptance. Burns and Goh (2012) claim that an effective self-monitoring depends on the speaker's meta-linguistic and pragmatic knowledge (39). In other terms, in order to monitor his speech effectively at the conceptualization, formulation, and articulation stages, a speaker (both L2 and L2 speakers) needs to have enough knowledge about the grammatical and pronunciation rules that govern the target language. In addition to this linguistic knowledge, a speaker needs to evaluates his utterances according to the pragmatic demands of the speech situation by taking into consideration the listener as well as the context in which his speech is produced (Burns, 1998). In this respect, the monitoring stage represents another cognitive difficulty to a foreign language learner. A learner with a limited amount of knowledge about the linguistic and pragmatic rules of

the foreign language will not be able to monitor his speech in an appropriate way.

2. 1. 2. 2. Communicative Demands in L2 Speaking

To speak a foreign language, a learner is required to mobilize various aspects of communicative competence that take into consideration the situational context of the speech production. That is, to engage in a foreign language speech production, the learner should possess a sufficient amount of linguistic and meta-linguistic resources about the target language.

2. 1. 2. 2. 1. Linguistic Knowledge

Obviously, grammar knowledge is essential to the development of any language skill. As far as speaking is concerned, learners are required to know the various grammatical rules that govern the language (Martínez-Flor, et al,. 2006). For example, an English learner must be able to realize that verbs conjugated in the present tense finish with an 's' when they come after a singular pronoun like 'he' or 'she'. Furthermore, learners need to have some syntactical knowledge about the language they are interested to speak. For instance, a speaker of English is expected to know that affirmative sentences have a specific word- order (e.g., She enjoys reading books.), and a speaker would use a different word-order or add an auxiliary verb if he wants to utter an interrogative sentence (e.g., Does she enjoy reading books?).

In addition, when the language is used in natural contexts, learners should show the ability to use spoken grammar rather than model their speeches on the written language. In other terms, a foreign language learner should understand that spoken grammar is characterized as a set of features often different from that of written grammar. Luoma (2004: 12) argues that speaking consists of 'idea units', which are short phrases and clauses

connected with *and, or, but* or *that* not joined by conjunctions at all but simply spoken next to each other, with possibly a short pause between them."

This can be illustrated with the following example of a transcribed conversation of a group of graduates (referred to as speakers **D, K** and **J**) taking about the job requirements of speaker **"D"** who was due to deliver his first lecture the coming week.

D: on occasion we do a bit of proof reading along there +
K: uhuh
D: and we're all sort of called on to do that from time to time
K: what does that involve
D: well+one of our main jobs in the Botanics is writing for the flora of Turkey+
K: uhuh
D: they haven't got the scientists to do it so + we sort of supply the scientists for that+
K: uhuh
D: well when+you've got all the scientific work written up+ we all sort of check through it and one-reads and the others +
K: oh I see you read aloud
D: uhuh that's right
K: I see
D: and then you sort of switch back and forward like this +
K: uhuh + and that doesn't bother you
D: it does actually (laughter) I'm terible at it + but I don't know
K: enven when it's something you're interested in +
D: well it makes it a bit easier to read certainly but + em just because you're reading to somebody else you feel + a bit uneasy somehow +
K: uhuh
J: I think it comes from + having to stand up and read in school +

<p align="right">(Brown & Yule, 1983:05)</p>

The above example shows that the speakers' utterances consist of relatively simple clause structures, which are strung together by simple conjunction, such as *'and'* and *'so'*. For instance, **D**'s third remark *"well+one of our main jobs in the Botanics is writing for the flora of Turkey+"* was simply followed by another remark *"they haven't got the scientists to do it"* without explicitly subordinating them with a subordinating conjunction, such as because or due to; he rather lets it for the listener to work out the relationship between the two clauses. The example also indicates that the spoken clauses and phrases are short, incomplete and separated with pauses: the single plus signs (+) represent the short pauses while the two plus signs (++) indicate that the pauses were long.

Learners are required to have a lexical knowledge that permits them to speak in the target language. According to Goh and Burns (2012), language learners' lexical knowledge can be discussed in terms of 'productive knowledge' and 'receptive knowledge' (55). Productive knowledge is the number of vocabulary a foreign language learner can use in his speaking or writing productions. Receptive knowledge, on the other hand, is the vocabulary a learner can recognize during listening and reading, but he cannot use when speaking or writing. The amount of productive knowledge an individual possess is generally smaller than his receptive vocabulary. Therefore, one of the major issues learners encounter when speaking a foreign language is that they do not have sufficient vocabulary to express their thoughts appropriately.

Foreign language learners are also required to develop knowledge about the fixed formulaic and idiomatic expressions usually used by native speakers. Many of these ready-made expressions are used for indicating discourse organization (e.g., *let's start by …*), for filling gaps (e.g., *ah, you*

see, sort of, well, you know ...), for expressing vagueness (e.g., *this, that, those ...etc.*), and modality (e.g., *I think. I suppose; Apparently; ... ect.*).

Observing the example from Brown and Yule (1983: 05) below, we can notice that most of the words and phrases used by the speakers are vague, non-specific.

- uhuh
-they haven't got the scientists to do it
-we sort of supply the scientists for that
- well when+you've got all the scientific work written   up
-we all sort of check through it
-uhuh that's right
-you sort of switch back and forward like this
-well it makes it a bit easier to read certainly
- a bit uneasy somehow

(Brown and Yule, 1983: 05)

Language learners, especially at advanced levels, need a high command of a wide range of such expressions to be both accurate and fluent (Luoma, 2004: 17-18). However, this might not be obvious for many language learners who might be harder for them to notice this feature of spoken language due to the few opportunities they have to speak the language outside the classroom (ibid: 18).

Phonological knowledge is another category of linguistic knowledge learners should know to develop their speaking performance in the target language. According to Goh and Burns (2012), "phonological knowledge is necessary for three levels of production: word, utterance, and discourse" (54). At the word level, foreign language learners need to know how to pronounce the segmental elements, such as vowels, consonants, sound clusters, and word-stress; they should also learn how to avoid sounds'

pronunciation problems, which may be caused by interference from their native language(s) (Burns & Hill, 2013). At the utterance and discourse levels, learners should show ability to use the super-segmental elements of speech to share their experiences, and express their attitudes and emotions (Brazil, et al, 1980, in Burns & Hill, 2013). Among these super-segmental elements are intonation patters, through which a speaker can use his pitch to express meanings. For example, in English, a rising pitch that accompanies an utterance usually indicates that the speaker is asking a question; whereas, a falling pitch reflects the end of a speaker's turn and signals the opportunity for another speaker to take a turn (Burns & Hill, 2013). Thus, learners need to possess a strong phonological background about the target language in view that this kind of knowledge sustains their speaking performance and communication abilities.

2. 1. 2. 2.2. Discourse Knowledge

Speaking a foreign language urges a student to have knowledge of its discourse features. Burns (1998) relates this type of knowledge to a learner's understanding of the spoken texts' functional purposes and social contexts and how these proposes and contexts can influence the structure of the speech he produces. In this respect, the learner should develop an understanding of how to use linguistic resources to produce cohesive and coherent utterances that are appropriate to the social context and the interlocutors.

Indeed, these linguistic and discourse requirements are not the only issues that cause problems to foreign language learners. Speaking is a spontaneous and a dynamic process. It is produced "on-line", and it is situated in real-time (Burns & Goh, 2012: 78). Therefore, when learning to speak in a foreign language, learners often encounter the difficulty of time constraint. This characteristic feature of speaking does not permit learners time to plan in advance what they will say. They, rather, need to "co-

construct their interactions with others, as the talk unfolds" (ibid,79). The presence of interlocutors, according to Bygate (2010), brings with it the need for reciprocity, which requires a learner to adjust his speaking outputs according to the interlocutors' knowledge, interest, or expectations. For example, in a face-to-face interaction, a speaker is expected to adapt his utterances according to linguistic and cognitive abilities of the interlocutor.

To be competent, a foreign language student must combine various skills, knowledge, and processes that take account of the context of production, and result in speech that is culturally and socially relevant, appropriate, and comprehensible to their interlocutors, as well as managing micro-level reactions and responses to what he utters. A competent speaker must at the same time be listeners who can take account of the interactional and unpredictable dynamics of speech. According to Bygate (2010: 16) "all this happens very fast, and to be successful depends on automation". Goh and Burns (2012) propose that speaking competence can be thought of as "combinatorial", involving the use of linguistic knowledge, core speaking skills, and communication strategies, which must all cohere simultaneously to constitute speaking competence and to facilitate fluent and intelligible speech production.

2. 1. 2. 3. Affective Demands in L2 Speaking

Given that speaking is produced spontaneously without any planning and rehearsal, it is strongly influenced by some affective factors, such as anxiety and lack of motivation. In L2 learning, the term anxiety is often used to refer to "language anxiety" in general. It is often associated with feelings of "uneasiness, frustration, and self-doubt experienced by learners in the second or foreign language process" (Arnold & Brown , 1999). For many L2 learners, speaking is an anxiety invoking skill because it requires them to face uncomfortable situations, such as speaking in public or in a conversation with other speakers. This makes their performance open to

immediate evaluation by others, which may increase their anxiety levels and push them to become unwilling to participate in many speaking activities in class (MacIntyre, 2007).

This situation has been revealed by a number of research studies that sought to examine the impact of anxiety on learners' motivation to speak the foreign language. For instance, Burden's (2004) study with about 200 Japanese learners of English reveals that around half of the students suffer from some level of language anxiety, which hinder their motivation to participate in the classroom speaking activities. Another study by Woodow (2006) also shows the negative effects of anxiety on students' speaking motivation and performance. This study, which involved more than 270 EAP students, reported significant negative correlations between anxiety and students' speaking performance.

In conclusion, speaking poses a number of cognitive, communicative, as well as affective demands on L2 learners, which makes its learning a very difficult process.

2. 2. Writing as an Important and Complex Skill

2. 2. 1. The Role of Writing in L2 Learning

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, OH researchers argue that output in its oral form is essential for L2 learning because this type of output involves learners in the processes of gap-noticing, knowledge-reflection, and hypothesis-testing. Although these arguments seem to value the role of speaking in L2 development, a number of researchers working within the OH framework consider writing as more advantageous than speaking in facilitating language learning (e.g. Williams, 2007). Compared to speaking, writing allows learners sufficient time to reflect on their produced language. When writing, learners have sufficient opportunities to notice errors (holes) in their L2 because writing allows them time to

examine their own linguistic knowledge. They can also solve their communication problems by consulting reference materials, experts, or reflecting on the explicit language knowledge, which subsequently lead to L2 development (Ortega, 2013; Williams, 2012; Polio, et al, 1998).

This argument is also shared by Cummunig (1990) who asserts that writing has a paramount importance in L2 development. He states:

> Composition writing elicits attention to form-meaning relations that may prompt learners to refine their linguistic expression – and hence their control over their linguistic knowledge – so that it is more accurately representative of their thoughts and of standard usage. This process appears to be facilitated by the natural disjuncture between written text and the mental processes of generating and assessing it.

Cumming's view on the L2 learning potential of writing has been acknowledged directly or indirectly by numerous empirical studies. For instance, Swain and Lapkin (1995) find that the act of writing engages their participants in a sort of mental processing that allows them to generate and consolidate linguistic knowledge even in the absence of external feedback. In their recent study on composition and reformulation, Yang and Zhang (2010) report that the participants noticed many gapes in their L2 during the processes of composition. They were able to revise and solve many of these language problems when they re-read their own texts as reformulated by NSs.

In this regard, writing can promote a focus on form because it encourages learners to tap into their L2 explicit knowledge, which plays an important role in L2 learning. Manchón and de Larios (2008) explain that the problem-solving nature of the writing skill enables learners to deeply reflect on language, leading them to become more aware of language

accuracy. Storch (2013) suggests that: "writing is a more natural task to encourage learners to pay attention to form than tasks which require only oral interaction" (156).

This claim is supported by a number of studies, which examined the role of writing in enhancing learners' focus on form. For instance, Adams (2006) investigated the effects of task modality (oral versus written modes) on learners' orientation to form. The researcher engaged her forty-four L2 participants in both oral and written information-gap tasks. The findings of the study indicate that writing components of the tasks completed by the participants elicited more attention to form than the spoken ones. In this study, writing stimulates the participants to discuss linguistic forms and to use self-repairs. It also increases their use of the linguistic structures (prepositions of place and the past tense) targeted by the study. Similar results were reached by Niu's (2009) study, which examined the difference between oral and written collaborative tasks in impacting EFL learners' focus on form. Niu found that the writing tasks drew the participants' attention to form more than the speaking tasks.

Indeed, writing does not only encourage learners to focus on form, but it also stimulates them to test hypotheses about the accuracy of their L2 use. Manchón and de Larios (2008) reveal that unlike speaking, writing offers learners more time to write and re-write texts. It allows them more rooms for testing their L2 hypotheses in the form of "internal feedback" and "external feedback". In addition, Bitchener and Storch (2016) consider writing as an ideal opportunity for hypothesis-testing due to the time it guarantees to learners: "to retrieve existing knowledge from the long-term memory and to make cognitive comparisons between it and the written CF [corrective feedback] they have received" (328). Accordingly, the hypothesis-testing function is perceived to be more successful in writing than in speaking and this is attributed to the slow pace feature of the

writing skill. To the best of our knowledge, no empirical study has attempted to confirm or disconfirm these claims.

Apart from the OH, the importance of writing in L2 development has been widely supported by the SCT. The first section of the present chapter has explained that the SCT views oral interactions as very significant in L2 development because they encourage scaffolding between a more knowledgeable person (e.g.,. he can be a teacher or a peer in a language classroom) and a less knowledgeable learner (e.g., a less knowledgeable peer). In this respect, to facilitate L2 learning, scaffolding needs to exist within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Although scaffolding is a concept that is mainly used to discuss the role of oral interactions in language development, many SCT scholars have claimed that scaffolding is encouraged by the skill of writing, and particularly writing in its collaborative form.

Collaborative writing (CW) has been identified as fundamental in scaffolding L2 learning. According to Barnard and Campbell (2005) "writing, as a learning activity, is one that lends itself to the co-construction of texts by students working together". Furthermore, Weisberg (2000) affirms that CW has a paramount role in L2 learning because it pushes learners to use both oral and written forms of a language and to play various roles while producing their text, such as peer tutors, co-author, and/or sounding boards.

CW requires learners to work together in pairs or in small groups to discuss what and how to express their ideas. In this process, learners are engaged in collaborative dialogue, which permits them to construct new knowledge and new understandings of the target language. Storck (2013) claims that:

When encountering a problem, learners writing in pairs or small groups no longer need to rely only on their own linguistic resources to solve the problem. They can also draw on the knowledge of others. Together, they can pool their linguistic resources, collectively scaffolding their performance and co-construct new knowledge.

From the socio-cultural perspective, the knowledge co-constructed during CW can be internalized and employed independently by learners when composing new texts in the future.

Indeed, very few studies have investigated the impact of students' ability to use the knowledge constructed during a CW activity in their subsequent writings. For example, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) examined the effects of CF within learners' ZPD on L2 learning. The study was conducted with three adult ESL learners enrolled in a reading and writing course. The participants were asked to write one in-class essay per week and perform a feedback session with a tutor over a period of eight weeks. Aljaafreh and Lantolf found that CW enabled their participants to progress from other-regulated behaviors (i.e., the learners could adjust their writings with the help of the tutor's explicit feedback) to self-regulated behaviors (i.e., each participant was able to accomplish tasks independently). In other terms, Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) study shows that the participants could internalize the knowledge co-constructed during the feedback sessions with their tutor and used it independently to adjust their own writings.

In conclusion, the different language theories have viewed writing as an important language skill due to its critical role in L2 learning. However, the learning of this skill is challenging for many L2 learners. This will be explained in the next section.

2. 2. 2. Challenges of Learning to Write in a Foreign   Language

For many L2 learners, writing is difficult and demanding at the same time. Scholars attribute the difficulties learners confront when learning to write in a second or foreign language to the recursive, cognitively-demanding, problem-solving nature of the writing skill.

2. 2. 2. 1. Writing as a Cognitively-Demanding Skill

Writing is recursive in nature. In writing a text, a writer does not simply move from one stage to another following a linear order. He, rather, drafts, reads, re-reads as he drafts, or edits as he invents. In this sense, writing is a whole process that is more recursive than linear. After analyzing the writing processes of a group of L2 students, Perl (1979) concludes that:

> Composing does not occur in a straightforward, linear fashion. The process is one of accumulating discrete bits down on the paper and then working from those bits to reflect upon, structure, and then further develop what one means to say. It can be thought of as a kind of "retrospective structuring"; movement forward occurs only after one has reached back, which in turn occurs only after one has some sense of where one wants to go. Both aspects, the reaching back and the sensing forward, have a clarifying effect.

Therefore, writing a text requires a learner to recursively engage in the processes of planning, formulating, and revising. These writing processes push the learner to continuously "move back and forth on a continuum of discovery, analyzing, and synthesizing of ideas" (ibid). At some stages, the writer may generate ideas and choose words without judging their relevance or usefulness for his text. At other stages, he may

decide to eliminate the irrelevant ideas and select more appropriate words. He may also change the whole plan if some new ideas rise in the process of ideas generation.

The recursive nature of writing makes it a cognitively-demanding skill that involves a learner in a continuous problem-solving activity. In the case of writing, problem-solving is the sequence of cognitive operations a writer engages in to cross the gap between what he wants to express (the writer's objective) and what he puts on a paper or type on a screen. Each of the writing processes (planning, formulating, and revising) entails some sort of problems that the L2 learner needs to solve in order to transform his ideas and intended meanings into a written text (Manchón & de Larios, 2008: 33).

According to the existing theoretical writing models (Hayes & Flower, 1980; Hayes, 1996; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), the challenges that a learner face in the three writing stages can be represented through the following diagram.
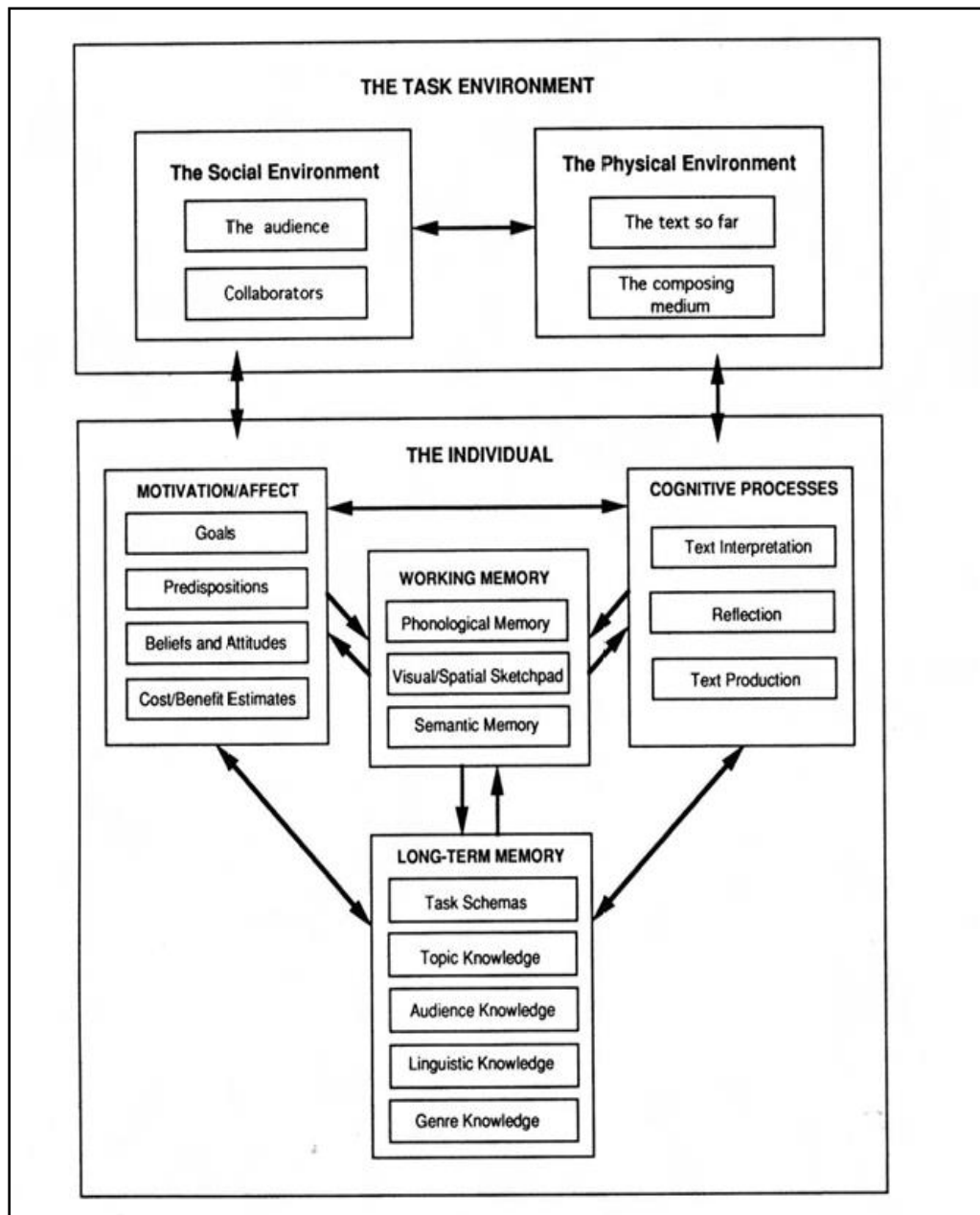
Figure 2. 2: The Writing Model by Hayes (1996) (Weigle, 2002: 26)

1. The planning stage: At this stage, the learner goes through some reflective processes in which he sets goals, generates ideas, and retrieves information (about the topic, the audience, and the context) from the long-term memory. Planning is particularly difficult for many L2 learners because of their limited language proficiency. That is, in the process of transforming ideas into a written text, the learner may be involved in a lengthy search for appropriate vocabulary and syntactic structures. This

intensive problem-solving activity can place a considerable load on working memory and lead to the loss of ideas before they are written on paper. Consequently, in many cases the produced text does not reflect the learner's intended meaning (Weigle, 2002: 36).

***2.** The formulation stage:* At this stage, the learner transforms his intended content into an actual written text. This transformation requires the learner to select linguistic forms from his mental lexicon, taking into consideration the target language's requirements of grammar correctness and pragmatic adequacy (Schoonen et al., 2009). For many L2 learners, the formulation stage constitutes a considerable challenge because it heavily depends on the availability and accessibility of the writer's linguistic resources (Grosjean & Li, 2013: 102). Therefore, to become a skilled writer, the L2 learner must have a large repertoire of words and sentence structures that are appropriate for the different rhetorical situations.

***3.** The revision stage:* At this stage, the learner applies his meta-linguistic knowledge to read and judge the appropriateness of the text he has produced. In fact, revision allows the learner to analyze the produced text at different levels (lexical, semantic, syntactic, etc). It permits him to solve textual problems, such as those related to the organization of ideas, the appropriateness, and correctness of words and expressions. In contrast to the monitoring stage in the speaking skill, the revision process in writing is more intentional and elaborate. Revision in writing requires an awareness of audience, the text's objective(s), the ability to read critically, and the ability to evaluate and solve problems at the text level (Fidalgo, et al, 2010). Accordingly, revision poses challenges for writers (both L1 and L2 writers) because of the high demands on working memory[4].

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[4] For further details about the revision stage, see Kellogg (1988).

In conclusion, writing is a cognitively demanding skill because it involves a learner in a number of reflective and problem-solving processes for planning, drafting, and revising. Indeed, learning to write in L1 or L2 requires a learner to simultaneously coordinate several mental resources and apply various types of knowledge to construct a text that successfully communicates his message and respects the linguistic as well as the communicative conventions of the target language.

Therefore, the complexity of writing cannot be attributed solely to its recursive nature as any attempt to understand this language skill should consider the communicative demands it poses on writers. This argument will be further explained in the section that follows.

2. 2. 3. 2. Writing as a Communicative-Demanding Skill

Similar to speaking, writing draws heavily on a learner's linguistic and discourse resources. The learner is required to possess a confident level of lexical, grammatical, mechanical, and pragmatic knowledge that allows him to effectively communicate his ideas in the target language. In other words, when writing a text, the learner is expected to attend to a number of communicative factors, including language correctness, audience, context, and purpose.

Linguistic knowledge is the first valuable resource for learning the writing skill, especially in a foreign language context. It comprises of some basic elements of written communication discourse, including lexicon, grammar, and mechanical rules that govern the target language.

As it has explained previously in this chapter, lexical knowledge includes a learner's ability to recognize (perceptive lexical knowledge) and appropriately use (productive lexical knowledge) a language's frequently occurring words as well as the other more specialized academic terms.

Writing effectively requires a learner to possess a sufficient amount of lexical knowledge in the language he intends to write in (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). That is, the size of the learner's lexicon can greatly influence the quality of his produced text and a shortage in vocabulary may severely limit communication.

For L2 learners, the development of lexical knowledge can cause a special problem. On the one hand, it is acknowledged in research that a good degree of text comprehension increasingly depends on the writer's appropriate word choice (Nation & Waring, 1997). This reveals that effective and fluent writing requires a learner to make the correct decisions while working with vocabulary. This can be particularly challenging, especially because enhancing vocabulary knowledge is a complex task for both L1 and L2 learners. According to Folse (2008), lexical knowledge represents "a special problem because there are multiple aspects of vocabulary knowledge that learners must master, including polysemy, connotation and usage, part of speech, frequency, and collocation". In other words, constructing a written text involves a learner in the complex task of learning how to accurately use words in the language he intends to express his message in and any lexical errors may be considered as signs of weak writing skill on the part of the learner.

Apart from lexical knowledge, writing also requires a learner to master the use of a language's basic grammatical and mechanical elements. To write effectively, the learner has to develop a conscious understanding of the language's grammar system. He has to make the right choices of sentence structures, verb tenses, modal auxiliaries, plurals, articles, subject-verb agreement, passives, conditionals, complex clauses (e.g., adjective clause, relative clause), and different types of reference for academic written discourse (Ferris, 2009).

In addition to theses grammatical rules, the learner has to construct a solid knowledge of the language's mechanics. That is, the learner has to understand how to use the different capitalization and punctuation markers to combine phrases, clauses, and sentences since any mechanical errors may affect the reader's understanding and interpretation of the text's meaning (ibid).

Therefore, the mastery of linguistic knowledge is indispensible to writing as it allows a learner to effectively communicate his ideas. Nevertheless, the difficulties that arise in the process of learning the language's various lexical, grammatical, and mechanical elements makes writing a communicative demanding skill for many L2 learners whose command of the target language is underdeveloped (Eisterhold, 1990: 94).

Another challenge that an learner faces when learning to write in a second or foreign language is related to discourse knowledge. The learner needs to possess discourse features of coherence and cohesion, which enable him to effectively communicate his ideas "to readers who are removed in place and time from the writing process itself" (Olshtain & Celce-Murcia, 2001). In order to create a coherent text, the learner has to pay a special attention to the text's cohesive devises, including reference, conjunctions, ellipsis, substitution, and lexical ties.

In addition to these cognitive and communicative issues, most learners face a number of affective difficulties when learning to write in the L2. Such difficulties will be summarized in the following section.

2. 2. 3. 3. Writing as an Affective-Demanding Skill

For many researchers, writing poses particular affective challenges for many L2 students. Prominent to these challenges are anxiety and lack of motivation. According to Daly and Miller (1975) writing anxiety is an

negative feeling that pushes a person to avoid situations, which require the use of the writing skill. This feeling is generally associated with a person's fear from negative evaluation of his own writings (cited in Cheng et al, 1999). As such, writing anxiety can result in a number of negative consequences, such as self-doubt, hesitation, and negative attitudes towards writing (Harmer, 2006:55). In this respect, Masny and Foxall (1992) found that students with a high anxiety level tended to develop a feeling of an unwillingness to participate in more writing classes. Similarly, Hassan (2001) claimed that anxiety negatively correlated with his participants' self-esteem and resulted in low quality writing.

The lack of motivation is another affective issue that most student generally face when learning to write in L2. Students with low motivational levels might not be interested in developing this important skill. Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997) claim that a writer's motivation is affected by a number of factors, including knowledge about the composition topic, task complexity, lack of immediate feedback, and the effort needed to persist in the task. In addition to these factors, Harmer (2006) asserts that fear from committing mistakes can be considered a major demotivator for many L2 writers (24). In other terms, students' writing performance can be hindered as a result of their fear of negative feedback. This assertion is consistent with the results of Gupta and Woldemariam's (2011) study. The latter investigated the effect of motivation and attitudes on students' use of writing strategies. The results of this study show that highly motivated students used more writing strategies than the less motivated ones. The researchers suggest that enhanced motivational levels is one of the major factors in developing L2 writing.

Accordingly, Speaking and writing are extremely demanding for L2 students because they call upon a number of cognitive, communicative, as

well as affective abilities. Therefore, developing learners' performance in these skills may be a challenging task for many teachers. As such, teachers are required to provide their learners with effective instructional practices to help them enhance their performance in these important language skills. Amongst these instructional practices is topic control, which forms the interest of the current thesis. Before going further in our explanation of the effectiveness of this practice, it is interesting to examine the differences between speaking and writing skills.

2. 3. Differences Between Speaking and Writing

This section is, in fact, a synthesis of what has been presented previously in the current chapter. This last section focuses on explaining the subtle differences between speaking and writing as a necessary step to interpret the findings of the two studies included in this thesis. According to Brown (2001:340-341), these two language productive skills vary from each other in terms of number of characteristics, including permanence, production time, distance, orthography, complexity, formality, and vocabulary.

1. Permanence: Speaking is impermanent because it is processed in real-time as a person speaks. Unless it is recorded, speaking does not leave any physical trace, which can later be referred to by the speaker or by the listener. On the other hand, writing is essentially more permanent than speaking. Once the text is written, it can be read and re-read as much as a person wants.

2. Time of Production: Speaking is unplanned. The real-time nature of this skill requires speakers to plan, formulate, and deliver their utterances in a very short time. In contrast, writers have more time to plan, write, re-write, and revise their texts before they are completed.

3. Distance: Speaking is generally a face-to-face interaction between a speaker and a listener. This feature allows the speaker to easily get an immediate feedback from his interlocutor in order to avoid any sort of misunderstanding. On the other hand, the distance between a writer and a reader in terms of time and place requires him to devote a great amount of time and energy in order to construct his text in an explicit way.

4. Orthography: Unlike speakers, a very limited amount of orthography is available to writers in order to produce their texts. Speakers, however, can make use of an important number of helpful linguistic and phonological devices to enhance their messages (e.g., stress, intonation, pausing, act).

5. Complexity: In speaking, the use of short clauses connected by coordinators is very common. In addition, the spoken language is characterized by redundancy, i.e., speakers are permitted to repeat the same word as much as they want. In contrast, writing is more complex than speaking in terms of lexical density and clauses' length. Therefore, writers are required to use longer clauses and more subordinators. They are also asked to avoid redundancy in their texts.

6. Vocabulary: Writing, as compared with speaking, places a heavy demand on vocabulary use. Writers are generally required to employ a greater variety of words in their texts than speakers are expected to do when uttering their speeches.

7. Formality: Compared with writing, speaking is generally less formal. Speakers tend to use simple words, short clauses, contractions, verbal phrases, and formulaic expressions. In contrast, writers are expected to follow the grammatical rules as well as the rhetorical conventions of academic writing (e.g., writers should possess enough knowledge about how to describe, explain, define, etc).

In addition to this lists of textual features provided by Brown (2001), other researchers discuss the differences between speaking and writing in terms of their individual cognitive processes. For instance, grabowski (1996) claims that these two language productive skills vary with respect to their demands on the cognitive resources. In this respect, speakers, as compared with writers, are faced with time pressure. They need to devote their cognitive resources in order to maintain the flow in their utterances by means of strategies, such as filling pauses and turn-taking signals. This cognitive load is not present in writing because writers have time to pause for planning and revising their texts as much as they choose.

The second cognitive processing difference between speaking and writing is related to planning and information retrieval. The absence of the reader places heavier cognitive demands on writers more than on speakers. Writers are required to spend much time and energy on planning and word as well as information retrieval in order to construct a text, which should consider the reader's knowledge, interest, and purpose. In contrast, in speaking the presence of the interlocutor's immediate feedback reduces such demands on the speaker's cognitive resources (ibid).

The third difference between speaking and writing from the cognitive processing perspective is related to error monitoring and correction. The presence of the interlocutor pushes the speakers to concentrate on error correction more than writers do. On the other hand, writers are able to read and revise the produced texts as much as they want before submitting them for feedback (ibid).

The above discussion indicates that speaking and writing are different in terms of their textual features as well as the demands they place on the cognitive resources. As such, when conducting studies about these language skills, researchers should consider that the results obtained from

such studies cannot be directly compared to one another. This will be further explained in the following chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the importance of both speaking and writing in L2 learning. For many language theories and hypotheses, these two productive skills have a paramount role in facilitating the L2 learning. The OH researchers consider speaking as well as writing as essential skills for enhancing learners' ability to notice gaps in the language system, to test hypothesis about the target language, and to reflect on language use. Furthermore, the SCT regards the speaking skill as a helpful means for assisting learners to achieve communicative goals through social interactions with the more knowledgeable individuals. The SCT also claims that scaffolding is encouraged by the writing skill, particularly in collaboration with others.

In addition, the second chapter attempted to explore the major difficulties and challenges that L2 learners face in the process of learning the productive skills of speaking and writing. This particular section revealed that both skills are complex due to the different cognitive, communicative, and affective demands they impose on learners. The last section of this chapter summarized the differences between speaking and writing.

Chapter Three

Topic Control and L2 Fluency

in Speaking and Writing

Introduction

The previous chapter explores the difficulties experienced by L2 students when learning the two productive skills, namely speaking and writing. The current chapter focuses on "topic control" as a teaching practice and its influence on fluency in both speaking and writing. Therefore, the chapter contains four sections. The first one summarizes the major definitions given to the term fluency in the fields of speaking and writing. The second section describes the various measures used by researchers to analyze learners' fluency in speaking and writing. The third section explains how fluency is measured in this thesis. The fourth section reviews the literature related to the effects of topic control on L2 fluency in speaking as well as writing.

3. 1. Definitions of Fluency

3. 1. 1. Fluency in Speaking

Researchers have long debated the definition and nature of the term fluency. Lennon (1990) identifies two separate meanings of fluency: broad and narrow. In the broad sense, fluency is used as a synonym for speaking proficiency. It is in this sense that a language user is described as a fluent speaker, meaning that his language approximates the native-speakers' norms. In its narrow sense, fluency is considered as one component of language performance and it is often used to refer to the language user's speed of delivery while speaking or writing in the target language.

Fillmore's (1979) definition of L1 fluency can be used to illustrate the broader meaning of the term. He describes fluency as a term that comprises four different abilities. The first one is the ability to speak at length and with few pauses and hesitations; it is the "ability to fill time with talk". The second ability is related to speech coherence or the ability "to talk in coherent, reasoned, and semantically dense sentences". The third ability of a fluent speaker is "the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts". This ability can be

considered as a component of the socio-pragmatic competence explained previously in this thesis. The fourth ability suggested by Fillmore is the ability of the speaker to use language in order to express his ideas in a creative and imaginative manner. Fillmore's definition of fluency is vague and luck precision. It does not clearly explain the difference between fluency and the other components of oral proficiency like accuracy and complexity.

In contrast, Lennon (1990) regards fluency as distinct from the other elements of speech production. Lennon's narrow definition conceptualizes fluency as a purely performance phenomenon because it is "an impression on a listener's part that the psycholinguistic processes of speech planning and speech production are functioning easily and efficiently". Therefore, a fluent speaker should be able to hold the listener's attention to the message by avoiding all types of dysfluency, such as long, unfilled pauses that may make the listener notice that the speech production processes are working under strain.

Lennon's definition is accepted by Schmidt (1992) who describes fluency as a performance phenomenon that depends on the speaker's procedural knowledge. In this respect, fluency relates to the speaker's ability to know how to use the language rather than to know about the language rules. Schmidt argues that fluency is 'automatic' and it is relatively free from conscious attention and effort. Therefore, similar to Lennon (1990), Schmidt's conceptualization makes it clear that fluency is different from the other two dimensions of language performance. However, it should be noted that accuracy and complexity seem to be prerequisites for fluency in view that they must be automatic for the development of fluency.

This argument about the importance of automaticity for describing fluency as a component of speaking proficiency is adhered by Levis (2006) who argues that a fluent speaker usually has "greater automaticity" than a less fluent one. This is because the fluent speaker is able to produce the language automatically without

consciously considering the elements of speech while communicating (264). Levis adds that fluency involves automaticity at both the sound/word and the phrase levels. Accordingly, a person is considered to be fluent if his language production at sound/word and phrase levels is automatic. In other terms, a fluent speaker, compared to a less fluent one, does not pay attention to the pronunciation elements, such as the articulation of sounds and stress. Furthermore, the fluent speaker is able to express his intended meaning relying on his memorized pre-fabricated phrases and verbal idioms which do not need to be consciously reconstructed (ibid: 265).

The relationship between fluency and automaticity of language production can be noticed in Lennon's (2000) definition of the term. After synthesizing a number of definitions, Lennon concludes that fluency should be perceived as "the rapid, smooth, accurate, lucid, and efficient translation of thought or communicative intention into language under the temporal constraints of on-line processing" (ibid). In this definition, Lennon focuses on the temporal aspects of a language. It relates fluency to the ability to communicate a message under the cognitive pressures of real-time processing with easiness, accuracy, and at a faster pace without excessive or unnecessary pauses, hesitations, or self-corrections. Accordingly, fluency is judged by errors in the language, i.e., misplaced or overly frequent pauses and hesitations may be considered as predictors of dysfluency.

This narrow definition of fluency as the language user's ability to produce language under the cognitive pressures of real-time processing is accepted by Segalowitz (2010). The writer proposes a three-folds definition of cognitive, utterance, and perceived fluency, which can be summarized in the following lines:

1. Cognitive fluency: It is the "ability to efficiently mobilize and integrate the underlying cognitive processes responsible for producing utterances with the characteristics that they have" (ibid, 48). Similar to Lennon's (2000) definition, cognitive fluency entails the efficiency and fluidity underlying the processes of

language production, including planning, lexical retrieval, and appropriate choice of grammatical markers while articulating, and revising a message.

2. Utterance fluency: It refers to the actual observable features of an utterance, such as temporal, repair, pausing, and hesitation characteristics (ibid). In Segalowitz's terms, this type of fluency focuses on "the fluency characteristics that a speech sample can possess" (ibid). It perceives fluency as a product rather than a process-based phenomenon. Therefore, utterance fluency is, in fact, the manifestation of the speaker's level of cognitive fluency. For example, the excessive occurrence of dysfluency markers (e.g., long pauses, or hesitations) in speech may be perceived as evidence of cognitive dysfluency.

3. *Perceived fluency*: It is "the inferences listeners make about a speaker's cognitive fluency based on their perception of utterance fluency" (ibid). In other terms, perceived fluency refers to the impression that a listener draws from the speech the interlocutor has produced. This type of fluency is different from both cognitive and utterance fluency in the sense that "it is ascribed by a listener to a speaker, based on impressions drawn from hearing speech samples produced by the speaker" (ibid, 49). According to this proposed definition, cognitive fluency underlies utterance fluency, which affects listeners' perception of fluency.

In a more recent work on fluency in native and non-native speech, Götz (2013) distinguishes between productive and perceptive fluency.

1. Productive Fluency: It involves the aspects of speech that "enhance the speaker's ease and effortlessness in their speech production" (ibid, 2). These aspects of speech are similar to the temporal fluency variables of speech rate, mean length of runs, unfilled pauses, and phonation ratio that have been previously established by Lennon's (1990, 2000) definitions of fluency. Götz (2013) suggests that productive fluency is attained through a group of verbal strategies that help the speaker to minimize the cognitive pressure when planning a message (ibid, 8). These strategies include, among others, the use of easily retrievable, multi-word formulaic

sequences and/or lexical bundles (ibid). Understood in this way, productive fluency is equivalent with automaticity of language production.

2. Perceptive fluency: It includes the elements that "establish the perception of a speaker's fluency" (ibid, 2). These elements comprise all the variables that make a listener perceive that a speaker has a native-like fluency (ibid, 10). Götz (2013) classifies this group of variables as those related to the speaker's language accuracy (i.e., grammar correctness), idiomatic expressions (i.e., the speaker's ability to select the appropriate, native-like expressions for specific communicative situations), intonation (i.e., the speaker's ability to use a native-like rules of stress, rhythm, etc), accent (i.e., the speaker's ability to use a native-like pronunciation), lexical diversity (i.e., the speaker's ability to select from a range of lexical choices), and register and sentence structure (i.e., the speaker's ability to select from a range of syntactic structures) (ibid).

It should be noted that Götz (2013) does not agree with Segalowitz's (2010) definition of perceived fluency as the listener's judgments on the speaker's productive fluency. In Götz's view, a listener cannot detect all the dysfluency markers, such as the number and position of temporal variables, in a speaker's output. She further argues that there are other features that "have a much greater influence on the fluency perception of listeners on native as well as nonnative speech" (Gotz, 2013:10). Accordingly, perceptive fluency is a speaker-based phenomenon that includes observable features of communication, which enable the listener to judge if the speaker is fluent or non-fluent.

According to the above discussion, researchers have reached neither an agreement on the definition of speaking fluency nor on its componential features. In the field of writing, similar debates are noticed amongst researchers trying to conceptualize the term fluency. This discussion will be revealed in the next section.

3. 1. 2. Fluency in Writing

An important feature of Lennon's (2000) definition discussed in the previous section is that fluency does not solely pertain to the skill of speaking and it expands to the other language skills like writing. This definition is accepted by other researchers, such as Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) who define fluency as "the production of language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation" (139).

In a similar vein, Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998), take into account the components of fluency discussed by Lennon's (2000) definition in their analysis of writing fluency. They write:

> In our view, *fluency* means that more words and more structures are accessed in a limited time, whereas a lack of *fluency* means that only a few words or structures are accessed. Learners who have the same number of productive vocabulary items or productive structures may retrieve them with differing degrees of efficiency. Fluency is not a measure of how sophisticated or accurate the words or structures are, but a measure of the sheer number of words or structural units a writer is able to include in their writing within a particular period of time (14).

According to Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998), writing fluency is associated with rapidity and ease within text execution. The number of words or structures produced by a writer in a limited period of time can determine his fluency level. That is to say, the writer is considered fluent, if he is able to use a high number of words or structures within a given time constraint.

In an earlier study, Bruton and Kirby (1987) refer to two definitions of fluency in writing: traditional and multidimensional. The traditional perspective defines writing fluency in terms of text quantity and the composing rate. For this perspective, the writer's fluency is determined by his ability to produce more

words in a given period of time. In contrast, the multidimensional view relates fluency to "the richness of the writer's processes and the writer's ability to organize composing strategies and the complexities of their use in a way that reflects her or his mature awareness of task demands" (ibid). Accordingly, fluency in writing is associated with the writer's ability to access his stored linguistic knowledge in order to retrieve ideas, vocabularies and text efficiently.

Brand and Brand (2006) also relate fluency in writing with automaticity. They assert that "fluent writing occurs when the writer effortlessly writes words on the page, concentrating on communicating thoughts and ideas" (03). Accordingly, fluency in writing is established when a writer exerts control over words spelling and have an efficient amount of grammar and sequencing skills, which permit him to present his ideas and thoughts automatically with an organized and coherent manner. In other words, fluency in writing is based on the automaticity of the writing processes. A fluent writer does not spend a long time looking for words, ideas and thinking about their organization within the text because his writing processes have become automatic. On the other hand, the non-fluent writer spends a considerable time thinking and pondering over what and how to write a text. The writing processes of this non-fluent writer are frequently interrupted by pauses and/ or revisions. The result of this non-automatic writing is a text lacking coherence and organization of ideas.

The aforementioned definitions reflect the different approaches researchers have adopted to conceptualize the term fluency in writing. For the first group of researchers, fluency is limited to the number of words a writer can produce within the allotted time. A fluent writer, as compared to a non-fluent one, can construct more words and structures in a limited amount of time. According to the second group of researchers, fluency extends beyond this rate/time perspective because it mirrors the writer's ability to automatically access his linguistic knowledge base in order to generate an organized, coherent text. These varied conceptualizations of

writing fluency mirror the various measures used for assessing it. The next section will summarize these measures.

3. 2. Analyzing Fluency

Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) suggest that two approaches are possible for measuring the fluency of both oral and written productions. The first one is qualitative in nature because it analyzes fluency in terms of listener/reader ratings. The second approach is quantitative as it provides a quantitative analysis of the fluency aspects (149). The following sections will examine how researchers in the fields of speaking and writing have applied these approaches to analyze fluency.

3. 2. 1. Analyzing Speaking Fluency

Taken the aforementioned definitions into account, a number of temporal measurements of speaking fluency have been developed. The majority of these measurements reflect the speed of the speech production processes and they can be grouped into four separate quantitative measures, including the duration and type of pauses, the amount of speech, rate of speech, and dysfluency markers (Skehan, 2003).

In the context of speaking, the duration and type of pauses or breakdown fluency is primarily measured in terms of the number of pauses and length of pauses of a person's speech production. While the number of pauses is measured by counting the number of filled and unfilled pauses of each speaker, the length of pauses is assessed as either the total length of pauses above 1 second, or as the mean length of all pauses above 1 second (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005: 157). Breakdown fluency might also be assessed by counting the number of pauses filled with hesitators, such as *uh* or *erm* (Gutz, 2009: 80). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) claim that breakdowns in speech can provide an indication of the speaker's ability "to disengage from speaking in order to plan [his] spoken messages" (156). In this regard, a speaker is considered fluent, if he spends less time pausing.

The second temporal measure of speaking fluency is the amount of speech or the length of runs. This fluency measure is calculated by counting the mean number of syllables produced between pauses of a 1 second length (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005: 157). The length of runs is considered as a significant fluency indicator because it reflects the speaker's ability to produce segments of a message without excessive pauses (ibid, 156). Longer runs suggest that more elements of speech are being combined in a shorter space of time (Housen, et al, 2012: 62).

Rate is another major temporal fluency measure, which indicates the speed delivery of speech. Speech rate can be measured by the number of words per minute (Lennon, 1990) or the number of syllables per second (Ortega, 1995) divided by the total amount of time of speech production. It should be noted that speech rate is affected by such factors like the formality of the situation and time pressure. In this context, Götz (2013) reports that the average rates of native-speakers of English ranges between 120 and 260 words produced per-minute (wpm). She illustrates that this range considers the different communication situations that a native speaker might experience, such as radio broadcasts (150-170 wpm), lectures (125-160 wpm), interviews (160-210 wpm), and spontaneous conversations (190-230) (15).

Dysfluency markers constitute the final temporal measure of speaking fluency. Tavakoli and Skehan (2005) argue that these measures can be indicated by the number of reformulations, replacements, false starts, and repetition of words or phrases. Each of these dysfluencies are defined by Skehan and Foster (1999) as follows:

1. Reformulations are the clauses or phrases that a speaker repeats with some modification either to syntax, morphology, or word order;

2. Replacements are the lexical items that are immediately substituted for other lexical items;

3. False starts are the incomplete utterances/sentences, which may or may not be followed by a reformulation; and

4. Repetitions are the words, phrases, or clauses that are repeated without any modification to syntax, morphology, or word order.

According to Skehan and Foster (1999) the dysfluency markers are closely related to the rapid decisions that a speaker has to make while speaking the target language. As a result, these measures are significant fluency predictors because they reflect the ongoing adjustments that the speaker makes in order to insure the communication flow.

To date, an important number of empirical research has used the aforementioned temporal measures to analyze fluency in speaking. In his longitudinal study, Lennon (1990) measures the fluency development of his four German students of English subjects in terms of a group of temporal variables, including the number of words per minute, the number of repeats and self-repair, the mean length of utterances between pauses, the mean and the total length of pauses. Lennon concludes that quantitative analysis can enable teachers as well as researchers to objectively identify speaking fluency improvements in their individual learners. Lennon argues that speech rate, filled pauses, and the percentage of runs followed by pause are significant indicators of perceived fluency. Self-corrections, however, do not prove a good predictor.

Most research since Lennon (1990) has employed similar measures to analyze fluency. For instance, for the analysis of his subjects' spoken fluency gains, Freed (1995) uses speech rate, the number and length of pauses, and the length of fluent speech runs. Freed finds that speech rate is "the only fluency feature", which reveals a significance difference between the group of American students that studied French in France and the group that learned the language in the United States. As for the number of pauses, the study reveals that the fluent group, compared to the less fluent group, had shorter and fewer filled and unfilled

pauses. The amount of speech does not show any significant difference among students' fluency levels.

Similar measures are used by Kormos and Dénes (2004) who explore the validity of temporal variables in predicting fluency scores both for native and non-native judgments of fluency. They find that speech rate , mean length of utterance, phonation time ratio and pace (number of stressed words per minute) were the best predictors of fluency. Kormos and Dénes conclude that speaking fluency is not only a temporal phenomenon because linguistic accuracy cannot be disregarded when judging speaking fluency. They argue that "raters do not only look at speed and pace when intuitively judging someone's fluency, but consider other variables strongly related to proficiency such as accuracy and lexical diversity" (ibid). In this respect and following Lennon's definition of fluency (1990; 2000), Kormos and Dénes distinguish between 'low-order features of fluency', which are the temporal measures, and 'high-order features', which are mainly the accuracy and lexical diversity in a speech sample.

Another research by Iwashita, et al, (2008) uses a set of temporal fluency measures to analyze 200 recorded samples from L2 speakers of English, collected during piloting of the speaking section of TOEFL iBT test. The fluency variables included in this large-scale study are: filled pauses per minute (ums and ers), unfilled pauses per minute, repair, total pausing time (as a percentage of total speaking time), speech rate, and mean length of run. Iwashita, et al find that the three measures that reveal a clear relationship with L2 proficiency levels are: speech rate, silent pauses, and total pause time, with speech rate showing the strongest effect. Filled pauses, repairs, and mean length of run do not yield significant associations with proficiency levels.

The findings of Iwashita, et al, (2008) appear to conflict with the findings of Skehan and Foster's (1999) study. In their examination of the effect of task structure on learners' performance, Skehan and Foster focus mainly on the dysfluency measures. The authors count the number of repetitions, false-starts,

reformulations, and replacements to analyze the speaking fluency of their forty-seven low-intermediate subjects. Skehan and Foster find that these four measures prove to be valid predictors of fluency because they generate meaningful statistical significances in their study. .

This brief review of studies reveals that speaking fluency can be analyzed by means of a number of temporal measures, including rate, number of pauses, length of pauses, length of runs, and reformulations. The next section will review the most commonly used measures to analyze writing fluency.

3. 2. 2. Analyzing Writing Fluency

In the context of writing, researchers often differ in their choice of the measurements that can effectively analyze fluency. The first group of researchers prefers to use the product-based measures and the second group adheres for the employment of the process-based measurements.

3. 2. 2. 1. Product-Based Measures of Writing Fluency

Researchers adopting the product-based measures in their analysis of writing fluency focus on the quantitative elements of the text under examination. The first of the these elements is rate. Writing rate, which is measured in the speaking context as the number of words per minute or syllables per second, is examined in writing research by dividing the number of words by the time spent writing (Knoch, 2009: 85). Some researchers prefer to measure writing rate by dividing the total number of unique words (different words) by the square root of twice the total number of words produced by an individual writer. This formula was first used by Carroll (1967) in order to measure lexical complexity, but it was adopted by many writing fluency researchers, such as Bonzo (2008). Therefore, writing rate measures the quantity of words and structures within a text, without taking into account the complexity and correctness of the writer's language. According to this perspective, a fluent writer, as compared to a less fluent one, is able to construct a

high number of words and structures in a limited amount of time (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998: 22).

The second product-based measure is related to dysfluency markers. In speaking research, dysfluency markers are operationalized as reformulations, replacements, false starts, and repetitions. However, in the context writing, dysfluencies are measured by the number of revisions (self-corrections) a writer makes while producing a piece of writing (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001).

An important number of empirical studies have employed the productive-based measures for examining writing fluency. Sasaki's studies (2000, 2002, 2004, 2007) are typical examples of this approach to writing fluency investigation. In these studies, the participants' writing fluency is examined in terms of the mean total number of words written in the text (quantity) and the mean number of words written per minute (speed). The results of Sasaki's first study (2000) reveal that there is a significant difference between the expert and the novice teacher writers as well as between the more and the less-skilled student writers in terms of quantity and speed of production. In other terms, the mean total number of words written by the experts was more than the number of words produced by the novices. In addition, the expert writers are more fluent than the novices because they are significantly faster in producing the pieces of writing. Similarly, the mean number of words written by the skilled writers is significantly greater than the mean number of words produced by the less-skilled writers in this study. The more-skilled writers, as compared to the less-skilled students, are fast in compositing their texts because they produced longer pieces in a limited period of time.

In the second study, Sasaki employs writing rate for measuring his participants' writing fluency. The findings of Sasaki's study (2002) suggest that writing quantity and speed are significant indicators of fluency because they serve to quantitatively indicate the differences between the expert and the novice participants. In this study, the experts write significantly longer compositions and

are faster than the novices. Therefore, the participants' writing rate indicates that the expert writers are more fluent than their novice counterparts.

In a more recent study, Sasaki (2007) assesses the writing rate of his Japanese students of English by calculating the mean total number of words written in the text (quantity) and the mean number of words written per minute (speed). The findings of this investigation reveal that the study-abroad group of students' writing fluency increased in both quantity and speed, whereas the study-at-home students' fluency decreased. In other words, the first group write significantly longer than the second group. The study-abroad students produced 130.70 WPM at their mid-3rd-year of English studies and 177.00 WPM when they became 4th-year students. However, the study-at-home group wrote 118.67 WPM when they were mid-3rd-year students and 107.50 WPM when they reached their 4th-year of English studies. In regard to writing speed, the study-abroad group wrote significantly more rapidly than the at-home-group.

The study of Ellis and Yuan (2004) can also be considered an important example of the empirical research that have adhered to the product-based indicators to assess writing fluency. In contrast to Sasaki (2000, 2002, 2007), Ellis and Yuan calculate the participants' writing rate by counting the mean of the total number of syllables written per minute instead of words per minute. In addition to rate, the researchers consider the number of dysfluencies the participants produce when completing the tasks. In employing this fluency measure, Ellis and Yuan calculate the total number of words every participant reformulated (crossed out or changed) and divide them by the total number of words produced. The findings of this study, indicate that the pre-task planning group of students obtained the highest writing rate as compared with both the no-planner and the on-line planner groups. Therefore, the writing rate results indicate that the pre-task planning group are more fluent because they wrote faster than the other two groups of participants. With regard to the dysfluency measure used, the study's findings show that both the pre-task planning and the on-line planning groups produced fewer self-corrections.

Whereas, the no-planning group out-numbered the other two groups in terms of the number of self-corrections.

In addition to the product-based measures outlined in the previous section, another group of writing researchers have decided to analyze fluency by means of process-based measurements. This will be further explained in the next section.

3. 2. 2. 2. Process-Based Measures of Writing Fluency

Research studies adopting the process-based fluency measures consider writing as a reiterative skill that permits a writer to plan, monitor, and edit his text before submitting it for evaluation. Therefore, these studies base their analysis of fluency on online observations of their participants' writing processes. This approach to fluency analysis has been facilitated by the introduction of some advanced observation tools, such as the keystroke logging computer program. The latter enables researchers to focus on finer-grained writing process data and to assess complex fluency indicators, including pauses and bursts length.

One of these process-based indicators is the writer's pausing while composing a text. Knoch (2009) suggests that, in contrast to speaking, pausing (or breakdown fluency) is assessed in terms of the pause times during the writing process. According to this perspective, a writer is considered fluent, if he does not produce long pauses per minute while writing a text. However, it should be noted that Knoch (2009) does not clearly define the pausing duration for this measure as he only refers to the fact that the occurrence of pauses during the writing task is an indication of dysfluency.

In addition to pauses, burst length is considered as a process-based indicator of writing fluency. This fluency measure, which is transferred from speaking research, is defined as the number of words produced between pauses of 2 seconds length or more as a criterion used by most writing researchers (Chenoweth and Hayes, 2001). According to this perspective, a fluent writer produces texts in longer

bursts. In other words, he writes more words between pauses than a less fluent writer. Therefore, fluent writing processes are not frequently interrupted by pauses or/and revisions. Kaufer et al. (1986) identifies two types of bursts: P-bursts and R-bursts. According to this classification, P-bursts are bursts that finish with a pause and reflect the writer's planning capacity while producing a text. In writing fluency research, the length of P-bursts is used to identify the limitations of the writer's writing processes capacity (Hayes, 2009). On the other hand, R-bursts are burst that end with a pause for revision. This second category of burst length is used in research to determine the writer's working memory capacity while producing a piece of writing. Breuer (2019) claims that R-bursts can be attributed to a writer's lack of meta-cognitive awareness or writing skills. Furthermore, since R-bursts are often associated with cognitive overloads, they have "a negative influence on the fluency of the writing processes" (ibid).

Bursts length as a central measure of writing fluency is used in a series of studies by Chenoweth and Hayes (2001, 2003) in which they examine the correlation between students' linguistic experience and their L2 writing fluency. In these studies, both rate and bursts length were used to measure fluency. The experiments' results led the researchers to suggest that the length of bursts can effectively assess writing fluency because they reflect the writer's rapidity as well as productivity in producing a text. They observe that the fluent writer pauses less frequently than the non-fluent one and bursts length strongly correlates with fluent writing processes.

In brief, the discussion above indicates that defining and analyzing fluency constitutes a real challenge for researchers in the areas of speaking and writing. For each of these productive skill, researchers have differed in the definitions as well as the approaches they have adopted for measuring fluency. Therefore, in order to conduct the two experimental studies included in this thesis, it is necessary not only to define the term fluency in speaking as well as writing, but it is also

important to identify the appropriate measures for analyzing it. This will be further explained in the following section.

3. 3. Defining and Analyzing Fluency in this Thesis

The previous sections have discussed the various perspectives L2 researchers in the fields of speaking as well as writing have adopted in order to define and analyze fluency. Results of this discussion reveal that to date researchers have not been able to reach one universally applicable approach that could be useful in assessing learners' fluency. As the preceding sections of this chapter have explained, while an important number of L2 researchers have opted for the quantitative-based approach in measuring L2 fluency. Some other investigators have combined both the quantitative and the qualitative approaches. This disagreement makes L2 fluency a difficult research subject, particularly when it is related to the language productive skills of speaking and writing. Consequently, to measure fluency for research purposes, a researcher is required to find ways to practically define and analyze the concept (Segalowitz, 2010, 3-5).

Subsequently, in accordance with the objectives of this thesis, the definition of fluency is taken to mean the ability to produce the L2 (speak or write) with native-like rapidity, pausing, hesitation, or reformulation (Ellis 2003, 2008; Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005; Lennon 1990; Skehan 1998; Wolfe-Quintero, et al, 1998; Segalowitz, 2010; Götz (2013). In other terms, L2 fluency in this thesis refers to the sense of the fluent production the spoken or the written text can reflect. Therefore, the fluency measures adopted in the current thesis are typically product-based. They are applied to analyze the participants' fluency in terms of the temporal aspects of their spoken or written productions.

However, it is interesting to note that the current thesis includes two studies, each of which seeks to examine the impact of the independent variable (topic control) on one productive skill, namely speaking and writing. That is to say, although the adopted definition of fluency is the same for both speaking and

writing, the specificity of each skill and the divergent conditions required for their productions (See Chapter Two of this thesis) are taken into consideration in this thesis. The temporal measures used to analyze fluency in Study 1 (the impact of topic control on spoken fluency) and Study 2 (the impact of topic control on written fluency) are not identical. As a result, the findings of the two studies cannot be directly compared.

Before going forward in the explanation of the fluency measures adopted in this thesis, it seems necessary to review the major temporal measurements used by L2 researchers in the areas of speaking and writing. This review is provided in Table 3. 1. below.

Measure	Definition	Speaking Fluency Studies	Writing Fluency Studies
Speech/Writing Rate	The number of syllables produced per second or number of words per minute on a task. The number of pruned syllables (i.e. excluding dysfluencies) is counted and divided by the total number of seconds/minutes. -The total number of unique words divided by the square root of twice the total number of all words produced by a writer in his text.	-Ellis (1990) -Lennon (1990) -Freed (1995) -Kormos & Dénes (2004) -Iwashita, et al, (2008) -Skehan & Foster's (1999) -Chang (2002) -Rahimpour and Hazar (2007)	Sasaki (2000; 2002; 2004; 2007) Ellis & Yuan (2004) Chenoweth & Hayes' (2001) Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) Bonzo (2008) Cohen (2013) Dickenson (2014) Ferreira (2013) Bonyadi

		-Bui (2014)	(2014)
		-Bui & Huang (2018)	Rtting-Miki & Sholdt (2014)
Number of pauses	The total number of filled and unfilled pauses for each speaker.	-Lennon (1990) -Freed (1995) -Iwashita, et al, (2008) -Bui (2014)	
Pause Length	**1.** Total length of pauses beyond some threshold (e.g.. 1 second). **2.** The mean length of all pauses beyond the threshold. - The pause times during the writing process.	-Skehan (1999; 2003) -Ellis & Bara , 2005) -Lennon (1990) -Freed (1995) -Iwashita, et al, (2008)	- Knoch (2009)
Length of Runs	The mean number of syllables between two pauses of a pre-determined length (e.g. 1 second). This measure discounts dysfluencies.	-Ellis & Bara (2005) -Kormos & Denés (2014) -Lennon (1990) -Freed (1995) -Iwashita, et al, (2008)	
False Starts	Incomplet utterances/sentences (i.e. constitute fragments). They may or may not	-Skehan & Foster (1999)	

	be followed by reformulation.	-Rahimpour and Hazar (2007)	
Repetitions	Words, phrases, or clauses that are repeated without any modification whatsoever.	-Skehan & Foster (1999) -Rahimpour and Hazar (2007)	
Reformulations	Phrases or clauses that are repeated with some modification.	-Skehan & Foster (1999) -Rahimpour and Hazar (2007)	
Replacements	Lexical items that are immediately replaced by other lexical items.	-Skehan & Foster (1999) -Rahimpour and Hazar (2007)	
Dysfluencies	-The number of revisions a writer makes while producing a piece of writing		Ellis and Yuan (2004)
Burst Length	-The number of words produced between pauses of 2 seconds length or more.		-Chenoweth and Hayes (2001, 2003)

Table 3. 1. A Summary of The Temporal Fluency Measures Used in the Productive Skills' Studies

Table 3. 1. above summarizes the majors temporal measures of fluency together with the studies that have used them. By synthesizing the information presented in this table, it appears that the most commonly used measures in the speaking fluency literature are: rate, pausing, and runs. This is because they significantly correlate with subjective fluency ratings (Kormos & Denés, 2014; Chang, 2002; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). In contrast, repair fluency (false starts, repetitions, reformulations, and replacements) seems to be important only for some researchers (Skehan & Foster, 1999; Rahimpour and Hazar, 2007). Some researchers argue that using the repair measures for analyzing fluency does not seem to be appropriate, especially for those less advanced learners or those who have never been abroad. In this respect, Lennon (1990) shows that repair is "part of fluency development in the advanced learner may involve increased ability to reformulate, monitor and self-correct production on-line". Similarly, Freed (1995) writes: "There is a tendency for students who have been abroad , especially those whose speech is more advanced, to attempt linguistic expressions which they sometimes find don't work: they reformulate their speech producing more false starts than is evidenced in the speech of those who have never been abroad" (142).

Furthermore, Table 3. 1. lists two temporal measures that researchers in the field of writing have considered reliable fluency indicators, namely rate and self-correction. Therefore, Study 2 will consider the adoption of these two measures in analyzing the participants' writing fluency.

In the light of this reviewed literature and in line with the definition of fluency adopted, the following measures are considered appropriate for the two studies of the current thesis.

1. Fluency Measures in Study 1:

1 Speech rate
2. Number of Pauses
3. Length of Pauses

4. Length of Runs

2. Fluency Measures in Study 2:

1. Writing Rate

2. Dysfluencies or the number of Self-Corrections

The details of each of these measure and their applicability in the two studies will be provided in this thesis' research methodology chapter.

3. 4. Topic Control in the Foreign Language Classroom

3. 4. 1. Definition of the term "Topic"

According to McCarthy (1991: 132) there are a number of ways in which the term "topic" can be defined. At the formal level, a topic is the stretches of talk that are bounded by phonological markers (a change in the speaker's pitch) and/or lexical ones (using words or phrases like "now" and "by the way" to indicate a change in the conversation). At the pragmatic level, a topic can be described as a group of utterances that are perceived by speakers in a discourse as being relevant to one another. At the semantic level, a topic is defined according to single-word or phrasal titles speakers use to state what is being talked about (e. g. 'holidays', 'buying a house'). McCarthy suggests that although all the aforementioned approaches can validly describe the term "topic", the semantic definition tends to dominate the field of language teaching (ibid).

This semantic definition is shared by Brown and Yule (1983: 73) who consider both types of discourse, spoken and written, in their definition of topic. For Brown and Yule, a discourse topic is "what is being talked/written about". Since the purpose of the current research work is a pedagogical one, we will adopt the semantic definition of discourse topic proposed by Brown and Yule (1983). Therefore, the term topic in this thesis will be taken to mean what the speakers talk about and what the writers write about.

3. 4. 2. Teacher Versus Student Topic Control in the Foreign Language Classroom

3. 4. 2. 1. Theoretical Accounts of Topic Control and L2 Learning

Allowing a learner to control the discourse topic has been proved to be a significant factor for language development. In L1 naturalistic context, Wells and Montgomery (1981) distinguish between two dissimilar styles in which mothers interact with their children. The first one is described as a "supportive style" because the mother permits her child to both initiate and control topics and the second is called a "teaching style" because the mother prefers to control discourse by choosing the topic and providing evaluative feedback all along the conversation with her child. Extracts 1 and 2 below show this distinction.

Extract 1:	Extract 2:
A child (Mark) is talking to his mother about a man who was in the garden and has just left.	A mother is talking to her child (Thomas) about the guests who visited their home last weekend.
1. Mark: Where man gone? Where man gone?	**1. Thomas:** Biscuits.
2. Mother: I don't know. I expect he's gone inside because it's snowing.	**2. Mother:** Those were got specially — we had visitors at the weekend. Who came to see — Tommy? Who came in a car?
3. Mark: Where man gone?	**3. Thomas:** See Grannie Irene — e — car
4. Mother: In the house?	**4. Mother:** Grannie Irene's coming. But who came last weekend?
5. Mark: Uh?	**5. Thomas:** Auntie Gail in — a — train.
6. Mother: Into the house.	**6. Mother:** Auntie Gail's coming. They're coming on the train —yes.
7. Mark: No. No. Gone to shop, mummy.	**7. Thomas:** Colin in -a train.
8. Mother: Gone where?	**8. Mother:** Colin — Colin er — and Anne came in a <car>, didn't they?
9. Mark: Gone shop.	**9. Thomas:** Colin — Anne Colin — Anne
10. Mother: To the shop?	**10. Mother:** Yes.
11. Mark: Yeah.	**11. Thomas:** Colin — Anne Colin — Anne
12. Mother: What's he going to buy?	**12. Mother:** Colin and Anne came in the train.
13. Mark: er — biscuits.	
14. Mother: Biscuits — mm.	
15. Mark: Uh?	
16. Mother: Mm. What else?	
17. Mark: er– meat.	

18. Mother: Mm.	**13. Thomas:** In train. Auntie train.
19. Mark: Meat. er — sweeties. Buy a big — bag — sweets.	**14. Mother:** No, not auntie train — darling. Auntie Gail — and Grannie Irene — are coming on the train — on Friday.
20. Mother: Buy sweets?	
21. Mark: Yeah. M — er — buy — man — the man — buy — sweets.	**15. Thomas:** Auntie Gail — in — a - train.
22. Mother: Will he?	
23. Mark: Yeah.	

Figure 3. 1: Topic Control in L1 (From Wells and Montgomery 1981)

In Extract 1 above, the mother-child interaction style is highly supportive. The child initiates the topic with the opening question "Where man gone" and he stays in control of the topic throughout the conversation. The mother supports her child and encourages him to keep the conversation going on using a number of conversation strategies, including clarification request (e.g., 'Gone where?') and confirmation (e.g., 'To the shop? and 'Buy sweets?'). The effect of the child's nomination of this conversation topic can be clearly noticed in his utterances. When the mother allows her child the opportunity to choose the topic that he wants to talk about, the child's language becomes progressively more mature and complex.

Nevertheless, in Extract 2 the mother-child interaction style is typically didactic. Although the child begins the conversation by choosing a topic ('Biscuits'), the mother does not encourage him to continue talking about the same topic; she rather prefers to choose a topic of her own ('Who came to see Tommy?'). Throughout the conversation, the mother attempts to stimulates her child to talk by asking him questions (e.g., 'Who came to see — Tommy? 'Who came in a car?') and giving him a limited range of possible responses (e.g., 'Auntie Gail's coming'. 'They're coming on the train'; 'Colin' — 'Colin er — and Anne came in a <car>, didn't they?'). Despite of all the mother's attempts to attract her child's attention to the topic she has nominated, the child does not seem to be able express himself easily. In this conversation, the mother's topic control has a negative impact on her child's language. In contrast to the child's language in Extract 1, Thomas utterances in Extract 2 are repetitive and linguistically simple.

In L2 context, researchers have provided evidence that allowing learners the opportunity to control the discourse topic is a key factor in language learning. In his early work on interaction in L2 speaking classrooms, Hatch (1978, cited by Ellis, 1992) suggests that building a significant basis for interactional opportunities requires teachers to be flexible in giving learners the freedom to select topics for discussion in class.

Hatch's (1978) suggestion is further explained by some interactional hypothesis researchers. As it has been discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, the IH emphasizes the importance of input comprehension and meaning negotiation in facilitating language learning. Despite the large body of laboratory research, which has confirmed this assertion, another group of classroom studies has suggested that there is less genuine meaning negotiations going on in many L2 classrooms (e.g. Long & Sato, 1983; Pica & Long, 1986). Ellis and Fotos (1999) attribute this limited meaning negotiation opportunities between teacher-students and student-student in the L2 classroom to the fact that "negotiation is to a large extent dependent on learners' control of the discourse" (223). Teachers control of the discourse may actually inhibit learners from signaling their non-understanding and actively negotiating meaning, especially with their teacher. In such context, learners prefer either to wait for the teacher to make the meaning less difficult to them or they may abandon any attempt to comprehend (ibid). According to Ellis and Fotos (1999), the issue of students' hesitation to negotiate meaning in L2 classrooms can be effectively solved by encouraging them to control the discourse topic. When the student nominates the discourse topic, meaning negotiation opportunities increase. This is mainly because teachers do not hesitate "to negotiate when they fail to understand something a student has said" (ibid, 233).

In the same vein, Ellis (1984) claims that when students nominate the conversation topic themselves, their willingness to communicate in L2 increases. This is because topic-selection helps them to feel free to express their own meanings. This claim is also stressed by Ellis (1992) who considers topic-selection as important for L2 learning in a number of ways:

a. it enhances students' motivation;

b. it helps reduce the linguistic complexity for students;

c. it creates better opportunities for negotiating meaning when a communication problem occurs; and

d. it stimulates more extensive and more complex L2 production on the learner's part (p 44).

3. 4. 2. 2. Classroom Studies of Topic Control and L2 Learning

Although there is remarkably little research that has addressed the effects of topic control on L2 learning, a number of classroom studies have found that learners can benefit more from self-selected than from teacher-selected topics. In his ethnographic classroom research, Van Lier (1989) observes that teachers control "classroom interaction, undoubtedly, almost all the time". By deciding what, when, and how to talk about a topic, teachers interrupt the discourse flow and prevent inter-language development (ibid). Van Lier argues that L2 teachers need to offer their learners opportunities to take control of both discourse topic and turn-taking because these latter are essential strategies to a successful learning.

This perspective is accepted by Slimani's (1989) study on the effect of interaction on L2 learning outcomes. In this study, Slimani investigates a series of lessons taught to a group of adult EFL Algerian students. At the end of every observed lesson, Slimani asks the students to record on an "Uptake Recall Chart" the linguistic points they think they have learnt from the lessons they have attended. The findings of this study reveal that the classroom discourse is predominantly controlled by the teacher who excessively intervenes to raise topics for discussion without allowing the students enough opportunities to act in the same way. Nevertheless, the analysis of the lessons' transcripts shows that there are occasions when the teacher relinquish topic control to the students. Slimani finds that the students are able to recall an important amount of previously unknown linguistic items from lessons when the teacher offers them opportunities to nominate topics. This finding can be explained by the fact that "whatever is topicalized by the learners, rather than by the teacher, has a better chance of being claimed to have been learned". In other terms, in the classroom context, students'

control of the discourse topic has important positive impacts on L2 learning because it generates more comprehensible input and engages learners in meaningful interaction.

Another study by Ernst (1994) also discusses the positive impacts of students topic control on the quality of L2 classroom discourse. This study investigates the opportunities provided by the 'Talking Circle', a recurrent event in an elementary classroom, to practice and interact in the L2. This Talking Circle event constitutes of five phases: (1) getting ready, (2) entry into the circle, (3) a core phase, when the learners can speak about a topic of their own choice (4) the teacher's agenda, and (5) the moving on phase. Ernst selects a 16 minute talking circle lesson for an in-depth analysis that demonstrates the differences between the five phases in terms of topic development, the social demands imposed on the learners, and the communicative speech functions of both the teacher and the learners. Ernst's analysis of the data indicates that when the teacher controls the topic, the students' participation and language use is very restricted. However, during the phase when the students control the topics, the discourse is qualitatively richer.

In their qualitative study, Bonyadi and Zeinalpur (2014) examine students' perceptions about topic control in their writing classes. In this study, the participants were asked to record their perceptions about the teacher-assigned and the self-selected topics in form of reports, which were collected and qualitatively analyzed by the researchers. The findings of this study revealed that the participants positively perceived the self-selected topics. They considered this teaching practice as a source of motivation in their writing classes. However, a small number of students expressed their positive perception about the teacher-assigned topics in view that this type of topics allow them to feel more confident about their produced texts.

3. 5. Fluency as Related to Topic Control: A Literature Review

3. 5. 1. Effects of Topic Control on L2 Speaking Fluency

There is, in fact, remarkably very little research that has addressed the effects of topic control on speaking fluency. In general, researchers have chosen to investigate another aspect of discourse topic in the language classroom, namely topic familiarity. For instance, Chang (2002) examines the effects of the discourse topic on L2 learners' inter-language variation. One of the research purposes of this study is to describe the relationships between discourse topics and the grammatical complexity, the accuracy and the fluency of the participants' oral production. Chang's investigation includes two studies. In the first study, the researcher collects data from NS-NNS natural conversations (one NS and two graduate NNS). In the second study, he collects data from NNS presentations (six Taiwanese graduate L2 learners: three male and three female students). In both studies, Chang assesses fluency in terms of two major quantitative measures: speech time and speech rate. The time at talk is measured by counting the total amount of time spent by the speakers on each topic and the mean turn length is calculated by dividing the total speech time by the number of turns the individual participant took. The speech rate is measured by dividing the total speech time the participant spent talking by the total number of words and t-units produced, with excluding all the filled pauses (i.e., words like 'uh' and 'hmm') in the word count.

The findings of Chang's (2002) first study reveal that the discourse topic has a dramatic impact on the learners' speaking fluency. The amount of time the NNS participants spent on the familiar topics was more than the speech time they spent on the unfamiliar ones. Moreover, the NNS participants' average turn lengths were longer when the topics were familiar as compared to their turn lengths when the topics were unfamiliar. With regard to the speech rate measure, the participants' speech rates on the familiar topics were high in terms of both the total amount of words per minute and the number of t-units produced per minute.

Similarly, the effects of topic familiarity on L2 speaking fluency are indicated in Chang's (2002) second study. The findings of this study show that the mean length of time most of the participants spent in presenting the topics they are familiar with is longer than the mean length of time they spent on the unfamiliar topics. Most of the participants' speech rates were higher when they delivered presentations about familiar topics compared to their presentations about the unfamiliar topics. Therefore, the results of the fluency analysis in Chang's (2002) studies show that the discourse topic exerts a positive effect on the fluency area of the L2 learners' oral production. Most of the participants are more fluent on topics they are familiar with.

Rahimpour and Hazar (2007) examine the impact of L2 students' familiarity with the discourse topic on the complexity, accuracy, and fluency areas of their oral productions. This study involves twenty upper-intermediate students of English (six male and fourteen female students). Rahimpour and Hazar provide every individual participant with one familiar topic and another unfamiliar topic to speak about for about six minutes in class. To analyze fluency, the researchers adopt the measurement advocated by Skehan and Foster (1999) and Foster and Skehan (1998), which counts the number of words uttered by an individual speaker per minute. The participants' fluency levels were higher in the familiar topic task than the unfamiliar topic task. Similar to Chang (2002) and Ellis (2002), Rahimpour and Hazar (2007) argue that topic familiarity promotes performance in terms of speaking fluency because it involves learners in meaning negotiation and encourages them "to function as active speakers".

Another interesting study by Bui (2014) investigates the effects of the discourse topic on learners' fluency in speaking English as a foreign language. The study involves eighty participants who are asked to speak about two different topics: one is familiar and another one is unfamiliar. Bui uses two fluency categories: breakdown and repair fluency. Breakdown fluency includes eight temporal measures: (1) speech rate (total words per minute after deletion of filled

pauses, reformulations, replacements, false starts, and repetitions), (2) mean length of run (number of words uttered before any breakdown or repair), (3) mid-clause pause (number of pauses in the middle of a clause per one hundred words. A pause is measured as any break of 0.4 seconds or longer), (4) clause-end pause (number of pauses at the end of a clause per one hundred words), (5) mid-clause silence (the total length of pauses in the middle of a clause per one hundred words), (6) clause-end silence (the total length of pauses at the end of a clause one hundred words), (7) mid-clause pause length (the average length of pauses in the middle of a clause), and (8) clause-end pause length (the average length of pauses in the middle of a clause). In addition, repair fluency includes four measures: (1) reformulations, (2) false starts, (3) repetitions, and (4) replacements.

The study's results show that the opportunity to have a familiar topic to speak about proves to be a significant means that enables the participants to speak at a faster speech rate, with a longer stretch of words before encountering any pauses, repairs, or fillers. Furthermore, topic familiarity reduces the number as well as the average length of pauses and the total amount of silence in the middle of a clause. The study also reveals that topic familiarity is effective in shortening the total silence time between two clauses. Nevertheless, topic familiarity does not exert an important effect on the last measure of breakdown fluency analyzed in this study. That is to say, the number and the length of pauses at the end of clauses are not affected by topic familiarity. The results of the four repair fluency measures indicate that topic familiarity significantly reduces the number of repetitions, but it does not help reduce the other three repair measures (false starts, reformulations, and replacements).

In a more recent study, Bui and Huang (2018) investigate the effects of content familiarity on L2 fluency. The study uses the same speaking tasks in Bui (2014). The fifty-eight participants (twenty-one males and thirty-seven females) were asked to make two presentations: one on a familiar topic and one on an unfamiliar topic. The study includes eight categories of fluency measures: (1)

Speed, including both raw speech rate (the total raw words per minute, including filled pauses (e.g. *er* and *hmm*), incomplete words and repairs, divided by the total duration (in minutes) of the speech) and pruned speech rate (total words per minute after the deletion of filled pauses, repairs and incomplete expressions), (2) Mean length of run (the average number of words before encountering any pause, filler or repair), (3) Phonation time (the ratio of voicing time to the total time of utterance), (4) Mid-clause pauses, including the number of mid-clause pauses (the total number of pauses in the middle of a clause per 100 words), mid-clause pause length (the average length of pauses, measured in seconds, in the middle of a clause) and mid-clause silence total (the total silence time in seconds in the middle of a clause per 100 words), (5) Independent clause pauses, including the number of independent clause pauses (the total number of pauses at the end of an independent clause per 100 words), independent clause pause length (the average length of pauses, measured in seconds, at the end of an independent clause) and independent clause silence total (the total silence time in seconds at the end of an independent clause per 100 words), (6) dependent clause pauses, including the number of dependent clause pauses (the total number of pauses at the end of a dependent clause per 100 words), dependent clause pause length (the average length of pauses, measured in seconds, at the end of a dependent clause) and dependent clause silence total (the total silence time in seconds at the end of a dependent clause per 100 words), (7) Filled pauses, including the number of filled pause (the total number of filled pauses (e.g. *er, erm, hmm, eh, um, uh*) per 100 words) and the number of pseudo filled pauses (the total number of pseudo filled pauses (e.g. *well, like, you know*) per 100 words), (8) Repairs, including false start (utterances that are abandoned before they are completed per 100 words, same below), reformulation (repeated phrases or clauses with any modification to syntax, morphology, or word order), and repetition (words, phrases or clauses that are repeated verbatim without any kind of modification) and replacement (lexical items that are immediately substituted for another).

The findings of Bui and Huang (2018) show that topic familiarity exerts positive effects on L2 speaking fluency. The analysis of fluency in this study indicate that being familiar with the topic significantly increases the participants' speech rates (both raw and pruned speech rates) and phonation time, which helps the students to speak with less silence during their presentations. In addition, topic familiarity reduces the participants' number of repetitions. In contrast, topic familiarity does not have many positive effects on the other aspects of fluency, in particular the mean length of run; i.e., the participants do not produce longer stretches of words before breakdowns and repairs when they are allowed to speak about the topics that are familiar to them. Similar effects are revealed by the analysis of the other fluency measures, namely pauses and repairs. For these measures, the study shows that topic familiarity does not appear to be helpful in reducing the number of pauses and silence at the end of an independent clause. Furthermore, topic familiarity does not have any effects on the participants' filled pauses and other repairs (false starts, reformulations, and replacement).

3. 5. 2. Effects of Topic Control on L2 Writing Fluency

Unlike speaking, L2 writing researchers have shown an interest in investigating the effects of topic control on learners' fluency. However, it is interesting to note that for these researchers topic control is synonymous with the idea of students being given the right to self-select the topics of their writing tasks. In other terms, most of these research studies hypothesize that students' writing fluency will increase if the topic is self-selected rather than assigned by the teacher.

This hypothesis is a reflection of Elbow's work in the area of L1 writing. Elbow's work advocates the benefits of "free-writing" as a teaching technique through which the teacher permits his learners to write for a limited period of time (for at least ten minutes) without thinking about grammar correctness. For this researcher, free-writing is an effective technique that does not only help learners develop their writing fluency, but it has many other positive effects, such as reducing frustration and block. In this respect, Elbow (1998) writes:

The main thing about free writing is that it is *non-editing.* It is an exercise in bringing together the process of producing words and putting them down on the page. Practiced regularly, it undoes the ingrained habit of editing at the same time you are trying to produce. It will make writing less blocked because words will come more easily. You will use up more paper, but chew up fewer pencils (6).

In L2 writing research, Bonzo' (2008) study is regarded as a pioneering work that investigated the effects of topic modulation (the writing topics were modulated between instructors and students) on learners' fluency, complexity, and interest. This experimental study was conducted among four groups of Japanese students enrolled in a third-semester German class. For a period of eight weeks, the participants were asked to produce a ten-minute piece of writing about teacher-assigned and self-selected topics. The participants were also required to indicate their interest level as well as their general self-appraisal in the quality of their writings during the weeks of this study. In order to analyze writing fluency, Bonzo measured every participant's writing rate, by means of the total number of different words (Unique words) divided by the square root of twice the total number of all words. The findings of this analysis were correlated with the other two intervening variables, namely interest level and self-appraisal.

The study's results revealed that topic control had a positive impact on the participants' writing fluency, and a negative influence on their grammatical complexity. Furthermore, the study's findings showed that there were no significant correlation between topic control and the students' interest level. On the other hand, the findings indicated that there was a correlation between the participants' self-appraisal of the quality of their own writings and teacher-assigned topics. In other words, the students indicated higher levels of self-confidence when writing about the teacher-assigned topics.

Bonzo's (2008) study has been replicated by a number of L2 writing researchers. For instance, Ferriera (2013) examined the impact of topic control (teacher-assigned versus students' self-selected topics) on the writing fluency of a group of forty-seven Japanese female university EFL students. The study lasted for a period of four weeks, during which the writing topics were counterbalanced between the two groups of participants, i.e., for week 1 and 3, the first group was assigned to write about a topic selected by the teacher and the second group was allowed to choose the writing topic. In contrast, the topic control activity was counterbalanced between the two groups during week 2 and week 4 of this experimental study. In analyzing the students' writing fluency, Ferriera adopted the same formula used by Bonzo (2008) to calculate their mean rate. The findings of this study showed that the participants were able to express themselves more fluently with a large variety of words when asked to write about the self-selected topics. In this respect, the results of Ferriera's (2013) study are consistent with that of Bonzo (2008) and students' self-selected topics had have a positive impact on the students' writing fluency, which was measured in terms of rate only.

Another interesting study was conducted by Dickinson (2014) to explore the effect of topic control on the writing fluency of forty-six Japanese English university students. Similar to Bonzo (2008) and Ferriera's (2013), Dickinson alternated the control of the writing activities' topics from teacher to students during a period of four weeks. In order to analyze fluency, the researcher measured the participants rate in terms of the total number of unique words divided by the square root of twice the total number of words. The findings of this study indicated that topic control did influence the participants' writing fluency. In other terms, when given the right to choose their own topics, the participants displayed a higher level of fluency than when they were assigned topics by the teacher. Furthermore, the results obtained from the pre-and post-activity questionnaires revealed that the topic control activity contributed to some extent in enhancing the students' enjoyment of writing in English. On the other hand, the results showed that the activity did not show significant effects on the participants' self-efficacy.

The positive effects of topic control on writing fluency were also confirmed by Sponseller and Wilkins (2015). In line with Ferriera (2013) and Dickinson (2014), Sponseller and Wilkins (2015) study was a replication of Bonzo (2008). This experimental study investigated the impact of topic control on a group of seventy-five Japanese EFL university students who were assigned into two groups. The first group began with three weeks of teacher-assigned writing topics and ended with three weeks of self-selected topics. In contrast, the second group spent the first three weeks writing about self-selected topics and completed the treatment sessions with three weeks of teacher-assigned writing topics. At the end of the experiment, Sponseller and Wilkins asked the participants about their attitudes towards the self-selection activities by means of a post-study questionnaire. The findings of this research work were consistent with the other studies whose results claimed that topic control yielded significant impact on learners' writing fluency.

Conclusion

This third chapter reviewed the different approaches followed by researchers in order to define and analyze fluency in the fields of speaking and writing. The first sections of this chapter revealed that researchers have not yet found a common definition to the term fluency. This disagreement has affected the approaches they followed in order to investigate learners' fluency in both speaking and writing. According to the reviewed literature, in order to analyze fluency development, researchers are required to identify practical ways through which they can define and analyze the concept. Relevant to this, the third section of this chapter was devoted to the explanation of how fluency is defined and analyzed in this thesis.

The fourth and the fifth sections reviewed the existing literature related to the role of topic control as an instructional practice in the L2 classroom. According to the last section of this chapter, there is a severe shortage of classroom studies about the effects of topic control on learners' fluency in speaking as well as writing. In response to this research scarcity, two quasi-experimental studies were designed, each of which aimed at investigating the impact of topic control on learners'

fluency in these two language productive skills. More details about these two studies will be provided in the following chapters.

Chapter Four

Research Methods and

Procedures

Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to investigate the effects of topic control (teacher-assigned and self-selected topics) on EFL learners' fluency in speaking and writing. Therefore, the thesis includes two studies. Study 1 examined the effects of topic control on students' speaking fluency, and Study 2 targeted the impacts of the same independent variable on learners' writing fluency. The research design used for each of the two studies will be described in more details in this chapter.

4. 1. Research Methods and Procedures

4. 1. 1. Research Design

The two studies included in the present thesis adopted a quasi-experimental design involving pre-test, intervention, and post-test. The choice to use this design was justified by the fact that it aims to examine causal-like effects via hypothesis testing (Phakiti, 2015: 72). In other terms, the use of this research design proved to be helpful in answering the main research questions in both Study 1 and Study 2 of this thesis. It examined the effect of the independent variable (topic control) on the dependent variables (speaking fluency in study 1 and writing fluency in study 2).

In the two studies, the independent variable was manipulated through an intervention, and the effects of this intervention was observed on the dependent variable. In other terms, the researcher created different conditions that the participants were exposed to during the two studies. In Study 1 and Study 2, the participants experienced a student-self-selected topic condition and a teacher-assigned topic condition. The dependent variables in both studies (spoken and written fluency) were measured through a test as a research instrument that is typically associated with experimental research design (Phakiti, 2015: 28).

For an effective examination of the impacts of the independent variable (topic control) on the dependent variables (spoken fluency and written fluency), both Study1 and Study2 utilized the non-random assignment technique. The latter was chosen because the researcher was not able to randomly assign the studies' participants on the basis of chance due to fact that the studies of the current thesis took place at the English Department in the UB2, where the assignment of students into groups is decided by the administration. This situation is, in fact, similar to the situation described by Gliner et, al (2016):

> In some intact situations, such as classrooms within a single school, the assignment of students to different classrooms may be almost random (i.e., there was no intentional bias introduced in the assignment); in those cases, the strong quasi-experimental design is almost equivalent to a randomized experimental design.

Subsequently, in view that the students were randomly assigned into pedagogical groups by the department administration, the researcher had the control over who received the independent variable as she had the possibility to randomly assign the treatment to one group, and the other did not receive the intervention, reducing the level of bias in the research methodology (Abbuhl, et al, 2013; Phakiti, 2015: 63). Although a detailed description of the designs used for each of the two studies will be covered in the next sections, it is quite useful to provide a visual representation of the quasi-experimental research adopted in the current thesis. This is shown by Figure 4. 1. below.
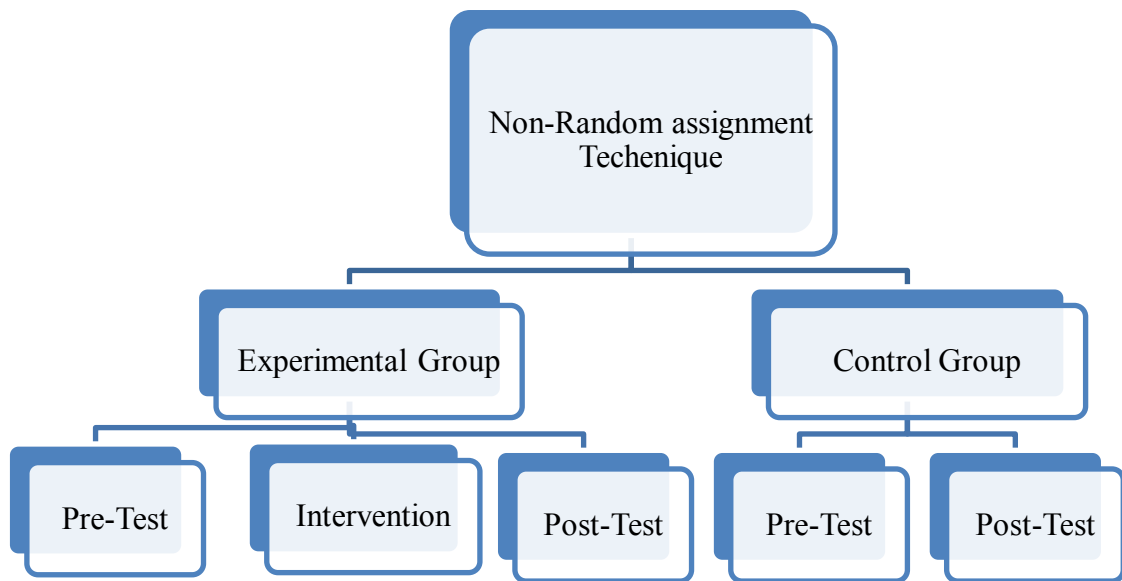
Figure 4. 1. A Visual Representation of the Quasi-Experimental Research Design Utilized in the Current Thesis

Figure 4. 1. summarizes the main elements of the quasi-experimental design adopted in this thesis. As it has been previously explained, these elements include, non-randomization, control and experimental groups, and tests. In both Study 1 and Study 2, the control and experimental groups' fluency levels were compared at the beginning as well as the end of the experiments by means of pre-and post-tests. The manipulation of these experimental research elements in Study 1 and Study 2 will be discussed in more details in the remaining sections. However, before moving to these details, it is interesting to explain the method followed to determine a workable sample population size for the present research.

4. 1. 2. Sample Size Calculation

Sampling size determination is an important step in research because it enables the researcher to select part of the population he wants to study (Dattalo, 2008: 06). Dhivyadeepa (2015: 24) suggests that there are a

number of practical observations about sample size. The first one is that experimental/quasi-experimental studies need smaller samples than survey type studies. The second observation is that the division of the sample population into smaller sub-groups may require the choice of larger samples to ensure adequacy in the sub-groups' size.

These observations were considered in the identification of the sample size for the two studies involved in this thesis. It is worth noting at this level that the same population was targeted in both Study 1 and Study2. This population comprised of 305 second year EFL students enrolled at the UB2. These 305 students were sub-divided by the English Department administration into five pedagogical groups. Therefore, the researcher decided to take a sample of two groups for each study, i.e., two groups for investigating the impact of topic control on spoken fluency and another sample of two groups for examining the effect of topic control on written fluency.

To calculate the sample size for both Study 1 and Study 2, the researcher employed the most commonly used formula, namely Steven K. Thompson sampling size equation (2012: 56-60). The latter is provided below:

$$ n = \frac{N \times (1 - p)}{[(N - 1 \times (d2 \div z2)] + p(1 - p)]} $$

Where,

n = sample size
N = population (305 in both studies of this thesis)
z = confidence level at 95 %
d = error proportion at 0,05
p = probability at 0,50

The application of the above formula revealed that the sample size required for each study is 171. Nevertheless, this required sample size was not maintained for a number of reasons. The first one was that the thesis includes two quasi-experimental studies, which made it very difficult for the researcher to involve a large sample in each. The second reason was that the two studies were conducted in a classroom environment where the students were assigned into pedagogical groups of about 60 members in each. Therefore, it was quite difficult to involve students from other groups for conducting the present studies.

4. 2. The Quasi-Experimental Studies

4. 2. 1. Study 1: The Effect of Topic Control on EFL Learners' Speaking Fluency

Study1 is an investigation of the impact of topic control on the participants' fluency in the speaking skill. This study is guided by one main research question and four sub-research questions, as shown below.

MRQ: What is the effect of topic control on EFL students' speaking fluency?

SRQ 1: How do students perceive the topic control practice in their speaking classes?

SRQ2: Will topic control influence the participants' perceived situational interest in their speaking classes?

SRQ3: Will self-selected topics result in higher intrinsic motivation of students in the speaking classes?

To answer the above research questions, the researcher opted for the use of the quasi-experimental research design.

4. 2. 1. 1. Participants

The study was conducted at the UB2 amongst second year undergraduate EFL students. The choice of the participants was based on a number of criteria. The first and the most important one was their English proficiency level. Student at the third and fourth semesters at this department have a sufficient language proficiency to orally communicate their ideas and thoughts in English. The second one was that at this level, the students engage in more regular speaking activities than during the previous two semesters (First year level students). Such criteria allow the participants to be more apt to develop their spoken fluency than students at a lower level.

The number of the participants in this study was 121, 55 male and 66 female students (this gender difference was neither controlled nor considered a variable in the present study). Since the study worked with two pre-existing groups, the participants were already organized by the administration into two groups (group 3 and group 4), with 60 and 61 students enrolled respectively in both groups during the academic year 2019-2020.

4. 2. 1. 2. Experimental Procedures

As stated previously, topic control (teacher-assigned and student-selected topics) constitutes the treatment in this study, which lasted for a period of five months. Before the beginning of the study, the researcher named Group 4 as the experimental group (61 students) and Group 3 as the control group (60 students). Both groups took the pre-test one week before the start of the treatment sessions.

The treatment began in the second week of November 2019. In order to assure an effective manipulation of the variables, the researcher took a number of measures, which are summarized in the following lines.

1. Counterbalanced Procedure

As a first measure, the researcher decided to undertake two initial steps. First, she sub-divided the experimental group into two smaller sub-groups, with 31 students in Group A and 30 students in Group B. Second, she followed the counterbalanced procedure. The latter is commonly used in research to control the order in which a particular condition occurs (Edgington, 2007: 116). In the present study, the researcher used counterbalancing to control for order effects. Table 4. 2. below summarizes the counterbalanced design used in Study 1.

Experimental Sub-groups	Month 1 November		Month 2 December		Month 3 January		Month 4 February		Month 5 October	
A	Weeks 2&3	Week 4	Weeks 1&2	No Classes Winter Holidays	Week 1	No classes Exams Period	Weeks 1&2	Weeks 3&4	Weeks 1&2	Weeks 3&4
	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts		S.S.Ts		T.A.Ts	S.S.TS	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts
B	Weeks 2&3	Week 4	Weeks 1&2		Week 1		Weeks 1&2	Weeks 3&4	Weeks 1&2	Weeks 3&4
	S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts		T.A.Ts		S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts

Table 4. 1. Representation of the Counter-balanced Design Used in Study1

As Table 4. 1. above shows, during the first weeks of months 1, 2, 4, and 5 the participants in Group A were assigned topics to speak about by the researcher. During the same period, the participants in Group B were allowed to select their own topics. For the second two weeks of months 1, 3, 4, and 5, the researcher counterbalanced the topic control activity. During these weeks, the speaking topics of the students in Group A were controlled by the researcher while the students in Group B were given the opportunity to control their speaking topics.

The assigned topics were chosen from the teaching materials and corresponded to the lessons teachers were delivering during the study as it is shown in the following table.

Lesson	Session	Topic
(1) **Interviewing in English**	**1**	-Pair 1: The effects of video games on children - Pair 2: the deterioration of students research skills -Pair 3: The importance of competition in the learning process -Pair 4: Security cameras and people's privacy -Pair 5: Gender equality in your country -Pair 6: Leading a successful life
	2	-Pair 7: Education in your country

		-Pair 8: Steps to maintaining a healthy lifestyle
		-Pair 9: Shopping on the internet
		-Pair 10: The qualities of a good leader
		-Pair 11: Homelessness in your country
		-Pair 12: Students dropping out of schools
		-Pair 13: Violence in schools
		-Pair 14: A successful career
		-Pair 15: Tourism in Algeria
(2) **Oral Presentation**	**1**	- Pair 1: Sleeping problems
		- Pair 2: Air pollution
		- Pair 3: International Women's Day
		- Pair 4: Economy in the United States
		- Pair 5: Education in Britain
		- Pair 6: Distance learning
		- Pair 7: Thanksgiving
	2	- Pair 8: Education in Algeria
		- Pair 9: Economy in Britain
		- Pair 10: Family and marriage in the United States

		- Pair 11: Family and marriage in Britain
		- Pair 12: How can technology improve learning?
		- Pair 13: Artificial intelligence
		- Pair 14: How can social media be dangerous for children?
		- Pair 15: The history of Jazz
(3) **Academic Discussion**	**1**	- Pair 1: Is life today better than life in the past?
		- Pair 2: Do people have better manners today than before?
		- Pair 3: Travelling has become easier and cheaper. What has it changed in people's lives?
		- Pair 4: Does technology connect or isolate people?
		-Pair 5: What personal qualities do you have that help you deal with conflict, challenge, and adversity?
		-Pair 6: What are the five most important decisions in a person's life?
		-Pair 7: Give your opinion about people who use social media to try and raise interest in themselves.
	2	-Pair 8: Which do you think is better: (1) being the worst in a group of highly proficient people? or (2) being the best in a group of less proficient people?
		-Pair 9: Do you think that a person should make decisions uninfluenced by other people's opinion?

		-Pair 10: Do human beings need to work to be happy?
		-Pair 11: Teaching life skills at schools.
		-Pair 12: Of the two, which is more important: (1) having talent or (2) working hard?
		-Pair 13: Does classroom technology enhance your way of learning?
		-Pair 14: What do you think is the most wonderful aspect of learning another language?
		-Pair 15: Which are easier to manage/control: (1) thoughts or (2) feelings?

Table 4. 2. Teacher-Assigned Topics Used in Study 1

The table above displays the Teacher-assigned topics used to conduct the present study. Such topics were taken from the first, second, and third lessons of the second year L.M.D Listening and Speaking Course content. As it is shown in the table, the first lesson is entitled "Interviewing in English" Accordingly, the main objective of this lesson is to help students develop their questioning-and-answering skills. To fulfill this objective, the teacher/researcher began the lesson by explaining the necessary language structures that the students may use when practicing interviews in class. Such structures include, confirmation expressions (e.g., Did you really think that ...? But, you said earlier that ...), as well as interruption and contradicting expressions (e.g., Hold on a minute, please, ..., Can I just butt in here?).This theoretical part of the lesson was followed by practice sessions during which the teacher/researcher asked the participants in both Group A and Group B (by following the counterbalancing procedure) to prepare radio or TV interviews about a number of assigned topics.

According to Table 4. 2. above, the teacher-assigned topics for Months 2 and 3 of the current study were taken for the second lesson of the Listening and Speaking Course content. In this lesson, the teacher/researcher teaches the students how to deliver presentations in English, by explaining the different parts of an oral presentation (i.e., the introduction, body, and, conclusion) and highlighting the sign-posting language (e.g., First, ... Then, ... to conclude, ...), which they may use in their own presentations. This first part of the lesson was followed by practice sessions during which the participants in Groups A and Group B were required to deliver oral presentations of about a set of assigned-topics, which are mentioned in Table 4. 2.

For Months 4 and 5 of the present study, the assigned topics were taken from the third lesson of the Listening and Speaking course. The lesson is entitled "Academic Discussion" and it aims at helping students to develop their discussion skills in English. To begin the lesson, the teacher/researcher focused on explaining what and how to conduct a small group discussion in English. She also taught them a number of useful discussion expressions for showing agreement/disagreement (e.g., yes, I agree with ..., Yes, that's right, That's not always the case because...), acknowledging ideas (e.g., Yes, OK, but..., I see what you mean, but...), giving reasons (e.g., This is due to..., Because/Since...), giving evidence (e.g., For instance..., For example...), and giving opinions (e.g., I think (that)..., I believe (that)...). This theoretical part of the lesson was followed by practice sessions. During these sessions, the researcher provided her participants in both Group A and Group B with a list of assigned topics that required them to prepare academic discussions in English.

2. Designing the Topic Control Activities

In designing the topic control activities, the researcher attempted to consider the three main self-determination constructs of autonomy,

competence, and control. As it has been discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, any choice provision experience that fails to support some or all these constructs may lose its power to enhance intrinsic motivation and the related performance outcomes. Therefore, throughout the five months of the present study, the researcher pursued a number of steps, which were to support the participants' perceptions of autonomy, competence, and control. These steps are explained in the next few lines.

1. Before the beginning of the treatment sessions, the researcher informed her participants in each sub-group (of the experimental group) that the speaking activities for semesters 3 and 4 were based on pair-work and that they were allowed to choose their partners. The rationale behind this measure was that the researcher did not want to interfere in forming the speaking activity pairs in view that this behavior may affect the participants' perceptions of autonomy and control.

2. The researcher explained to the study's participants in both Groups A and B that the grades they would receive would be based on the completion of their speaking activities rather than on performances. The purpose behind this step was that in this particular context, grades may be considered as a sort of rewards. Following this second step, the researcher attempted to avoid using self-selection and rewarding simultaneously because this fusion would not allow an accurate examination of the effects of topic control on the participants' fluency as well as intrinsic motivation.

3. As a third step, the researcher assured her study's participants that every pair of students would receive feedback at the end of each performance. In fact, the researcher considered this step as a way to make the topic control activities an experience that sustains the students' perceived competence.

4. The fourth step the researcher undertook was related to the type of choice provision used in this experiment. Following this step, which was

pursed during the self-selection sessions, the researcher explained to the participants in both groups A and B that they were free to choose their own topics, without any sort interference from the teacher. In other words, the students were made aware that they would be neither judged on the appropriateness of the chosen topic nor on the way of doing the activity at hand. The rationale behind this step was that the researcher was seeking to provide her participants with an autonomous form of self-selection, which had the power to elicit their sense of volition and control as important aspects of autonomy (See the discussion of self-selection as autonomy-supportive in Chapter One of this thesis).

A week after the end of the treatment sessions, both the experimental and control groups received the post-test, which was considered as the final step to examine the effects of topic control on the participants' spoken fluency. The content, credibility, and validity of the tests used in the present study will be presented in the next section.

4. 2. 1. 3. Data Collection Instruments

4. 2. 1. 3. 1. The Speaking Pre and Post-Tests

To examine the effects of topic control on the participants' spoken fluency, the researcher used the Cambridge Advanced (CAE)[5] Speaking tests. The CAE speaking test contains four separate parts: interview (part 1), long turn (part 2), collaborative task (part 3), and discussion (part 4). Although the test's parts are equally important, time constraint and the large number of the students involved led the researcher to employ two parts only in the study's pre and post tests.

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[5] Cambridge Advanced Speaking Test is available on *https://www.cambridgeenglish.org*

The two parts of the CAE speaking test, namely part 3 and part 4 were specifically selected because they corresponded to the purpose of the present study. Both the collaborative and discussion parts are paired format tasks, which could provide opportunities for the participants, rather than the assessor (the researcher), to control the discourse and create more balanced peer-peer interactional possibilities. In the words of Skehan (2001), the paired format tasks "enable a wider range of language functions and roles to be engineered to provide a better basis for oral language sampling with less asymmetry between participants". Therefore, this type of speaking tasks was considered a reliable means to gather data for this study.

As it is shown in Appendix A, the pre and post tests deployed in this study was approximately 15 minutes long and contained tasks: collaborative and discussion between two students. The collaborative task asked every pair of participants to talk about a given topic for about five minutes. In order to help the participants in idea generation, the task provided a diagram, which included one single question and a set of ideas to discuss. In the first few minutes, the collaborative task required the pairs to answer the main question while connecting the suggested ideas together. In the last minute, the pairs were expected to reach a decision about the best/worst/most interesting option suggested in the diagram.

The discussion task was, in fact, a continuation of the discussion that had been raised in the previous collaborative task. Every pair of participants were given a list of questions to use in their discussion of the topic at hand. In this task, the students were expected to answer the questions while engaging in a long conversation, which could last for about 10 minutes. It should be noted at this level that the topics in the post-test are similar, but not identical to the ones used in the pre-test tasks (See Appendix A).

As it has been previously noted, the control and experimental groups took both the pre and the post tests. While the pre-test was administered one week before the treatment began, the post-test was conducted a week after the last session of the study's experiment. In administering the tests, the researcher took into consideration some environmental factors. That is to say, the speaking tests required a quiet room, which could enable the students to concentrate while taking the tests. This condition was facilitated by the English Department administration. Such an appropriate environmental condition permitted the researcher to record the participants' spoken outputs in an adequate way.

In addition to the pre and post-tests, a questionnaire was administered to the experimental group participants (Appendix B). The main objective of this questionnaire was to investigate the students' perceptions of topic control in their speaking classes. The following section will provide more details about the students' questionnaire.

4. 2. 1. 3. 2. The Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire sought to gain insight into how the study's undergraduate participants perceived and experienced topic control in their speaking classes. It comprised three parts. The first part consisted of a set of close as well as open-ended questions targeting the participants' perceptions of both teacher-assigned and student-selected topics in their speaking classes. In the first and second questions, the students were asked to indicate their views about the familiarity level of their teacher-assigned topics (Q1: Do you find the topics assigned by your speaking teacher familiar to you?), and their perceived motivation (Q2: Do you feel motivated to develop a topic assigned to you by your teacher?). In the third question and the fourth questions, the students were asked about their perceived performance when talking about the teacher-assigned topics (Q3: How do you perceive your performance when speaking about a teacher-

assigned topic? Excellent/Very good/Good/Average/Bad) and to state the major difficulties that face them when speaking about the assigned topics (Q4: What are the difficulties that you encounter when speaking about a teacher-assigned topic?).

In the fifth, sixth and seventh questions, the students were instructed to indicate their perceptions about the self-selected topics as a teaching practice in the speaking classroom (Q5: Did you like the idea of self-selected topics in your writing classes? Q6: Do you think that free topics is a teaching practice that can motivate you to speak in English without waiting for any sort of rewarding (for example adding marks) from your teacher's part?; Q7: How do you perceive your performance when speaking about the self-selected topics?/Excellent/Very Good/Good/Average/Bad).

The second part of the questionnaire contains a set of items to assess the participants' levels of situational interest after experiencing topic control as a teaching practice in their speaking classes. This part consists of three elements related to (1) attention, (2) effort and persistence, and (3) experience of flow or having been totally involved in the activity (Schraw et al. 2001; Schraw and Lehman 2001; Mitchell, 1993).

Attention is measured by two items: (1. The topic control practice grabbed my attention), and (2.The topic control practice made the class so exciting, it was easy to pay attention to). Effort and persistence were assessed by two items: (3. I put in a lot of effort during the topic control experience), and (4. I wish we could still continue doing topic control in my speaking class for a while). And finally, the experience of flow was measured by one item: (5. When doing the topic control tasks, I was so involved that I forgot everything around me). The participants rated their perceived situational interest on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Not true at all) to 5 (Very true for me) (See Appendix B).

The third part of the questionnaire is an adapted version of the Post-Experimental Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (PE-IMI) developed by Ryan and Deci (2005)[6]. The original version of this PE-IMI is a self-report that can be used in the post-experimental phase to ascertain the participants' intrinsic motivation levels. It contains 7 scales measuring (1) interest/enjoyment, (2) perceived competence, (3) effort/importance, (4) pressure/tension, (5) perceived choice, (6) value/usefulness, and (7) relatedness. For the purpose of this thesis, we selected 4 subscales, namely, Interest/enjoyment, Perceived competence, Perceived choice, and Pressure/tension. Every subscale comprised a group of items, which were randomly ordered in the questionnaire as it is shown in the following table:

IMI Subscales	Items
Interest/Enjoyment	1, 5, 8, 10, 14 ®, 17, 20
Perceived Competence	4, 7, 12, 16, 22
Perceived Choice	3, 11 ®, 15, 19 ®, 21 ®
Pressure/Tension	2, 6®, 9, 13®, 18®

® represents the negative statements in the questionnaire, which were reversed in the study's data analysis phase.

Table 4. 3. The number of IMI Items as They Appear on Study1 Students' Questionnaire

The participants were instructed to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement by rating the questionnaires' items on a five-point scale,

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[6] Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2005). Intrinsic motivation inventory (IMI). *available online: https://selfdeterminationtheory.org*

where scale "1" indicates that the given statement is "not at all true", scale "3" shows that the statement is "neutral", and scale "5" means that the statement is "very true" for the student.

In order to establish the questionnaire's validity, the researcher conducted a pilot study with a group of four teachers: two of them were in charge of the speaking expression module at the English Department, UB2, and two research methodology teachers from the English Department at UB2 and University of ADRAR, Algeria. The comments provided by these teachers were taken into consideration by the researcher in the revision of several items in the questionnaire form.

After these modifications, the researcher sought to test the questionnaire's reliability by means of a pilot study with a group of 30 students. The pilot testing students' answers were used mainly for testing the questionnaire's reliability and were not included in the study's findings. The results of the pilot were tested using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS software (Version 20). The following table displays the final reliability coefficients for the questionnaire.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,866	30

Table 4. 4: Reliability Statistics of Study1 Students' Questionnaire

As it is illustrated in Table 4. 4. the general reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was good (α =0,866). The pilot test results indicated that the

questionnaire possessed a satisfactory level of reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein,1994).

4. 2. 1. 4. Data analysis

4. 2. 1. 4. 1. Analyzing the Speaking Pre and Post-Tests

Data collected from the pre and post-tests were analyzed for spoken fluency during the data collection period. The analysis of the spoken data was conducted following two stages. The first one was by recording and transcribing the data. During this stage, all pre and post-tests were audio-recorded using a high quality digital voice recorder. In order to accurately associate the participants with their speech samples for the analysis stage, every audio-recording was given a code. For example, the pre and post-tests recordings of the first pair in the experimental group was named Exp. Pr. 1 (pre-test sample) and Exp. Ps 1 (post-test sample). A similar methodology was used for coding the speech samples of the control group. For instance, the pre and post-tests recordings of the first pair in the control group was coded as Con. Pr. 1 (pre-test sample) and Con. Ps 1 (post-test sample). All the participants' audio-recordings were later transcribed manually by the researcher.

Once the recordings were transcribed, the researcher turned to the data analysis stage. This stage began by analyzing the transcribed data according to the fluency measures adopted in this study. That is to say, all the participants' pre and post-tests were examined in terms of speech rate, the mean number of pauses, the mean length of pauses, and the mean length of runs. Table 4. 4. below presents how each of these temporal fluency measures was calculated in this study.

Speaking Fluency Measures	Calculations
Speech Rate	The total number of words produced by the individual student in the speech sample was counted and divided by the total number of minutes.
Pauses	The total number of filled and unfilled pauses for the individual student in the speech sample.
Length of Pauses	The total length of pauses above 1 second.
Length of Runs	The mean number of syllables produced by the individual student in the speech sample between two pauses of 1 second length each.

Table 4. 5: Temporal Fluency Measures Used in Study1

As it is shown in the above table, four temporal measures were applied in order to analyze the participants' spoken fluency before and after the treatment sessions. Accordingly, speech rate was analyzed in words per minutes, i.e. all the words produced by the individual speaker were counted. This excluded all types of dysfluencies, such as self-corrections, repetitions, filled, and unfilled pauses. In addition, any sort of non-verbal sounds, like coughing or laughing were excluded from the word counts.

The participants' sample speeches were also analyzed in terms of the number and length of pausing. That is to say, the total number of pauses in every individual speaker's output were counted. The analysis included all instances of filled pauses, such as er/em/eh/erm. It also considered all sorts of unfilled pauses, which were indicated in the audio-recording by the

periods of silence the individual speaker made during the allotted speech time.

Furthermore, the participants' fluency was analyzed by counting the mean length of runs. This measure was applied by calculating the mean number of syllables uttered by the individual student between two pauses of 1 second each.

Once the participants' speech samples were examined for fluency, the statistical analyses were performed by means of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences , also known as SPSS (Version 20). During this stage, the researcher entered the quantitative data collected from the speaking tests into the SPSS sheet. The calculated fluency means for both the experimental and control group were compared before and after the treatment period. The results of the analysis will be presented in the next chapter.

4. 2. 1. 4. 2. Analyzing the Students' Questionnaire

The students' responses to the three sections of the post-study questionnaire were numerically coded and analyzed using the SPSS, version 20. Therefore, the close-ended questions were quantitatively analyzed by calculating the percentages of the participants' answers to them. On the other hand, the qualitative data drawn from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively by coding the students' answers and finding themes. Data collected from the likert scale items in the second as well as the third part of the questionnaire were quantitatively treated by means of calculating the number, percentages, means, and standard deviations for the five scales (ranging from Not at all true to Very true) on the students' questionnaire. The interpretation of the results obtained from the likert scale items was based on the evaluation criteria presented in the following table.

Evaluation Criteria	Score Interval (Mean)
High Level	3,40-5
Moderate Level	2,60-3,39
Low Level	1-2,59

Table 4. 6.: Evaluation Criteria Used to Analyze the Likert Scale Items in the Students' Questionnaire for Study1

As it is shown in Table 4.6. above, answers with "Very true" and "True" were considered High level, answers with "Not true at all" and "Not true" were regarded as Low Level, and answers with "Neutral" were viewed as Moderate Level. The data obtained from the three parts of the students' questionnaire was displayed in tables and figures in order to facilitate our interpretation and discussion of the study's results, as it will be explained in the next chapter.

4. 2. 2. Study 2: The Effects of Topic Control on EFL Learners' Writing Fluency

The major objective of Study 2 is to investigate the effect of topic control EFL learners' fluency in writing. To achieve this objective, the study raises one main research question and three related sub-research questions.

MRQ: What is the effect of topic control on EFL students' writing fluency?

SRQ 1: How do students perceive the topic control practice in their writing classes?

SRQ2: Will topic control influence the participants' perceived situational interest in their writing classes?

SRQ3: Will self-selected topics result in higher intrinsic motivation of students in the writing classes?

To answer the above research questions, the researcher conducted a quasi-experimental study with two groups of EFL participants. This will be explained in the following sections.

4. 2. 2. 1. Participants

The participants in Study 2 were members of two second year pre-existing intact groups at the department of English, UB2. The number of students in both groups totaled 127, with 65 students in Group 1 and 62 students in Group 2. The choice of the students' academic level was for a number of reasons. First of all, at this level, the students have a sufficient amount of grammar and vocabulary knowledge, which allows them to participate in this fluency development study. Second, the second year writing syllabus engages students in a number of academic writing activities, such as argumentative essay writing, which indicates that the selected participants are more apt to produce long and fluent pieces of writing. These factors encouraged the researcher to conduct her study with this group of participants.

4. 2. 2. 2. Experimental Procedures

Study 2 began in October 2019 and lasted for a period of six months. It should be noted at this level that the lockdown period caused by COVID

19 prevented the researcher from leading consecutive treatment sessions for this study. As a result, the last sessions of the quasi-experiment (Month 6) were postponed to the of November of academic year 2020-2021 (See Table 4. 7. below). Before the beginning of the treatment sessions, the researcher called Group 1 the experimental group and Group 2 the control group. Both groups took the same pre-test one week before the treatment. The experimental procedures pursued in Study 2 can be outlined as follows:

1. Counterbalanced Procedure

For a better manipulation of the experiment, the researcher followed two major procedures. First, she subdivided the experimental group into smaller sub-groups with 31 participants in Group A and 32 participants in Group B. Second, she adopted the counterbalanced design. In line with Study 1 discussed in the previous section, counterbalancing the topic control activities was used to control for order of the treatment effects. The design is shown in Table 4.7. below.

Experimentl Sub-groups	Month 1 October		Month 2 November		Month 3 December		Month 4 January		Month 5 February		Month 6 November	
A	Week 3	Week 4	Week 2	Weeks 3&4	Week 2	No classes Winter Holidays	Week 1	No Classes Exams Period	Weeks 2&3	Week 4	Weeks 2&3	Week 4
	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts		S.S.Ts		T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts
B	Week 3	Week 4	Week 2	Weeks 3&4	Week 2		Week 1		Weeks 2&3	Week 4	Weeks 2&3	Week 4

	S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts		T.A.Ts		S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts	S.S.Ts	T.A.Ts

Table 4. 7. Representation of the Counter-balanced Design Used in Study 2

Table 4. 7. above shows that Group A was assigned topics to write about during the first weeks of Months 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 while Group B was given the right to self-select the topics during the same period. Nevertheless, the topic control activities were counterbalanced during the last weeks of Months 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6. During this period, Group A was allowed to write about self-selected topics and Group B was assigned topics by the researcher.

The teacher-assigned topics used to conduct the present study were taken from the teaching materials and corresponded to the Second Year Reading and Writing Course content. This is illustrated by following table.

Lesson	Seesion	Topics
(1) **Opinion Essays**	1	- Write a well-structured essay about the following topic: **Give your opinion about banning cell phones in university classrooms.**
	2	-Write a well-structured essay about the following topic: **Give your opinion about working mothers.**
(2) **Cause/Effects** **Essays**	1	- Write a well-structured essay about the following topic: **Reasons of divorce.**
	2	- Write a well-structured essay about the following topic: **The effects of air pollution.**
(3) **Comparison/Contrast** **Essays**	1	- Write a well-structured essay about the following topic: **Compare the benefits of eating fast food to those of eating home-cooked meals.**
	2	Write a well-structured essay about the following

			topic: **Contrast between Backpacking or Staying in Hotels**
(4) **Descriptive essays**	1		- Write a well-structured essay about the following topic: **Describe your home to someone who has never visited it.**
	2		Write a well-structured essay about the following topic: **Describe your best friend and how you met for the first time.**
(5) **Discussion Essays**	1		Write a well-structured essay about the following topic: **Examine the arguments for and against the use of technology in the classroom?**
	2		Write a well-structured essay about the following topic: **Today more and more young children have electronic gadgets such as computers and mobile phones. Some people say that this is a positive development.** *Do you agree or disagree?*

Table 4. 8. Teacher-Assigned Topics Used in Study 2

As it is shown in the table above, the teacher-assigned topics used to conduct the present study were taken from the Second Year Reading and Writing Course content. During the six months of the current study, the participants in both Group A and Group B were asked to develop different types of essays, including opinion, cause-effects, comparison-contrast, descriptive, as well as discussion essays. Each of these practice sessions was preceded by a theoretical lesson, in which the teacher/researcher explained how to write a specific essay type.

2. Designing the Topic Control Activities

Similar to Study 1, the researcher designed the topic control activities of Study2 by taking into account the self-determination constructs of autonomy, competence, and control. Accordingly, throughout the six

months of the treatment sessions, the researcher pursued a number of methodological measures, which can be outlined as follows:

1. In order to sustain the sense of autonomy and control, the researcher informed the participants that their writing activities for semesters 3 and 4 were to be done individually in class without the teacher's interference in the writing process. In other terms, the researcher made the students aware that no pre-writing activities would occur before any writing session. The objective behind this first measure was to reduce the factors that might influence the learners' writing productions, such as the language provided by the teacher and task familiarity level.

4. The fourth step the researcher undertook was related to the type of choice provision used in this experiment. Following this step, which was pursed during the self-selection sessions, the researcher explained to the participants in both groups A and B that they were free to choose their own topics, without any sort interference from the teacher. In other words, the students were made aware that they would be neither judged on the appropriateness of the chosen topic nor on the way of doing the activity at hand. The rationale behind this step was that the researcher was seeking to provide her participants with an autonomous form of self-selection, which had the power to elicit their sense of volition and control as important aspects of autonomy (See the discussion of self-selection as autonomy-supportive in Chapter One of this thesis).

2. As a way to ensure an accurate examination of the effects of topic control on the participants' writing fluency and intrinsic motivational level, the researcher averted the use of rewarding alongside the self-selection experience. In this context, the researcher informed the participants in both groups that she would grade them on the completion of the writing activities rather than on their performances.

3. To support the participants' perceptions of competence while doing the topic control activities, the researcher informed them that she would give them feedback on their productions at the end of each writing session.

The post-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups one week after the conclusion of Study2's treatment sessions. The content, credibility, and validity of the pre as well as the post-test used in this study will be discussed in the following section.

4. 2. 3. Data Collection Instruments
4. 2. 3. 1. The Writing Pre and Post-Tests

To examine the effects of the treatment (topic control) on the students' writing fluency, the study utilized a pre and a post-test. The writing tests were administered to the participants in both experimental and control groups before and after the six months treatment sessions. The pre and the post-tests used in the present study were adopted from the IELTS writing test, Task 2[7].

The researcher choose Task 2 as a means to test the participants' writing fluency in the present study for two main reasons. The first one was related to the nature of the task itself. Task 2 of the IELT writing test requires test-takers to express their ideas about a given topic in an argumentative-based essay. The use of this task in the present study enabled the researcher to focus on testing writing fluency without being obliged to devote time to explain the argumentative essay, which formed an important part of the second year level course objective. The second reason was related to the participants as well as the study's objective. The researcher opted for the use of Task 2 in the present study because she considered that the argumentative-based essay had the potential to allow

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[7] IELTS writing test, Task 2. available on *https://www.english-exam.org*

the participants to freely express their thoughts about the given topic. Accordingly, this free nature of the essay type and the familiarity level of the task topics (in both the pre and post-tests as it is shown in Appendix C) deemed an efficient means to collect data about the participants' fluency.

The writing pre-test was taken by both groups, the experimental and control groups one week prior to the first treatment session. In this test, the participants were asked to write argumentative essay of approximately 250 words about "the effect of the fast pace and stress of modern life on families" (See Appendix C). They were required to complete this task in class in a period of 45 minutes.

In the same vein, the post-test was taken by the experimental group and the control group at the end of the topic control treatment sessions. As it is shown in Appendix C, the participants were instructed to produce an argumentative essay of about 250 words about " Computers are being used more and more in education and some people believe there will soon be no role for the teacher in education. To what extent do you agree or disagree?". The allotted time for producing this essay was 45 minutes.

4. 2. 3. 2. The Students' Questionnaire

A week after the treatment sessions, the experimental group students received a questionnaire wherein they indicate their perceptions of the topic control sessions they experienced in the last six months. Similar to the students' questionnaire described in Study 1 of the present thesis, this questionnaire contains three major parts. The first part consisted of a number of questions, which aim at collecting data about the participants' perceptions of the teacher-assigned as well as student-selected topics in their writing classes. As it is indicated in Appendix D, the first section of this part included questions that ask the participants about the teacher-assigned topics' familiarity and their perceived motivation of this type of

writing topics (Q1: Do you find the topics assigned by your writing teacher familiar to you? Yes/No. If No, please explain why?); Q2: Do you feel motivated to develop a topic assigned to you by your teacher?). It also comprised of a question to identify the students levels of satisfaction with the teacher-assigned topics (Q3: How do you perceive your performance when writing about a teacher-assigned topic?). The fourth question required the students to indicate the difficulties they encounter when writing about teacher-assigned topics (Q4: What are the difficulties that you encounter when writing about a teacher-assigned topic?).

The second section of the questionnaire's first part contained questions that targeted the participants' perceptions of the self-selected topics practice they experienced during the treatment sessions (Q5: Did you like the idea of free topics in your speaking classes?/Q6: Do you think that free topics is a teaching practice that can motivate you to speak in English without waiting for any sort of rewarding (for example adding marks) from your teacher's part? (Yes/No) - Please explain why?/Q7: How do you perceive your performance when writing about the self-selected topics?/Excellent/Very Good/Good/Average/Bad).

The major objective of the second part of the students' questionnaire was to examine the impact of the topic control treatment on the participants' situational interest. This part comprised of five statements with which the students were asked to indicate their agreement and disagreement on a five-point likert scale, ranging from 1 (Not true at all) to 5 (Very true for me) (See Appendix C). Similar to the questionnaire in Study1, the statements used to collect data about the students' perceived situational interest in this study revolved around the three constructs:

1. Attention, which was represented by items 1 and 2 (1. The topic control practice grabbed my attention/2.The topic control practice made the class so exciting, it was easy to pay attention to),

2. Effort and persistence, reflected in items 3 and 4 (3. I put in a lot of effort during the topic control experience/4. I wish we could still continue doing topic control in my writing class for a while), and

3. Experience of flow or involvement in the activity, which was assessed by item 5 (5. When doing the topic control tasks, I was so involved that I forgot everything around me).

The third part of the questionnaire was designed to answer SRQ 3 (Will self-selected topics result in higher intrinsic motivation of students in the writing classes?). Therefore, this part of the questionnaire is based four subscales taken from Ryan and Deci's (2005) IMI. These subscales were represented by a set of twenty-two items, which were randomly ordered in the distributed questionnaire as it is shown in the following table.

IMI Subscales	Items
Interest/Enjoyment	1, 5, 8, 10, 14 ®, 17, 20
Perceived Competence	4, 7, 12, 16, 22
Perceived Choice	3, 11 ®, 15, 19 ®, 21 ®
Pressure/Tension	2, 6®, 9, 13®, 18®

® represents the negative statements in the questionnaire, which were reversed in the study's data analysis phase.

Table 4. 9. The Number of IMI Items as They Appear on Study2 Students' Questionnaire

According to Table 4.9., the four intrinsic motivation subscale selected for this study are: (1) perceived interest/enjoyment, (2) perceived competence, (3) perceived choice, and (4) perceive level of pressure/tension. The questionnaire's items are rated on a five-point scales

where scale "1" indicates that the given statement is "not at all true", scale "3" shows that the statement is "neutral", and scale "5" means that the statement is "very true" for the respondent.

Before the administration of this questionnaire, we attempted to ensure its validity through two pilot studies. The first piloting was conducted with four writing expression teachers at the English Department, UB2. The teachers involved in this pilot study provided us with some valuable comments on the questions' relevance, intelligibility, and precisions. Such comments were considered in revising the questionnaire. The second piloting was a group of 32 second year students enrolled at the department of English, UB2, whose responses were used to test the questionnaire's reliability. The reliability analysis was performed by using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS software (Version 20). The findings of this statistical analysis is shown in Table 4.9. below.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,831	32

Table 4. 10.: Reliability Statistics of Study2 Students' Questionnaire

According to Table 4.10., the Cronbach's Alpha was good (α=0, 831). This revealed that the questionnaire was reliable and it could be distributed to the study's participants (Nunnally & Bernstein,1994).

4. 2. 4. Data analysis

4. 2. 4. 1. Analyzing the Writing Pre and Post-Tests

The data collected from the pre-and post-tests were coded and statistically analyzed using the SPSS, version 20. In order to analyze the writing tests, four stages were followed. At the first stage, the researcher coded every student's argumentative essay on the basis of group belonging, the test, and the student's number. For example, the pre-and post-test essays taken by students 1 in the experimental group was coded as Exp Pre.1 (i.e., Pre-test Sample 1) and Exp Ps.1 (i.e., Post-test Sample 1). A similar coding method was used to organize the participants' essays for the control group. For instance, the pre-and the post-test essays submitted by student 1 from the control group was coded as Con.Pre-1 (i.e., Pre-test sample 1) and Con.Ps.1 (i.e., Post-test sample 1). At the second stage, all the participants' submitted pre-and post-test essays were transcribed using the Microsoft Word document. This stage was necessary for analyzing the essays' for fluency development using an the online token calculation program.

At the third stage, the researcher began the analysis of the pre-and post-tests according to the fluency measures adopted in this study, namely rate and dysfluencies. The calculation of these two measures is shown in the following table.

Writing Fluency Measures	Calculations
Writing Rate	Total number of different words divided by the square root of twice the total number of words.

Dysfluencies	Total number of reformulated words divided by the total number of words.

Table 4. 11: Writing Fluency Measures Used in Study 2

According to the above table, two product-based measures were used in order to analyze the students' writing fluency in this study: rate and dysfluencies. The participants' writing rate was analyzed using the formula developed by Caroll (1967), which is represented below:

$$F = \frac{U}{\sqrt{2T}}$$

Where,

F: Fluency

U: Unique Tokens

T: Token

Accordingly, writing rate was measured in terms of the total number of unique tokens (words that are not repeated) divided by the square root of twice the total number of tokens (words) in the produced text. The second fluency measure used in this study is dysfluencies, which was calculated by means of the total number of words a participant reformulated (i.e., words that were crossed or changed) divided by the total number of words produced within the text at hand.

Once the students' essays were examined for fluency, the researcher turned to the statistical analysis stage. At this stage the researcher entered the quantitative data into the SPSS spreadsheet. The SPSS was used to calculate the writing fluency means for the experimental group and the control group before and after the topic control treatment sessions. The

statistical findings obtained from this data analysis stage were presented in form of tables and figures as it will be illustrated in the following chapter.

4. 2. 4. 2. Analyzing the Students' Questionnaire

Similar to Study1, this study's questionnaire required both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Therefore, The students' responses to the post-study questionnaire were coded and analyzed by means of the SPPS, version 20. The close-ended questions were analyzed by calculating the percentages and the open-ended questions were qualitatively treated by coding and identifying their recurrent themes.

The data collected from the likert-scale items in the first and the second part of the students' questionnaire were quantitatively treated. For this type of question, the researcher coded the students' ratings on an SPSS spreadsheet for the sake of calculating the number, percentages, means, and standard deviations for the scales. The findings obtained from the likert-scale items were interpreted according to the evaluation criteria that has been previously presented in this chapter (See Table 4.5.). This evaluation criteria suggests that answers with "Very true" and "true" are interpreted as "High level", answers with "Neutral" are considered as "Moderate level", and answers with "Not true at all" and "Not true" are seen as "Low level".

Conclusion

The present thesis aims at investigating the effect of topic control on students' fluency in speaking as well as writing. In order to fulfill this objective, the researcher chose to conduct two quasi-experimental studies: Study1 examines the effect of topic control on students' spoken fluency and Study2 studies the impact of the same independent variable on students' written fluency.

The first quasi-experimental study involved two sample groups: an experimental and a control group. The two groups' speaking fluency was tested by means of a pre-test. The topic control treatment sessions were introduced with the experimental group only. Next, a post-test was done in order to measure the effectiveness of the treatment. In order to collect data about the students' perceptions about the topic control practice in their speaking classes, the researcher distributed a post-study questionnaire to the experimental group. The findings obtained from these research instruments were numerically coded and analyzed by the researcher.

In order to conduct Study2, the researcher selected two second year sample groups, which were assigned into experimental and control groups. Similar to Study1, this quasi-experimental study included a pre-test, treatment sessions, and a post-test. The experimental and control groups took both the pre-and the post-test. However, the treatment sessions were experienced by the experimental group only. In addition to these research instruments, the researcher opted for the use of a post-study questionnaire, which was filled by the participants in the experimental group. This questionnaire asked the students about their perceptions of topic control as an instructional practice in their writing classes. The data collected from this study's research instruments were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed by the researcher.

Chapter Five

Key Findings

Introduction

The current thesis comprises two quasi-experimental studies, each of which endeavors to examine the effects of topic control on EFL students' fluency in the speaking and writing skills, respectively. The previous chapter has explained the research methodology followed to conduct both Study 1 (The effects of topic control on students' spoken fluency) and Study 2 (The effects of topic control on students' written fluency). In other terms, the research methodology chapter clarifies how the researcher proceeded to conduct, codify, and analyze the data in the two studies.

The present chapter, however, focuses on presenting the key findings obtained from the two studies' collected data. Therefore, this chapter contains two major sections. The first one reports the results of Study 1. The second section presents the findings obtained from Study 2 data collection instruments, including the tests and the questionnaire.

5. 1. Findings of Study 1

The data obtained from the study's research instruments (pre and post tests as well as the students' questionnaires) were numerically coded and analyzed using the IBM SPSS statistics software version 20. The findings of these three research instruments will be presented in the next sections.

5. 1. 1. The Pre and Post-Tests Findings

To answer the study's main research question and verify its hypothesis, we statistically analyzed the participants' recorded speeches in the pre as well as the post-tests, which were conducted before and after the treatment sessions (See the research methodology chapter of the current thesis). The findings of these tests will be presented in the following sections.

5. 1.1.1. The Pre-Test Findings

The statistical findings for the fluency scores attained by the experimental group and the control group in the pre-test are reported in the tables and figures below.

Fluency Measures	Number of students	Mean	Std. deviation
Rate	61	49,4428	14,99796
Pause	61	118,2787	34,97482
Length of pause	61	,9415	,32180
Length of runs	61	6,4621	2,15142

Table 5. 1: Statistical findings for the Experimental Group's Speaking Fluency Scores in the Pre-Test

According to Table 5. 1., the experimental group's mean speech rate in the pre-test was 49,44 wpm (Std=14,99). For the number and duration of pauses, the experimental group reached a total mean of 118,27 pm (Std= 34,97) and a mean length of pause of 0,94 (Std=0,32). As for the length of runs, the experimental group attained a mean of 6,46 (Std= 2,15).

The findings for the control group's fluency scores in the pre-test will be displayed in Table 5. 2. below.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean	Std. deviation
Rate	60	49,1748	5,12888
Pause	60	118,1667	27,02740
Length of pause	60	,9550	,24417
Length of run	60	6,0602	2,43562

Table 5. 2: Statistical Findings for the Control Group's Speaking
Fluency Scores in the Pre-Test

Findings from Table 5. 2. above reveal that the control group's rate in the pre-test was 49,17 wpm (Std= 5,12). In terms of the number and length of pauses, the results indicate that the control group attained a mean pause of 118,16 (Std=27,02) and a mean pause length of 0,95 (Std=0,24). As for the length of runs, the control group participants scored a mean of 6,06 (Std=2,43562).

To compare the pre-test results of the experimental and control groups, we conducted an independent sample t-test. The findings of this test are described in Table 5. 3. and Figure 5. 1. below.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean difference	t-value	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	*Significant at the 0,05 Level
Rate	121	,26795	,132	74,051	,895	>0,05

Pause	121	,11202	,120	119	,984	>0,05
Length of pause	121	,01352	,261	111,831	,795	>0,05
Length of run	121	,40196	,963	119	,338	>0,05

Table 5. 3: Independent T-Test Findings for the Experimental and Control groups' Fluency Scores in the Pre-Test
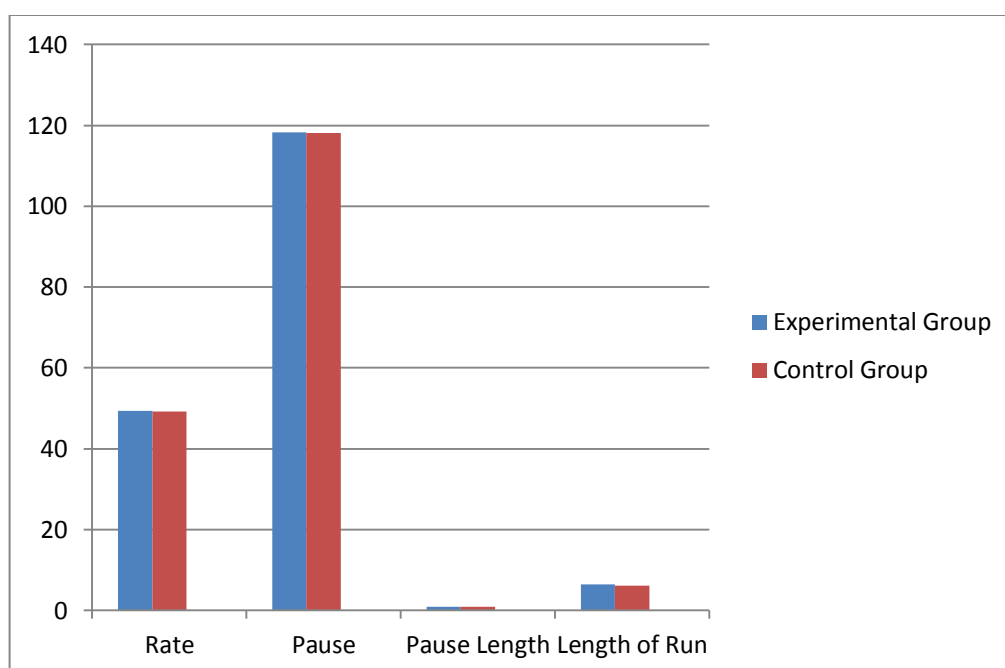
Figure 5. 1: Comparison of the Fluency Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pre-Test

Table 5. 3. and Figure 5. 1. indicate that the t-test for equality of means was not significant. The t- as well as the p-values (i.e., the p-value is the Sig. (2-tailed) in the above table) across the four fluency measures (i.e., rate, pause, length of pause, and length of runs) were more than the significant level (>0,05). That is to say, the t-values for the speech rate,

pause, pause length, and length of runs were 0,13 (P=0,89), 0,12 (P=,98), 0,26 (,79), and 0,96 (0,33), respectively. This reveals that the two groups were approximately at the same speaking fluency level in the pre-test.

Accordingly, we can assume that any statistical variance at the level of speaking fluency between the experimental group and the control group that may occur after the treatment sessions can be attributed to it. This assumption will be verified from the post-test findings that will be presented in the section that follows.

5. 1.1.2. The Post-Test Findings

Tables 5. 4., 5. 5., 5. 6., 5. 7., and 5. 8. below describe the statistical findings obtained from the post-test for both the experimental and control groups.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean	Std. deviation
Rate	61	98,3841	38,72792
Pause	61	112,2951	57,54400
Length of pause	61	,7566	,20024
Length of run	61	8,6184	3,84484

Table 5. 4: Statistical findings for the Experimental Group's Speaking Fluency Scores in the Post-test

Table 5. 4. summarizes the statistical findings for the experimental group's fluency scores in the post-test. The findings reveal that the participants' mean speech rate was 98,38 (Std=38,72). They also show that the number as well as length of pauses were 112,29 (Std=57,54) and 0,75 (Std=0,20), respectively. For the length of runs fluency measure, the experimental group's mean was 8,61 (Std= 3,84).

In order to compare the experimental group's means for the four fluency measures before and after the treatment sessions, we conducted a paired sample t-test. The findings of this test are shown in the following table.

	Mean	Std. Diviation	t-	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	*Significant at the 0,05 Level
Pair 1 Pre/Post-test rate	48,94131	44,50676	8,588	60	,000	<0,05
Pair 2 Pre/Post-test pause	25,33333	53,62983	3,659	60	,001	<0,05
Pair 3 Pre/Post-test pause length	5,70557	2,13752	20,847	60	,000	<0,05

Pair 4 Pre/Post-test length of runs	2,15623	3,99785	4,212	60	,000	<0,05

Table 5. 5: Paired-Sample T-Test for the Experimental Groups' Pre and Post Tests Findings
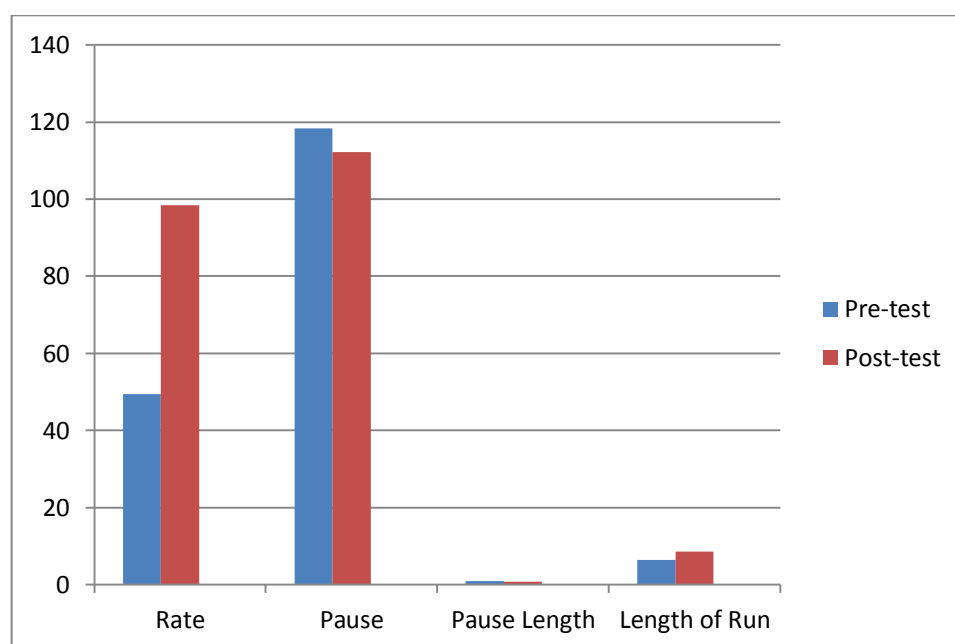
Figure 5. 2: Comparison of the Experimental Group's Fluency Scores in the Pre- and Post-tests

According to the findings of the paired sample t-test illustrated by Table 5. 5. above, the differences between the experimental group's fluency means in the pre and post-tests are statistically significant. The t- and the p-values were 8,58 (P=,000), 3,65 (P=0,001), 20,84 (P=0,000), and 4,21 (P=0,000) for the speech rate, pause, length of pause, and length of runs, respectively. Since the p-values in all the four fluency measures were less than 0,05, we conclude that there were significant statistical differences between the fluency means of the pre and post-tests. The

paired-sample t-test results show that topic control significantly increased the participants' speech rate (it increased from 14,99 wpm to 98,38 wpm) and length of runs (it increased from 6,46 to 8,61). This enabled them to speak with less pauses (the number of pauses decreased from 118,27 to 112,29 and the length of pauses decreased from 0,94 to 0,75). The obtained results indicate that the topic control treatment sessions had an important positive effect on the experimental groups' speaking fluency. This conclusion will be further illustrated by comparing between the experimental and control groups' statistical findings in the post-test. However, before presenting the results of this comparison, it is interesting to describe the statistical fluency results attained by the control group in the post-test.

Tables 5. 6. and 5. 7. below present the post-test fluency means for the control group.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rate	60	26,4130	6,30054
Pause	60	143,5000	39,73749
Length of pause	60	,9533	,13862
Length of run	60	4,8558	1,14754

Table 5. 6: Statistical Findings for the Control Group's Speaking Fluency Scores in the Post-test

Table 5. 6. reveals that the control group mean for speech rate was 26,41 (Std=6,30). With regard to the average number of pauses and the mean length of pause, the participants' means were 143,50 (Std=39,73) and 0,95 (Std=0,13), respectively. For the mean length of runs, the control group obtained a mean of 4,85 (Std=1,14).

In order to compare the control group's fluency means in the pre and post-tests, we considered the use of a paired sample t-test. The results of this test are displayed in the following table.

	Mean	Std. Diviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	*Significant at the 0,05 Level
Pair 1 **Pre/Post-test rate**	22,76183	9,39956	18,758	59	,000	<0,05
Pair 2 **Pre/Post-test pause**	5,98361	64,45166	,725	59	,471	>0,05
Pair 3 **Pre/Post-test pause length**	,00167	,27219	,047	59	,962	>0,05
Pair 4 **Pre/Post-test**	1,20433	2,60706	3,578	59	,001	<0,05

length of run						

Table 5. 7: Paired-Sample T-Test for the Control Groups' Pre and Post Tests
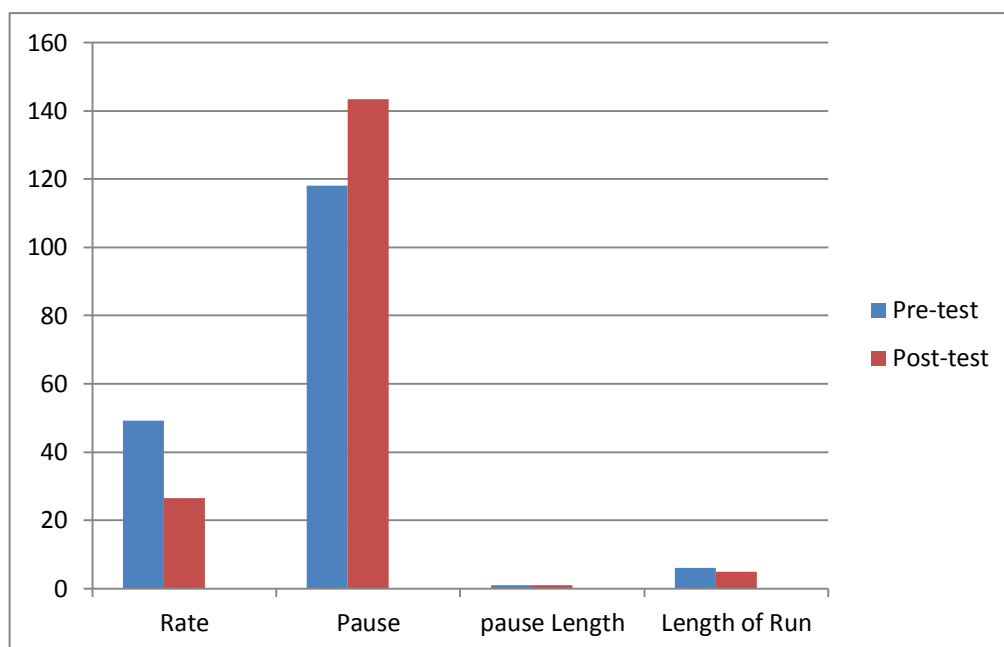
Figure 5. 3: Comparison of the Control Group's Fluency Scores in the Pre-
and Post-Tests

Based on the paired sample t-test in the above table, there were some statistical differences between the pre and post-tests fluency scores. For the speech rate and the length of runs, the t- and the p-values were 18,75 (P=0,00) and 3,57 (P=0,00). Since the p-value in these two fluency measures was less than the significance level (<0,05), we conclude that there were significant statistical differences between the pre-test and post-test scores in terms of the participants' number of words uttered per minute and the average length of sound syllables produced between pauses. In contrast, the table shows that there were no significant differences between the pre and post-test results in terms of the number as well as length of pauses. This is indicated by the t-and p-values, which were 0,72 (P=0,47) for the mean number of pauses and 0,47 (P=0,96) for the mean length of pause. Since the p-value is more than the significance level (>0,05), we

conclude that there were no significant statistical differences between the pre-test and the post-test in term of pausing. It is interesting to note that the participants' speech rate and mean length of runs were higher in the pre-test than in the post-test (speech rate decreased from 49,17 wpm to 26,41wpm and the length of runs decreased from 6,06 to 4,85). In addition, their mean number of pause increased in the post-test as compared to their scores in the pre-test (the mean number of pauses increased from 118,16 to 143,50). However, their mean length of pause remained at the same level, with a mean of 0,95.

Table 5. 8. presents the results of the independent t-test that was used to compare the fluency means attained by the experimental group and the control groups in the post-test.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean difference	t-value	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	*Significant at the 0,05 Level
Rate	121	71,97110	14,210	119	,000	<0,05
Pause	121	31,20492	3,466	119	,001	<0,05
Length of pause	121	,19678	6,275	119	,000	<0,05
Length of run	121	3,76253	7,268	119	,000	<0,05

Table 5. 8: Independent T-Test Findings for the Experimental Group and the Control Group Speaking Fluency Means in the Post-Test

The analysis of the independent samples t-test shows that important differences existed between the two groups' fluency means in the post-test.

The estimated t-and p-values for the speech rate, pause, length of pause, and length of runs were 14,21 (P=0,00), 3,46 (P=0,00), 6,27 (P=0,00), and 7,26 (P=0,00), respectively. In other terms, the p-value in the four speaking fluency measures was less than the significant level (<0,05). This leads us to observe that there were significant statistical differences between the experimental group and the control group in the post-test, indicating the effectiveness of the topic control treatment sessions in enhancing the speaking fluency of those students who received them.

Furthermore, in order to determine the effectiveness of the topic control treatment sessions on the participants' speaking fluency, we considered the calculation of the effect size using the Eta Squared Formula for the independent samples t-tests. The formula is shown below.

$$N^2 = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + \text{Df}}$$

Where,

N^2= the calculated effect size

t= the estimated t-value

Df= the degree of freedom

Before presenting the effect size calculated results, it is interesting to explain the framework for identifying the effect size of the obtained t-values, according to the Eta Squared formula. This explanation is provided in the following table.

Calculated result of the effect size	Interpretation
N^2 =0,01 (1%)	Small effect size
N^2 =0,06 (6%)	Medium effect size

N^2 =0,14 (14%)	Large effect size

Table 5. 9. The Referential Framework for Identifying the Effect Size According to the Eta Squared Formula

Taking into consideration the referential framework illustrated by Table 5. 9., we can observe that the effect size for the four fluency means were 0,62 (speech rate), 0,09 (pause), 0,24 (pause length), and 0,30 (length of run). That is to say, the effect size of the three of the obtained t-values was large. Therefore, we conclude that the topic control treatment sessions had a large effect on the experimental group's fluency as compared to that of the control group that did not receive the same treatment. This improvement can be illustrated in the following figure.
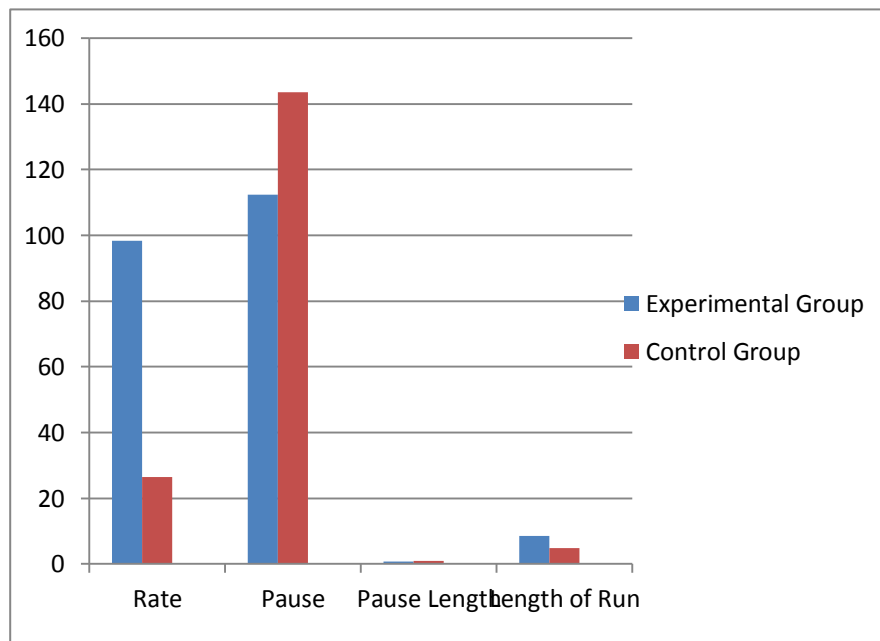
Figure 5. 4: The Mean Speaking Fluency Scores of The Control Group and the Experimental Group in the Post-Test.

To conclude, the pre-and post-tests data analysis showed that the topic control treatment had important positive effects on the experimental group's spoken fluency. The pre-test findings indicate that the two groups' spoken fluency levels were approximately similar. However, the post-test results revealed significant statistical differences between the groups, where the experimental group outnumbered the control group in terms of the different fluency measures employed in this study. Therefore, it can be said that the experimental group's fluency improvements were attributed to its exposure to the topic control treatment sessions.

As it has previously been mentioned in this thesis, Study 1 does not only aim at investigating the effect of topic control on students' speaking fluency, but it has other research objectives. Its seeks to examine the participants' perceptions about the topic control experiment and study the impact of this latter on their situational interest as well as intrinsic motivation. In order to reach these objectives, data was collected and analyzed using a questionnaire directed to the experimental group. The findings from the students' questionnaires will be presented in the following section.

5. 1. 2. Findings of the Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaires and its subsequent analysis were organized into three parts, each of which targets one dependent variable: students' perceptions of the use of topic control in their speaking classes, students' perceived situational interest after experiencing the topic control sessions, and the impact of the self-selected topics on the participants' intrinsic motivation. The findings of each of the aforementioned parts is presented in the following lines.

Part 1: Students' Perceptions of the Teacher-Assigned and Self-Selected Topics in their Speaking Classes

This part has two major objectives. The first one is to determine the participants' opinions about the topics assigned by their teacher. The second one is to examine their perceptions of the idea of self-selected topics in their speaking classes. Therefore, the analysis of the data in this first part of the questionnaire is itself divided into two sections: one for presenting the findings attained from Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 (students' opinions about the teacher-assigned topics) and another one for depicting the findings for Q5, Q6, and Q7 (students' perceptions of the self-selected topics practice in the speaking classes).

Q1: Do you find the topics assigned by your speaking teacher familiar to you? (Yes/No). If No, please explain why?

Q1 seeks to identify the participants' views about the general familiarity level of the teacher-assigned topics in the speaking classes. In this regard, the question contains two sections: the first one is close-ended, which requires the students to answer with "yes" or "no", and the second one asks those participants who answered with "no" to illustrate their perspective, which may help us to interpret the results. The findings of this question are presented in the following figure.
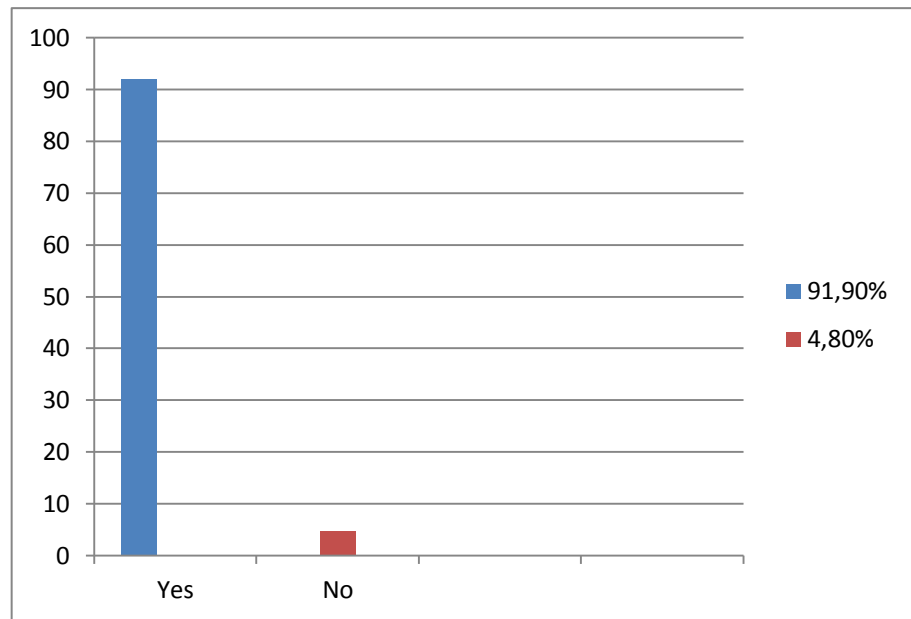
Figure 5. 5: Students' Familiarity with the Teacher-Assigned Topics in Their Speaking Classes

The analysis of the students' responses to Q1 indicates that the overwhelming majority (91,90%) perceived the teacher-assigned topics as familiar and the minority (4,80%) found that they were unfamiliar. This negative perception can be summarized in the response of one student to the sub-question (**If No, please explain why?):"**In my opinion, the topics given by the teacher are not familiar because I don't feel that I have information about them and I find difficulties to speak about them".

Q2: Do you feel motivated to develop a topic assigned to you by your teacher?

 Q2 is a close-ended question that aims at identify the students' motivational level when speaking about the teacher-assigned topics. Figure 5.7. below displays the results obtained from this question.

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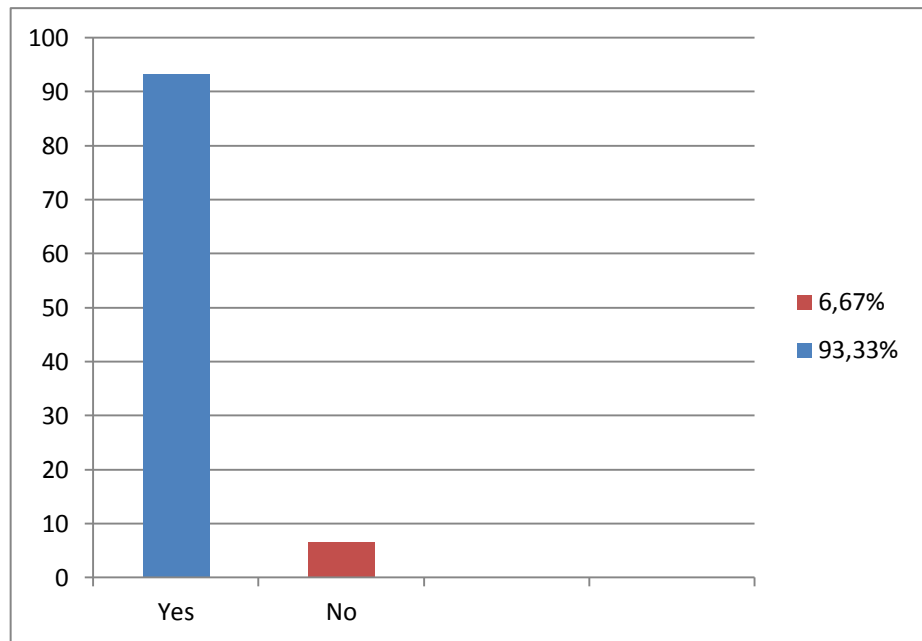
Figure 5. 6: Students' Perceived Motivation when Speaking about the
Teacher-Assigned Topics

Figure 5. 6. reveals that the great majority of the students (93,33 %) feel
motivated when speaking about the teacher-assigned topics while the
minority (6,67 %) think that this sort of topics is not motivating for them.

Q3: How do you perceive your performance when speaking about
a teacher-assigned topic?

This question asks the participants to evaluate their general speaking
performance when the topic is assigned. The analysis of the participants'
responses to this question are presented in the following figure.
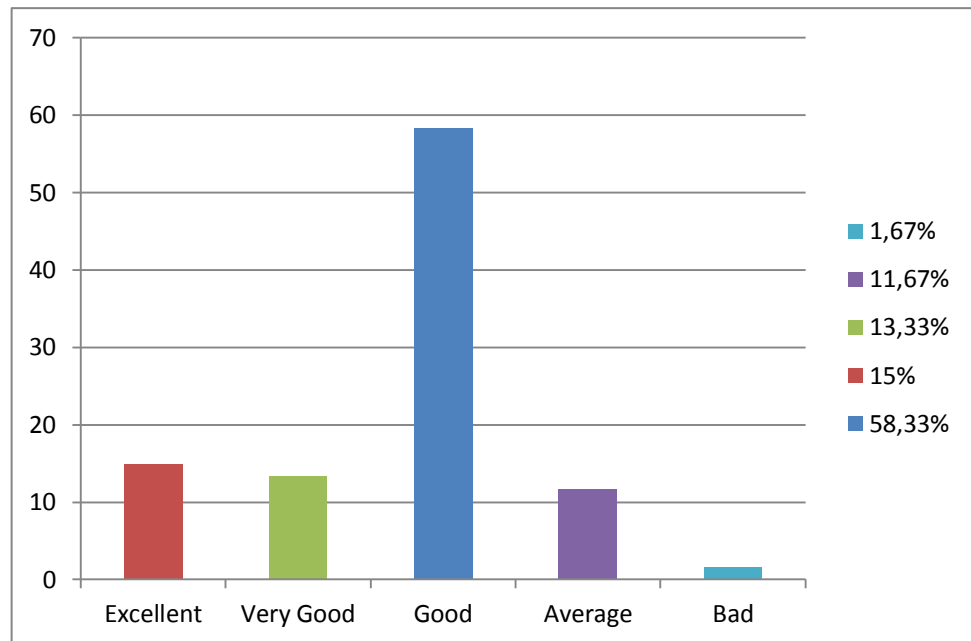
Figure 5. 7: Students' Perceived Performance when Speaking about the Teacher-Assigned Topics

The findings, displayed in Figure 5.7., indicate that the majority of the respondents (58,33 %) evaluated their performance as "good". However, the perceived performance level of the other respondents varied between "excellent" and "bad". It is interesting to note that the percentages of the students who saw that the teacher-assigned topics help them to consider themselves as "excellent" (15%), "very good" (13,33), and "average" (11,67%) are approximately equal and only 1,67 % participants observed that their speaking level is "bad".

Q4: What are the difficulties that you encounter when speaking about a teacher-assigned topic?

The aim behind asking this question is to understand the type of difficulties that the students generally face when the speaking topics are selected by the teacher. The question is open-ended in order to allow the respondents more space to express their ideas and thoughts. The analysis of the answers reveals that there are a number of difficulties that most of the

participants face when speaking about the teacher-assigned topics. These difficulties can be classified into three categories: background knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and affective.

1. Background Knowledge

For this first category, most of the students claimed that the major problem that face them when talking about the teacher-assigned topics is the lack of information and arguments to support their ideas. For instance, one student said that "when the topic is given to us during the session and we are supposed to discuss it immediately, I find it hard to do so, especially when I have few to almost no ideas about the topic". Another interesting explanation was provided by a student who commented that "sometimes the topic is too complicated, so it's hard to know how to start, which points to tackle, and how to divide the group work".

2. Linguistic Knowledge

Some respondents see that finding words and expressions to express ideas constitute a real issue for them, especially when the assigned topic is unfamiliar. This argument can be summarized by these two answers: "the topics assigned by the teacher are complicated and many times I feel that I don't have enough vocabulary to speak and express my opinion". Another student said "there are some topics that are unfamiliar and I couldn't speak about them mainly because I couldn't find words to express myself".

3. Affective

Most of the students believe that the teacher-assigned topics can generate anxiety as well as lack of interest and self-confidence. For example, one student said that "the topics most of the time are boring, I don't like them and I am forced to do it". Another student claimed that " I feel bored, I

can't feel involved, I feel that I can't develop my skill when I do a topic assigned by my teacher". A student argued that "I feel stressed of my language skills, I have problems of grammar and pronunciation which make me somehow shy. I feel afraid to forget ideas because the topic is known by the teacher from the beginning".

Q5: Did you like the idea of free topics in your speaking classes?

Q5 aims at identifying the participants' perceptions of the self-selected topics practice they experienced during the treatment sessions. It is a close-ended question as the students had to choose one of the suggested answers "yes" or "no". The findings are shown in the following figure.
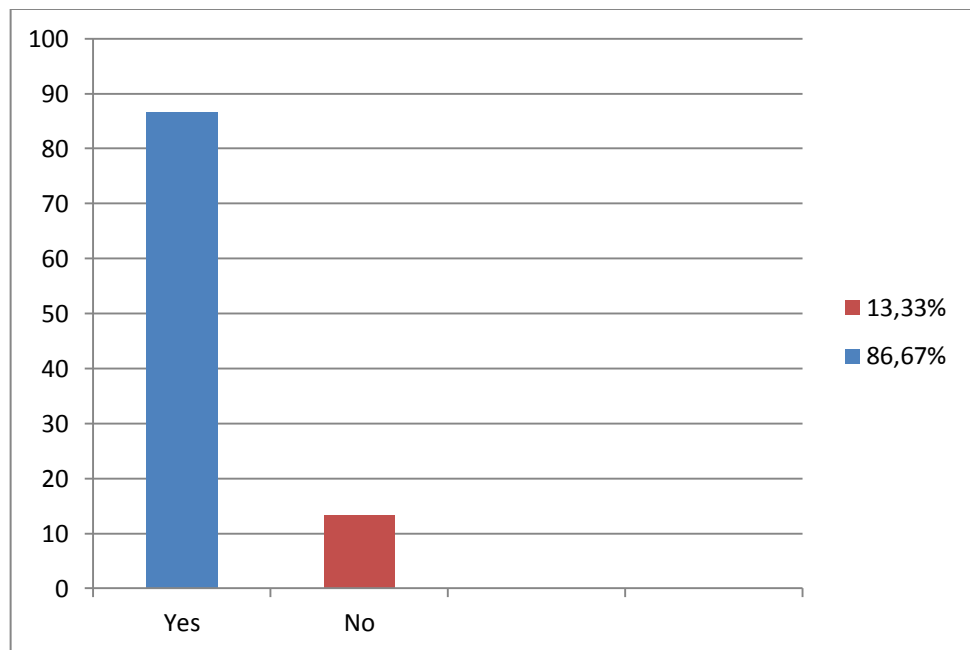
Figure 5. 8: Students' Perception of the self-selected topics

The findings in Figure 5.8. show that the great majority (86,67%) liked the self-selected topics practice, but the other students (13,33%) did not appreciate it.

Q6: Do you think that free topics is a teaching practice that can motivate you to speak in English without waiting for any sort of rewarding (for example adding marks) from your teacher's part? (Yes/No) - Please explain why?

This question was meant to examine the participants' perceived motivational effects of the self-selected topics practice. The findings of Q6 are presented in Figure 5.9. below.
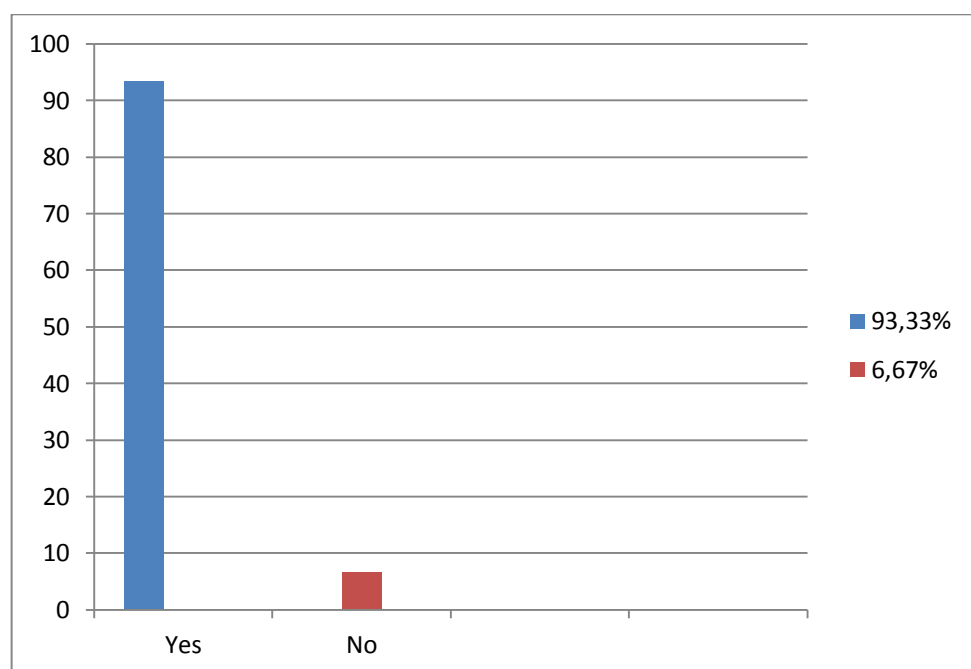
Figure 5. 9: Students' Perceived Motivation of the self-Selected Topics Practice

The findings of Q6 reveal that the overwhelming majority (93,33%) believed that free topics can motivate them to speak in class, but the other few students (6,67%) did not perceive it as a motivating teaching practice. The answers of the students to the sub-question (**Please explain why?**) helped us to understand their opinions.

Most of the participants who responded with "yes" argued that this practice is an important source of motivation because it helped them feel

confident, free, and creative. One student said that "Because I believe that when I get the chance to choose a topic that I like and I'm motivated to convince others about it as well, it automatically pushes me to try and speak better and more fluently in order to appear convincing, even without getting rewarded". Another interesting argument was mentioned by a student "I think that free topics give me more chances to express myself and my capacities. It helps me to develop myself without control because the idea of marks makes me feel scared". One student saw that "When I choose a topic by myself, I feel like I can create ideas alone and with little research. I feel that I can do well in the task".

However, the students who perceived the self-selected topics as demotivating argued that this practice requires a great deal of energy and time. One student said "if we are given a topic, we will save time and energy. Thinking how to select a topic is very hard, we need to search for ideas and arguments before we make our oral practice". Another student claimed "when the teacher asks us to choose a topic freely we get lost which topic shall we choose. So I prefer when the teacher chooses the topic".

Q7: How do you perceive your performance when speaking about the self-selected topics?.

Q7 asks the participants about their perceived performance level when the speaking topic is self-selected. The analysis of the students' responses is displayed in the following figure.
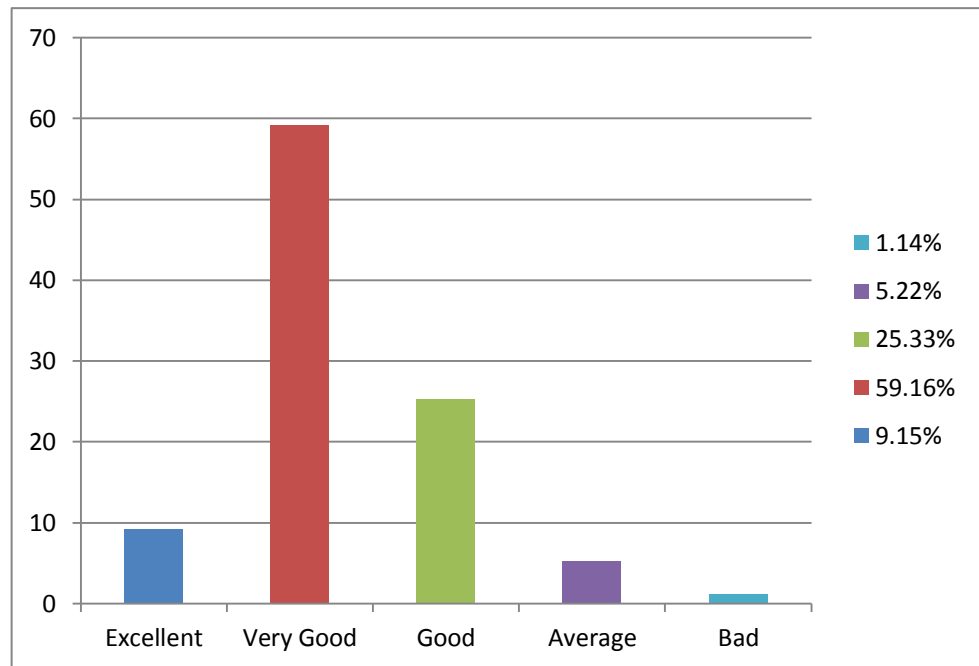
Figure 5. 10.: Students' Perceived Performance when Speaking about the Self-Selected Topics

As it is illustrated in the above figure, the results obtained from the participants' answers to Q7 show that the great majority of them (59,16%) perceived their performance as "Very good", more than 25% of the respondents indicated that their performance is "Good", and 9,15% rated their performance as "Excellent". Furthermore, 5,22% of the students perceived their performance as "Average" and 1,14% regarded their performance as "Bad".

Part 2: Topic Control and Students' Situational Interest

The objective of this second part of the questionnaire is to answer SRQ 3 (Will self-selected topics influence the participants' perceived situational interest in their speaking classes?). It contains five (5) statements with which the respondents were required to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a five-point likert scale. The following table reports the statistical findings for these five statements.

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Statement	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true	Mean	Std. Diviation	General orientation
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			
1	1	3	11	24	21	4,02	,948	Totally Agree
	1,6	4,8	17,7	38,7	33,9			
2	0	4	6	20	30	4,27	,899	Totally Agree
	0	6,5	9,7	32,3	48,4			
3	0	3	9	27	21	4,10	,838	Totally Agree
	0	4,8	14,5	43,5	33,9			
4	3	1	9	28	19	3,98	1,000	Totally Agree
	4,8	1,6	14,5	45,2	30,6			
5	6	3	13	20	18	3,68	1,242	Totally Agree
	9,7	4,8	21,0	32,3	29,0			
Total Mean						4,010	,2154	High Level

Table 5. 10: Students' Perceived Situational Interest During the Topic Control Sessions

According to Table 5. 10., statement 2 obtained the highest score with a mean of 4,27 (Std=0,89). This is followed by statements 3, 1 and 4 with means of 4,10 (Std=0,83), 4,02 (Std=0,94), and 3,98 (Std=1,00), respectively. The lowest score was attained by statement 5 with a mean of 3,68 (Std=1,24). The total mean for the five statements was 4,01 (Std=0,21), showing a high level of situational interest. These descriptive statistical findings lead us to conclude that the students totally agreed that the topic control sessions had an important positive impact on their attention, effort, and involvement in their speaking classes.

Part 3: Topic Control and Students' Intrinsic Motivation

As it has been explained in the research methodology chapter, this part of the questionnaire is designed to answer SRQ 3 (Will self-selected topics result in higher intrinsic motivation of students in their speaking classes?). Therefore, in the analysis of this part, we classified its twenty-two (22) items into four subscales: (1) interest and enjoyment, (2) perceived competence, (3) perceived choice, and (4) perceived pressure and stress. The findings of this analysis will be presented in the following sections.

1. Interest and Enjoyment

This intrinsic motivation subscale comprises items 1, 5, 8, 10, 14 ®, 17, and 20 (See Appendix B). It seeks to measure the participants' general level of interest and enjoyment after experiencing the self-selected topics practice. The following table displays the overall mean for the Interest/Enjoyment subscale as well as the means for its individual items.

Items	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true	Mean	Std. Diviation	General Orientation
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			
1	0	1	7	33	19	4,17	,693	**Totally Agree**
	0	1,6	11,3	53,2	96,8			
5	0	3	7	24	26	4,22	,846	**Totally Agree**
	0	4,8	11,3	38,7	41,9			
8	0	6	4	32	18	4,03	,882	**Totally Agree**
	0	9,7	6,5	51,6	29,0			
10	0	3	6	30	21	4,15	,799	**Totally Agree**
	0	4,8	9,7	48,4	33,9			
14	29	18	7	5	1	4,15	1,039	**Totally Disagree**
	46,8	29,0	11,3	8,1	1,6			
17	0	2	8	26	24	4,20	,798	**Totally Agree**
	0	3,2	12,9	41,9	38,7			

20	2	1	4	24	29	4,28	,922	**Totally Agree**
	3,2	1,6	6,5	38,7	46,8			
Total						4,1714	,07734	**High Level**

Table 5. 11: Students' Interest/Enjoyment Level after the Speaking Self-Selected Topics Sessions

The findings shown in Table 5.11. reveal that item 22 attained the highest score with a mean of 4,28 (Std=0,92), followed by item 5 with a mean of 4,22 (Std=0,84), followed by item 17 with a mean of 4,20 (Std=0,78), followed by item 1 with a mean of 4,17 (Std=0,69), followed by items 10 and 14 with a mean of 4,15 (Std=0,79 and Std=10,03, respectively), followed by item 8 with a mean of 4,03 (Std=0,88). The overall mean for this subscale is 4,17 (Std=0,07). This shows that the participants "totally agree" that the topic control sessions were an interesting and enjoyable experience for them.

2. Perceived Competence

This subscale contains items 4, 7, 12, 16, and 22 (See Appendix B). Its five (5) items measure the students' level of perceived competence at the end of the topic control sessions. The statistical findings of this I subscale are displayed in Table 5. 12. below.

Items	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true	Mean	Std. Diviation	General orientation
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			
4	0	5	11	29	15	3,90	,877	Totally Agree
	0	8,1	17,7	46,8	24,2			
7	2	4	19	27	8	3,58	,926	Totally Agree
	3,2	6,5	30,6	43,5	12,9			
12	0	4	11	25	20	4,02	,892	Totally Agree
	0	6,5	17,7	40,3	32,3			
16	2	2	20	25	11	3,68	,930	Totally Agree
	3,2	3,2	32,3	40,3	17,7			
22	0	1	19	22	18	3,95	,832	Totally Agree
	0	1,6	30,6	35,5	29,0			
Total Mean						3,8260	,18730	High Level

Table 5. 12: Students' Perceived Competence Level after the Self-Selected Topics Sessions

According to the above table, the analysis of the data indicates that the highest score was attained by item 12 with a mean of 4,02 (Std=0,89), followed by item 22 with a mean of 3,95 (Std=0,83), followed by item 4 with a mean of 3,90 (Std=0,87), followed by item 16 with a mean of 3,68 (Std=0,93). The lowest score was obtained by item 7 with a mean of 3,58 (Std=0,92). Since the overall mean for the subscale is 3,82 (Std=0,18), we conclude that the participants totally agreed that the self-selected topics experience has helped them to perceive themselves as competent speakers of English.

3. Perceived Choice

As it is shown in Appendix B, the items that constitute this intrinsic motivation subscale are 3, 11 ®, 15, 19 ®, 21 ®. This subscale measures the students' perceived choice while speaking about the self-selected topics during the treatment sessions. Table 5. 13. shows the descriptive statistical findings for this subscale.

Item	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true	Mean	Std. Diviation	General orientation
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			
3	2	0	5	29	24	4,22	,865	**Totally Agree**
	3,2	0	8,1	46,8	38,7			

11	9	27	14	10	0	3,58	,944	**Totally Disagree**
	14,5	43,5	22,6	16,1	0			
15	0	4	8	26	22	4,10	,877	**Totally Agree**
	0	6,5	12,9	41,9	35,5			
19	12	10	15	20	3	3,13	1,228	**Totally Disagree**
	19,4	16,1	24,2	32,3	4,8			
21	31	8	12	5	4	3,95	1,294	**Totally Disagree**
	50,0	12,9	19,4	8,1	6,5			
Total Mean						3,79	,44332	**High Level**

Table 5. 13.: Students' Perceived Choice while Doing the Self-Selected Topics Activity

The analysis of the participants' answers indicates that items 3 and 15 attained the highest scores with means of 4,22 (Std=0,86) and 4,10 (Std=0,87), respectively. They were followed by items 21 and 11 with means of 3,95 (Std=1,29) and 3,58 (Std=0,94), respectively. The lowest score was obtained by item 19 with a mean of 3,13 (Std=1,22). The total mean for the Perceived Choice subscale was 3,79 (Std=0,44). This reveals that the participants have reached a high level of perceived choice while speaking about the self-selected topics.

4. Pressure/Tension

As it has been previously explained, this subscale is theorized as a negative predictor of intrinsic motivation. Therefore, it contains three (3) negative items (6, 13, and 18) and two positive items (2 and 9). In other words, students' disagreements with those negative items are interpreted as positive results for this study. Table 5. 14. below summarizes the findings for this subscale.

Item	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true	Mean	Std. Diviation	General orientation
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			
2	3	10	16	15	16	3,52	1,200	**Totally Agree**
	4,8	16,1	25,8	24,2	25,8			
6	15	14	23	8	0	3,52	1,200	**Totally Disagree**
	24,2	22,6	37,1	12,9	0			
9	0	2	13	18	27	4,17	,886	**Totally Agree**
	0	3,2	21,0	29,0	43,5			
13	16	13	18	10	3	3,48	1,200	**Totally Disagree**
	25,8	21,0	29,0	16,1	4,8			

18	25	12	17	6	0	3,93	1,056	**Totally Disagree**
	40,3	19,4	27,4	9,7	0			
Total Mean						3,724	,30989	**High Level**

Table 5. 14: Students' Perceived Pressure/Tension While Performing the Self-Selected Topics Activity

The data analysis of the Pressure/Tension subscale shows that the highest score was obtained by item 9 with a mean of 4,17 (Std=0,88). This was followed by items 18, 2, and 6 with means of 3,93 (Std=1,05), 3,52 (Std=1,20), and 3,52 (Std=1,20), respectively. The lowest score was attained by item 13 with a mean of 3,48 (Std=1,20). The overall mean for the five items was 3,72 (Std=0,30). This illustrates that the participants did not experience stress while speaking about the self-selected topics in class.

In conclusion, the key findings obtained from Study1 collected data indicated that the topic control treatment sessions had important positive effects on the participants' speaking fluency in terms of their speech rate, mean length of runs, and the number as well as the length of pauses. In this respect, we can observe that the statistical results presented in this first section have confirmed the study's hypothesis that topic control enhanced the students' speaking fluency. Furthermore, the findings obtained from the distributed questionnaire revealed that the participants had positively perceived the topic control practice in their speaking classes.

5. 2. Findings of Study 2

In line with Study 1 of the current thesis, data obtained from Study 2 research instruments were coded and quantitatively analyzed using the IBM SPSS statistics software, version 20. The following sections will present the findings of the pre-test, post-test as well as the students' questionnaire.

5. 2. 1. Findings From the Pre-Test

The statistical results obtained from the pre-test are demonstrated in Tables 5.15., 5.16., and 5.17 below.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rate	65	9,8755	1,25459
Dysfluencies	65	,0952	,02878

Table 5. 15: Statistical Findings for the Experimental Group's Writing Fluency Scores in the Pre-Test

Table 5.15. shows the statistical findings for the experimental group's fluency in the pre-test. An analysis of the data presented in this table indicates that the students' mean writing rate was 9,87, with a standard deviation of 1,25. As far as their mean dysfluencies was concerned, the participants obtained 0,09, with a standard deviation of 0,02.

The following table summarizes the pre-test statistical results for the control group's writing fluency.

Fluency Measures	Number of students	Mean	Std. deviation
Rate	62	10,3760	1,78269
Dysfluencies	62	,1019	,02610

Table 5. 16: Statistical Findings for the Control Group's Fluency Scores in the Pre-Test

The findings displayed in Table 5. 16. reveal that the control group students' writing rate was 10,37, with a standard deviation of 1,78. They also show that the students' mean dysfluencies was 0,10, with a standard deviation of 0,02.

In order to compare the fluency means of the two groups (the experimental and control groups) in the writing pre-test, we conducted an independent samples t-test. The results of this test are summarized in the following table.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean difference	t-value	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	*Significant at the 0,05 Level
Rate	127	,50043	1,836	125	,069	>0,05
Dysfluencies	127	,00670	1,376	124,689	,171	>0,05

Table 5. 17: Independent Samples T-Test Findings for the Experimental and the Control Groups Fluency Scores in the Pre-Test
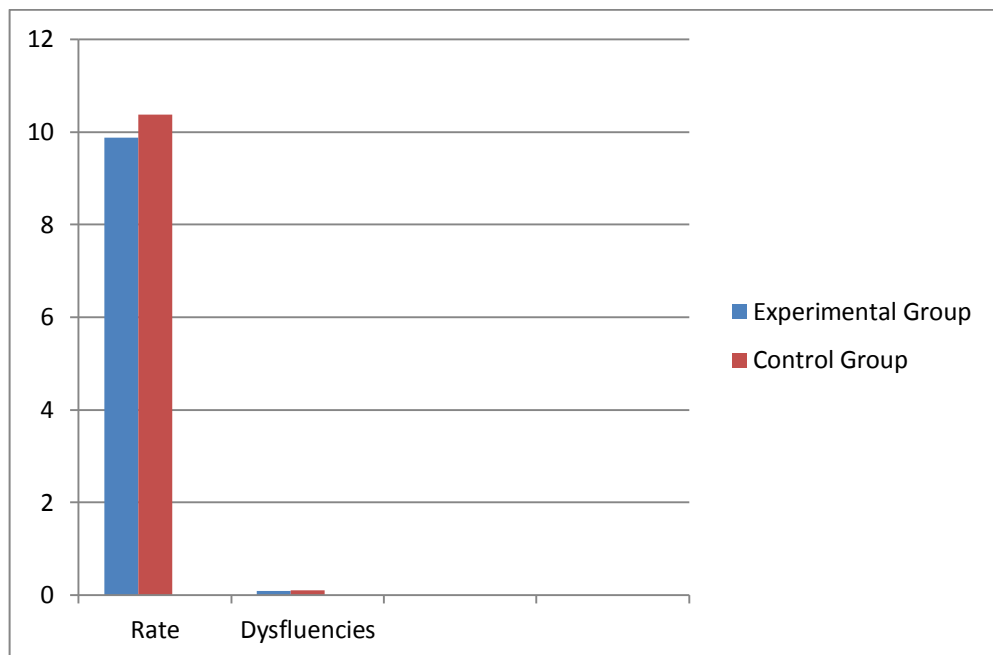
Figure 5. 11: Comparison of the Writing Fluency Mean Scores of the Experimental and the Control Groups in the Pre-Test

The independent samples t-test results for the experimental group and the control groups fluency means before the beginning of the topic control treatment sessions reveal that there were no significant differences between them. Table 5. 17. above demonstrates that the t-value for the first fluency measure (writing rate) was 1,83 and the p-value was 0,06. It also shows that the t-value for the second fluency mean (dysfluencies) was 1,37 and the p-value was 0,17. In view that the p-values in the two fluency measures was more that the significance level (>0,05), we observe that both the experimental group and the control group had approximately the same writing fluency level. This may lead us to assume that any increase in the experimental group students' fluency in terms of rate and dysfluencies may be attributed to the topic control treatment, which they will receive during the experimental sessions. This assumption will be confirmed by the post-test's findings.

5. 2. 2. Findings From the Post-Test

This section reports the results obtained from the writing post-test. It describes the statistical findings for the experimental and control groups, focusing mainly on their fluency scores in the post-test and comparing them to the pre-test results.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rate	65	11,2749	1,32893
Dysfluencies	65	,0738	,01851

Table 5. 18: Statistical Findings for the Experimental Group's Fluency Scores in the Post-Test

The statistical findings of the post-test, depicted in Table 5. 18., indicate that the experimental group mean rate reached 11,27, with a standard deviation of 1,32. As far as the second fluency measure was concerned, the group's mean dysfluencies was 0,07, with a standard deviation of 0,01. A closer look at the experimental group's means in the pre and the post-tests leads us to observe that there were important differences in its fluency level. Its writing rate increased from 9,87 in the pre-test to 11,27 in the post-test, and its dysfluencies decreased from 0,09 in the pre-test to 0,07 in the post-test. These statistical improvements are confirmed by the paired sample t-test described in Table 5. 19. below.

	Mean	Std. Diviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	*Significant at the 0,05 Level
Pair 1 Pre/Post-test rate	1,39938	1,48976	7,573	64	,000	<0,05
Pair 2 Pre/Post-test dysfluencies	,02138	,03061	5,632	64	,000	<0,05

Table 5. 19: Paired-Sample T-Test for the Experimental Groups' Pre and Post-Tests

Table 5.19. presents the paired sample t-test findings for the experimental group. The t- and the p-values for the students' means in the writing rate measure were 7,57 and 0,00, respectively. For the dysfluencies measure, the t-value was 5,63 and the p-value was 0,00. Since the p-values for the two fluency measures were less than the estimated significance level (<0,05), we conclude that there were significant statistical differences between the experimental group's fluency level in the pre-test and in the post-test. This can be illustrated by the following figure.
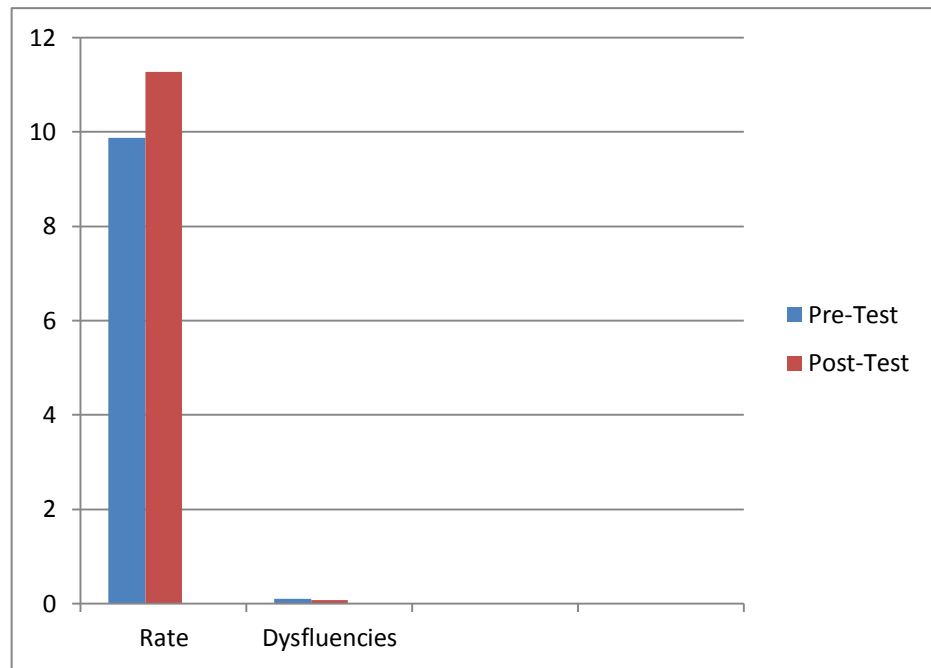
Figure 5. 12: Comparison of the Experimental Group's Pre and Post-Test
Writing Fluency Scores

Tables 5. 20. and 5. 21. below summarize the post-test findings for
the control group along with the paired sample t-test that examines the
mean differences of the group's pre and post-tests results.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rate	62	9,1027	,91521
Dysfluencies	62	,1353	,02178

Table 5. 20: Statistical Findings for the Control Group's Writing Fluency
Scores in the Post-Test

The findings of the post-test described in Table 5.20. reveal that the
control group's mean writing rate was 9,10 with a standard deviation of

0,91. It also shows that the mean dysfluencies attained by the control group was 0,13 with a standard deviation of 0,02. Comparing these results with those of the pre-test, we observe a change in the control group's fluency level. In other terms, the group's mean writing rate decreased from 10,37 in the pre-test to 9,10 in the post-test. Furthermore, the students' mean dysfluencies, which was 0,10 in the pre-test increased to 0,13. These observations were confirmed by the paired-sample t-test presented in Table 5.21. below.

	Mean	Std. Diviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	*Significant at the 0,05 Level
Pair 1 Pre/Post-test rate	1,27323	1,92213	5,216	61	,000	<0,05
Pair 2 Pre/Post-test dysfluencies	,03339	,03435	7,653	61	,000	<0,05

Table 5. 21: Paired-Sample T-Test for the Control Groups' Pre- and Post-Tests

The results of the paired-sample t-test, depicted in Table 5. 21., indicate statistical significant differences between the control group's fluency levels in the pre-test and the post-test. For the first fluency measure, the t-and p-values were 5,21 and 0,00, respectively. With regard to the second fluency measure, the t-value was 7,65 and the p-value was 0,00. In view that the p-

values for both writing rate and dysfluencies were below 0,05, we conclude that there were some significant statistical differences in the control group's fluency level as measured in the pre and post-tests. However, it is interesting to mention that these differences may not be interpreted as positive since the comparison between the pre-test and post-test results reveals that the control group's fluency decreased in term of the mean writing rate and increased in the mean dysfluencies. Figure 5.13. below clearly shows this comparison.
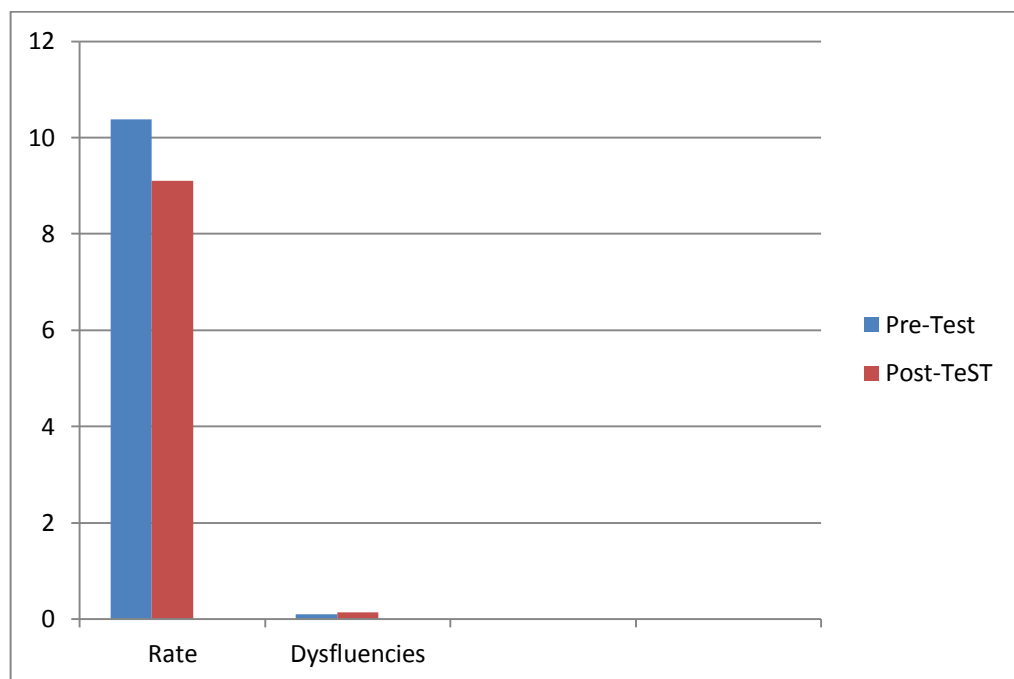
Figure 5. 13: Comparing the Control Group's Pre- and Post-Tests Writing Fluency Scores

Accordingly, the findings presented in the previous sections reveal that there were statistical significant changes in the two groups' writing fluency. While the experimental group's fluency increased after the topic control experiment, the control group's fluency level decreased. These conclusions are confirmed by the independent samples t-test findings summarized in the next table.

Fluency measures	Number of students	Mean difference	t-value	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	*Significant at the 0,05 Level
Rate	127	2,17218	10,679	125	,000	<0,05
Dysfluencies	127	,06148	17,099	119,810	,000	<0,05

Table 5. 22: Independent Samples T-Test Findings for the Experimental Group and the Control Groups Fluency Scores in the Post-Test

The data presented in Table 5. 22. reveal that there were differences between the post-test findings for the experimental and control groups. The t-and the p-values for the writing rate were 10,67 and 0,00, respectively. For the mean dysfluencies, the t-value was 17,09 and the p-value was 0,00. Since the p-value, for both fluency measures, was less than the significance level (<0,05), we conclude that there were important statistical differences between the two groups' fluency levels at the end of Study 2. This conclusion is clearly illustrated by Figure 5.14. below.
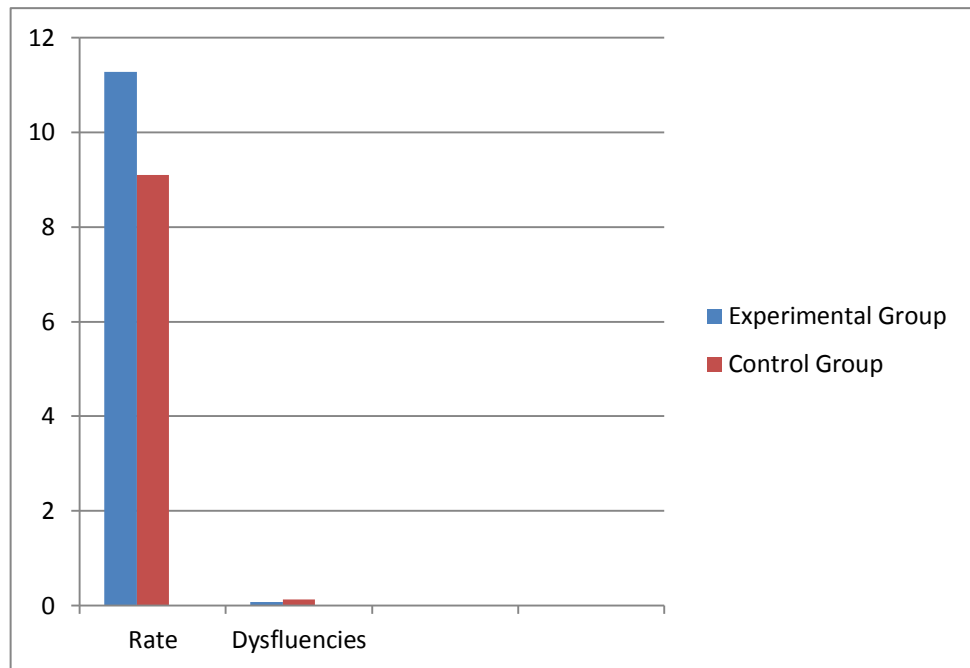
Figure 5. 14: Comparison of the Experimental and the Control Groups
Writing Fluency Scores in the Post-Test

Accordingly, by referring to our earlier interpretations, we can safely confirm that the experimental group's fluency means in the post-test outnumbered those means attained by the control group. This conclusion is further confirmed by the effect size that we calculated using the Eta Squared formula for the independent samples t-test. In line with Study 1 of this thesis, we considered the calculation of the effect size at the conclusion of Study 2 in order to examine the effectiveness of the topic control treatment sessions on the participants' writing fluency. The findings of this calculation indicated that the effect size for the mean writing rate was 0,47 and 0,70 for the mean dysfluencies. That is to say, the topic control experiment had a large effect on the experimental group's writing fluency. These results confirmed the study's hypothesis that topic control increased the experimental group students' writing fluency in terms of rate and dysfluencies.

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5. 2. 3. Findings From the Students' Questionnaire

As it has been mentioned in the research methodology chapter of this thesis, the students' questionnaire was administered at the end of the treatment sessions of Study 2. The questionnaire seeks to examine the participants' perceptions of the topic control practice in their writing classes. Therefore, the it contains three parts, each of which aims at answering the sub-research questions raised by the current study. The data collected from this research instrument was quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Its results are presented in the following sections.

Part 1: Students' Perceptions of the Topic Control Practice in their Writing Classes

This first part of the students' questionnaire asks the participants to give their opinions about the topic control practice in their writing classes. The first four (4) questions are meant to examine their perceptions about the teacher-assigned topics and the other three (3) questions are intended to investigate their perceptions about the self-selected topics.

Q1: Do you find the topics assigned by your writing teacher familiar to you? - If No, please explain why?

Q1 asks the participants to give their opinions about the familiarity level of the teacher-assigned topics by responding with "yes" or "no". those students whose answers were negative were required to explain their perspectives. The results of the participants' answers to this question are illustrated by Figure 5.15. below.
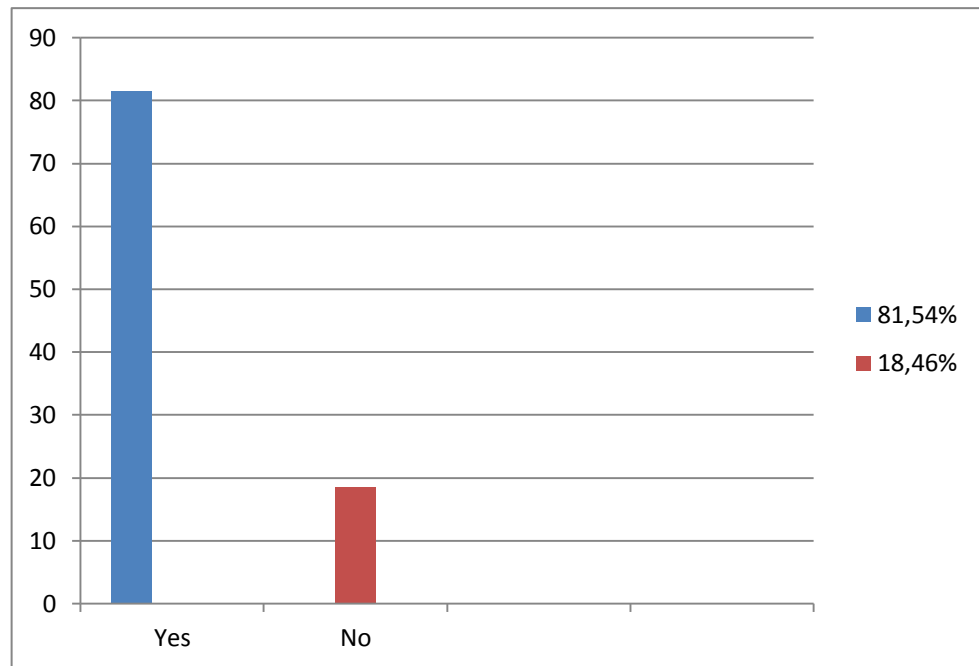
Figure 5. 15.: Students' Perceptions about the Familiarity Level of the Teacher-Assigned Topics in their Writing Classes

The percentages on the above figure show that the majority of the students (81,54%) perceived the topics given by the writing teacher as familiar. However, the other participants (18,46%) considered these topics as unfamiliar. According to their answers to the second section of Q1 **(If No, please explain why?)**, we observed that the main reason behind this negative perception about the teacher-assigned topics is the lack of background knowledge. One student argued that "I find difficulties in some topics because I don't have background information about them". Another student said "Sometimes I don't understand the topic and sometimes I don't have arguments about the topic". Another interesting argument is given by a student who explained that the teacher-assigned topics are "sometimes so specific and that what makes the student unable to write if he doesn't have enough information about the topic".

Q2: Do you feel motivated to develop a topic assigned to you by your teacher? (Yes/No)
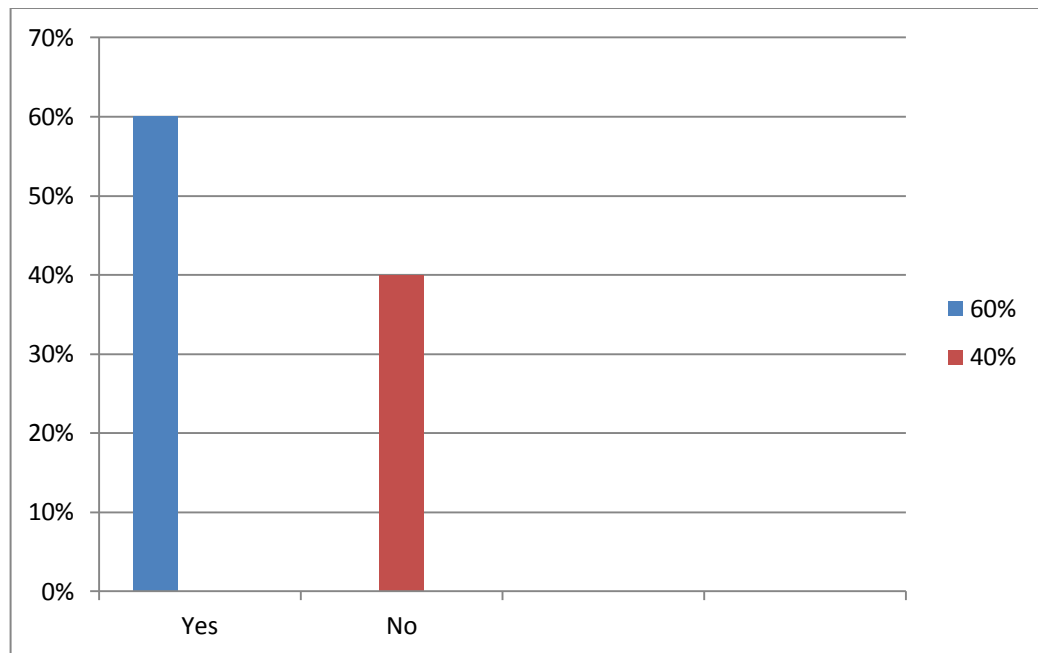
Figure 5. 16.: Students' Perceived Motivation of the Teacher-Assigned Topics in their Writing Classes

As it is shown in Figure 5. 16., 60% of the participants perceived the teacher-assigned topic as motivating while the other 40% did not consider them as a source of motivation.

Q3: How do you perceive your performance when writing about a teacher-assigned topic?

Q3 asks the participants to evaluate their writing performance when the topic is assigned to them by the teacher. To answer this question, the students were required to select one of the suggested answers, namely "Excellent", "Very good", "Good", "Average", or "Bad". The following figure illustrates the statistical findings for Q3.

Figure 5.17: Students' Perceived Performance Level When Writing about the Teacher-Assigned Topics

The analysis of the participants' answers, as shown in Figure 5.17., indicates that the majority of the students (53,85%) perceived their performance level as "Average". Some others (29,23%) considered their writings as "Good". A few students (12,31%) saw that their performance is "Very good" and only 3,08% considered performance levels in writing about the teacher-assigned topics as "Excellent". The lowest percentage (1,54%), however, was reported by those respondents who perceived their writings as "Bad".

Q4: What are the difficulties that you encounter when writing about a teacher-assigned topic?

This question aims at exploring the sorts of difficulties the students encounter when writing about the teacher-assigned topics. Q4 was analyzed qualitatively because it is an open-ended question. The findings of this analysis reveal that most of the participants face a number of

recurrent difficulties when the topic is chosen by their writing teacher. These difficulties can be classified into three major categories: informational, affective, and linguistic difficulties.

1. Background Information

The overwhelming majority of the students strongly believed that most of the teacher-assigned topics are difficult and require a great deal of research and readings in order to be able to write about. For example, one student argued that "The first problem we may face is the problem of understanding. Most of the time, students have difficulties of understanding the topic given by the teacher. The second difficulty is having relevant and sufficient information about the topic given". Another student said "I generally speaking I have a very basic knowledge about the teacher-assigned topics. And I have problems in developing my ideas".

2. Affective Issues

The analysis of the participants' answers to Q4 indicates that the second major difficulty that most of the students encounter when the writing topic is assigned to them is affective in nature. Most of the respondents assumed that this sort of topics can evoke stress. One student said that "Most of the time I don't find them interesting. The teacher-assigned topics are confusing. I feel pressured and unmotivated to write". Another student argued that "the topics given by the teacher are difficult, they make me feel stressed and confused".

3. Linguistic Issues

The third type of difficulty that the participants mentioned in their responses to Q4 is related to their inability to find appropriate words and expressions when writing about the teacher-assigned topics. For instance, a

student wrote "My major problem is finding the right words. I keep repeating the same words throughout my essay". Another one said that "the difficulties that I encounter when writing about teacher-assigned topics are using the formal language. I have weak vocabulary".

Q5: Did you like the idea of free topics in your writing class? (Yes/No)

This close-ended question asks the participants to indicate their perceptions of the self-selected topics practice in their writing classes. The analysis of the students' responses to this question is displayed in the following figure.
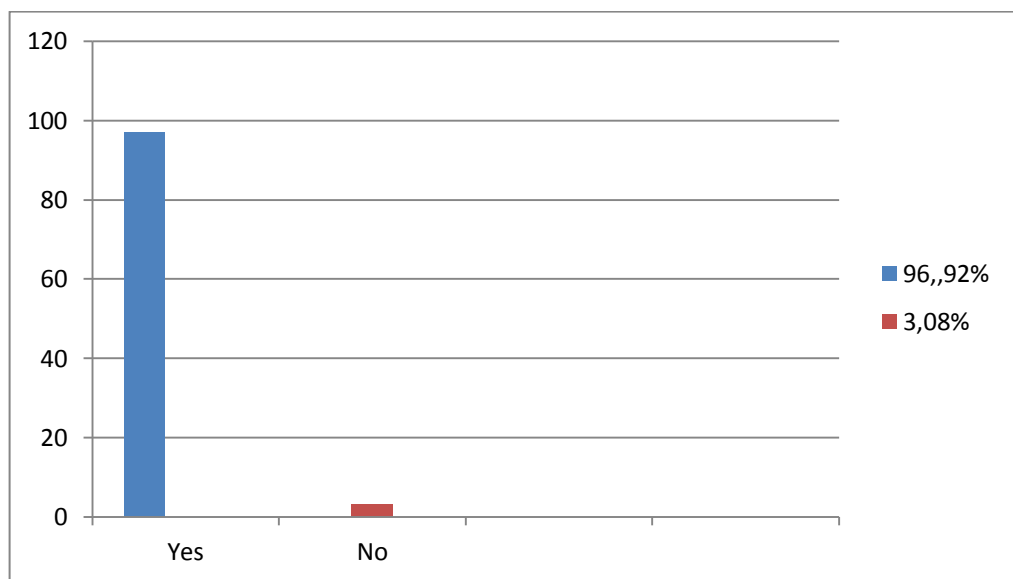
Figure 5.18.: Students' Perception of the Self-Selected Topics in their Writing Classes

The findings from Q5 show that the great majority of the students (96,92%) appreciated the practice of self-selected topics in their writing classes. They also reveal that a very small number of students (3,08%) did not like the practice.

Q6: Do you think that free topics is a teaching practice that can motivate you to write in English without waiting for any sort of rewarding (for example adding marks) from your teacher's part? (Yes/ No) - Please explain why?

Q6 seeks to identify the participants' perceptions of the motivational benefits of the self-selected topics. While the first part of this question asks the participants to answer with "yes" or "no", the second part requires them to explain their choice. The analysis of the participants' answers is shown in the following figure.
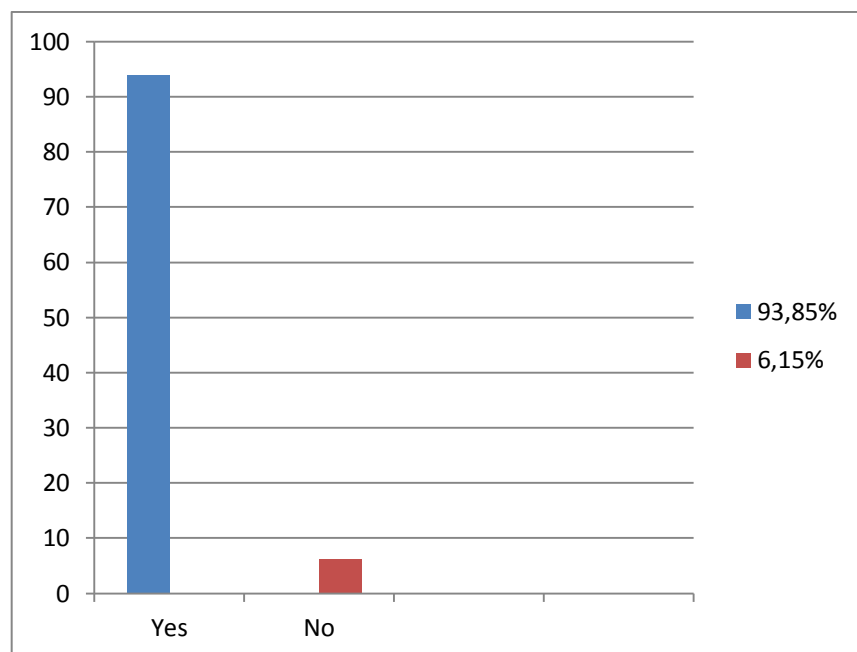
Figure 5.19.: Students' Perceptions of the Motivational Benefits of the Self-Selected Topics in their Writing Classes

According to the statistical findings for the students' answers to Q6, as illustrated in Figure 5.19., the great majority (93,85%) believed that the self-selected topics is a motivating teaching practice that can push them to write even without receiving any sort of rewards. This opinion, however, was not accepted by the other group of students who constitute the

minority (6,15%). Our qualitative analysis of the second part of Q6 (**Please explain why?**) helped us to understand the reasons behind both positive and negative students' perceptions.

Most of the students who answered with "yes" argued that this teaching practice has the power to generate some important positive feelings, including confidence, freedom, and interest. For instance, one student said "Because free topics help me feel confident because it makes me produce more and ideas come easily". Another student claimed that "writing about free topics is enjoyable, it gives me an opportunity to freely express my ideas and use my knowledge. Even if there is no reward, I'd feel motivated to do it". Another student commented "because it is a topic that interests me so I'll be excited to write all what I know about it".

In contrast, the analysis of the opinions of those students' who answered with "no" reveals that most of them did not appreciate the motivational benefits of free topics because they believe that it is a time-consuming practice. This perspective can be summarized by a student's comment that said "free topics is a good idea, but I think that it takes us a long time to think about what topics to write about especially when we are writing in class. But when the topic is given by the teacher we are much helped".

Q7: How do you perceive your performance when writing about the self-selected topics?

This question asks the students to evaluate their writing performance when they write about the self-selected topics. The results of the students' responses to this question is illustrated in the following figure.
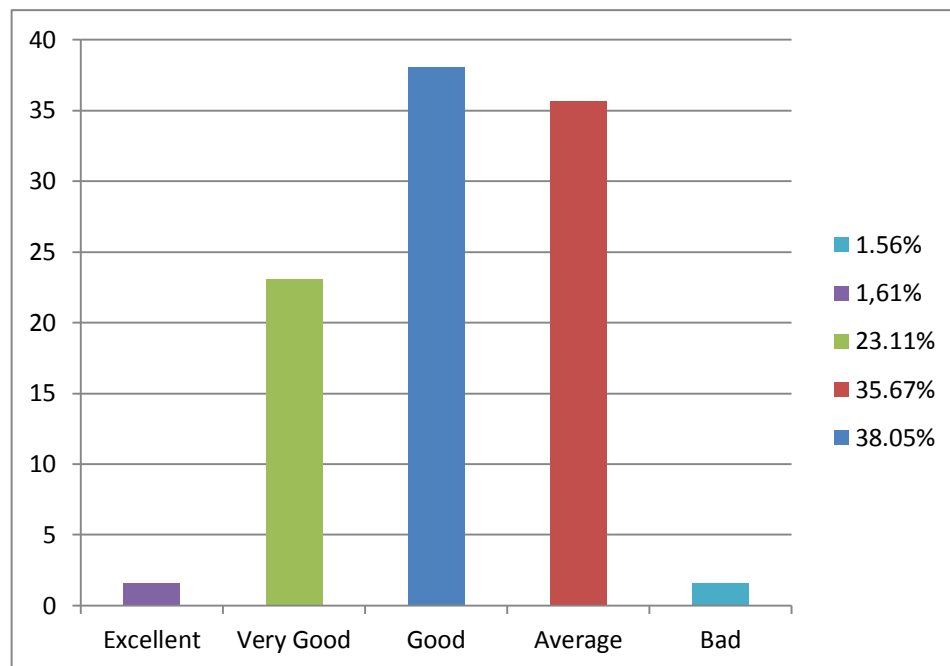
Figure 5.20.: Students' Perceived Performance Level When Writing about the Self- Topics

The findings represented in Figure 5.20. indicate that the majority of the students believed that their performance when they write about the self-selected topics was "Good" (38,05%) and more than 35% of them evaluated their writings about this type of topics as "Average" (35,67%). The figure shows that an important percentage of the participants (23,11%) perceived their performance as "Very Good". The participants who perceived their writing performance as "Excellent" is 1,61% and those who rated their writings as "Bad" is 1,56%.

Part 2: Topic Control and Students' Situational Interest

This second part of the questionnaire examines the impact of the topic control sessions on the participants' situational interest. Each of its five (5) statements required the students to show their agreement or disagreement levels on a five-point likert scale (See Appendix D). The following table

summarizes the statistical findings for the individual statements and concludes by presenting the overall mean for the situational interest scale.

Statements	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true	Mean	Std. Diviation	General orientation
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			
1	3	1	9	32	20	4,00	,968	Totally Agree
	4,6	1,5	13,8	49,2	30,8			
2	0	6	11	29	19	3,94	,916	Totally Agree
	0	9,2	16,9	44,6	29,2			
3	0	5	8	34	18	4,00	,848	Totally Agree
	0	7,7	12,3	52,3	27,7			
4	2	1	9	29	24	4,11	,921	Totally Agree
	3,1	1,5	13,8	44,6	36,9			
5	4	16	19	16	10	3,18	1,158	Totally Agree
	6,2	24,6	29,2	24,6	15,4			
Total Mean						3,8460	,37733	High Level

Table 5. 23.: Students' Perceived Situational Interest During the Topic Control Sessions

The data analysis presented in Table 5.23. shows that statement 4 is ranked the first on the scale with a mean of 4,11 (Std=0,92). This is followed by statements 1, 3, and 2 whose means are 4,00 (Std=0,96), 4,00 (Std=0,84), and 3,94 (Std=0,91), respectively. Statement 5 is ranked the last on the scale with a mean of 3,18 (Std=1,15). The overall mean for the five (5) statements is 3,84 (Std=0,37), indicating that the participants' perceived level of situational interest is high. The conclusion that we can draw from these statistical findings is that the topic control sessions the participants experienced had a positive impact on their perceived situational interest.

Part 3: Topic Control and Students' Intrinsic Motivation

This part of the questionnaire aims at examining the impact of the self-selected topics on the participants' intrinsic motivation while writing. It comprises four (4) subscales, each of which contains a number of items with which the students are required to indicate their agreement or disagreement. The statistical findings for the four intrinsic motivation subscales are presented in the following sections.

1.Interest/Enjoyment

This subscales measures the participants' interest/enjoyment level while writing about the self-selected topics. It comprises items 1, 5, 8, 10, 14 ®, 17, and 20 (See Appendix D). The findings from this subscale are displayed in the following table.

Items	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true	Mean	Std. Diviation	General orientation
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			
1	1	1	11	31	21	4,08	,835	**Totally Agree**
	1,5	1,5	16,9	47,7	32,3			
5	0	1	11	31	22	4,14	,747	**Totally Agree**
	0	1,5	16,9	47,7	33,8			
8	0	0	7	46	12	4,08	,539	**Totally Agree**
	0	0	10,8	70,8	18,5			
10	0	1	11	38	15	4,03	,684	**Totally Agree**
	0	1,5	16,9	58,5	23,1			
14	35	23	4	3	0	4,38	,804	**Totally Disagree**
	53,8	35,4	6,2	4,6	0			
17	0	3	10	32	20	4,06	,808	**Totally Agree**
	0	4,6	15,4	49,2	30,8			
20	0	0	7	38	20	4,20	,617	**Totally**

	0	0	10,8	58,5	30,8			**Agree**
Total Mean						4,1386	,12034	**High Level**

Table 5. 24.: Students' Interest/Enjoyment Level when Writing about the Self-Selected Topics

According to the findings presented in Table 5.24., the highest score is obtained by item 14 whose mean is 4,38 (Std=0,80). This is followed by items 20, 5, 8, and 1 whose means are 4,20 (Std=0,61), 4,14 (Std=0,74), 4,08 (Std=0,53), and 4,08 (Std=0,83), respectively. In contrast, the lowest score is attained by item 17 with a mean of 4,06 (Std=0,80). The overall mean for the subscale is 4,13 (Std=0,12), indicating that the participants' level of interest and enjoyment when writing about the self-selected topics was very high. Therefore, the self-selected topics as a teaching practice in the writing classroom had an important positive impact on the participants' interest and enjoyment.

2. Perceived Competence

This intrinsic motivation subscale assesses the effect of the self-selected topics on the participants' perceptions of their own competence while writing in English. As it is shown in the questionnaire (See Appendix D), the Perceived Competence subscale contains items 4, 7, 12, 16, and 22. Table 5.25. below presents the statistical findings for this subscale.

Item	Not true at all Number Percent	Not true Number Percent	Neutral Number Percent	True Number Percent	Very true Number Percent	Mean	Std. Diviation	General orientation
4	0	3	9	36	17	4,03	,770	**Totally Agree**
	0	4,6	13,8	55,4	26,2			
7	1	7	23	28	6	3,48	,868	**Totally Agree**
	1,5	10,8	35,4	43,1	9,2			
12	1	4	10	39	11	3,85	,833	**Totally Agree**
	1,5	6,2	15,4	60,0	16,9			
16	1	3	11	34	16	3,94	,864	**Totally Agree**
	1,5	4,6	16,9	52,3	24,6			
22	0	2	9	39	15	4,03	,706	**Totally Agree**
	0	3,1	13,8	60,0	23,1			
Total Mean						3,8660	,22832	**High Level**

Table 5. 25.: Students' Perceived Competence Level after the Writing Self-Selected Topics Sessions

The statistical analysis for the participants' level of perceived competence reveals that the highest score is attained by items 4 and 22 with means of 4,03 (Std=0,77) and 4,03 (Std=0,70), respectively. They are followed by items 16 and 12 whose scores are 3,94 (Std=0,86) and 3,85 (Std=0,83), respectively. The lowest score on the scale was obtained by item 7 with a mean of 3,48 (Std=0,86). The total mean for this intrinsic motivation subscale is 3,86 (Std=0,22), which is a high level as it is shown on the table. This leads us to conclude that the participants perceived themselves as highly competent while writing about the self-selected topics during the present study's treatment sessions.

3. Perceived Choice

The items that form the perceived competence subscale are Items 3, 11 ®, 15, 19 ®, and 21 ® (See Appendix D). In analyzing the collected data, we reversed the negative items (11 ®, 19 ®, and 21 ®) of this subscale. Therefore, the lowest percentages, as shown in Table 5.26. below, are considered positive predictors on the scale while the highest percentages are regarded negative predictors of perceived choice. The following table describes the statistical findings for this intrinsic motivation subscale.

Item	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true	Mean	Std. Diviation	General orientation
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			
3	3	10	12	17	23	3,72	1,231	**Totally**

								Agree
	4,6	15,4	18,5	26,2	35,4			
11	15	26	13	8	3	3,65	1,110	**Totally Disagree**
	23,1	40,0	20,0	12,3	4,6			
15	0	1	8	40	16	4,09	,655	**Totally Agree**
	0	1,5	12,3	61,5	24,6			
19	7	9	24	19	6	2,88	1,111	**Disagree**
	10,8	13,8	36,9	29,2	9,2			
21	11	25	16	12	1	3,51	1,033	**Totally Disagree**
	16,9	38,5	24,6	18,5	1,5			
Total Mean						3,8660	,22832	**High Level**

Table 5. 26.: Students' Perceived Choice while Doing the Self-Selected Topics Activity

The findings on Table 5.26. indicate that item 15 is ranked the first on the scale with a mean of 4,09 (Std=0,65). It is followed by items 3, 11, and 21 with means of 3,72 (Std=1,23), 3,65 (Std=1,11), and 3,51 (Std=1,03), respectively. Item 19 obtained the lowest score with a mean of 2,88 (Std=1,11). In this regard, the overall mean of this subscale is 3,86 (Std=0,22), which is a high level. As a conclusion, the participants'

perceived themselves as having a high level of choice when the teacher allowed them the opportunity to write about their own topics.

4. Pressure/Tension

This subscale examines the participants' felt level of pressure and tension while writing about the self-selected topics. On the administered students' questionnaire, the Pressure/Tension subscale is represented by items 2, 6®, 9, 13®, and 18® (See Appendix D). The following table displays the statistical results of this subscale.

Item	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true	Mean	Std. Diviation	General orientation
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			
2	2	7	7	24	25	3,97	1,104	**Totally Agree**
	3,1	10,8	10,8	36,9	38,5			
6	10	28	23	4	0	3,68	,812	**Totally Disagree**
	15,4	43,1	35,4	6,2	0			
9	0	2	10	32	21	4,11	,773	**Totally Agree**
	0	3,1	15,4	49,2	32,3			
13	19	25	15	6	0	3,88	,944	**Totally**

18								Disagree
	29,2	38,5	23,1	9,2	0			
18	18	24	16	4	3	3,77	1,072	**Totally Disagree**
	27,7	36,9	24,6	6,2	4,6			
Total Mean						3,8820	,16814	**High Level**

Table 5. 27. Students' Perceived Pressure/Tension While Performing the Self-Selected Topics Activity

The results for the pressure/tension subscale, shown in Table 5.27., reveal that the highest score is attained by item 9 whose mean is 4,11 (Std=0,77). It is followed by items 2, 13, and 18 whose means are 3,97 (Std=1,10), 3,88 (Std=0,94), and 3,77 (Std=1,07), respectively. The lowest score was obtained by item 6 whose mean is 3,68 (Std=0,81). The total mean for this subscale is 3,88 (Std=0,16), indicating that the participants did not experience stress while writing about the free topics in class.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the key findings of the two quasi-experimental studies involved in the present thesis. The results obtained from Study1 showed that the topic control treatment sessions had a positive effect on the students' speaking fluency. Before the beginning of the study's treatment sessions, the independent samples t-test's results indicated that the experimental group and the control group were approximately at the same fluency level. However, the post-test's statistical findings revealed that the experimental group's fluency scores outnumbered that of the control group.

The effectiveness of the topic control sessions in this fluency enhancement was confirmed by the calculated effect size, which showed that Study1 treatment sessions had a large effect on the experimental group's fluency in terms of speech rate, length of runs, number of pauses, and length of pauses. Furthermore, the questionnaire's findings indicated that the experimental group had positively perceived the topic control as a teaching practice in their speaking classes. The statistical findings for the second part of the questionnaire also revealed that this practice increased the students' situational interest in class. As far as the third part of the questionnaire is concerned, the analysis of its results showed that the self-selected topics had played an important role in enhancing the students' intrinsic motivation, which was assessed in terms of perceived interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, perceived choice, and perceive pressure/tension.

The statistical results of Study2 confirmed its hypothesis as they revealed that topic control increased the students' writing fluency, which was measured in terms of rate and dysfluencies. The statistical findings for the experimental and the control groups' scores n the pre-test showed that the homogeneity of their fluency levels. Nevertheless, after involving the experimental group in the topic control treatment sessions, there were statistically significant differences between this group and the control group. The results obtained from the independent samples t-test indicated that the treatment sessions had positively influenced the experimental group's fluency level as compared to that of the control group that did not receive the same treatment. This finding was consistent with the results obtained from the calculated effect size, which confirmed that the topic control treatment sessions had a large effect on the experimental group's writing fluency. In addition, the analysis of the first two parts of the students' questionnaire revealed that this teaching practice, which was positively perceived by the participants, had significantly enhanced their

situational interest in class. Furthermore, the findings of the questionnaire's last part showed that writing about the self-selected topics had helped the students to feel interested, competent, and in control of their learning.

Chapter Six

Discussion, Pedagogical Implications

and Recommendations

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings obtained from the research instruments employed in both Study 1 and Study 2. It showed that topic control as a teaching practice had positive effects on the students' fluency in speaking as well as writing. The present chapter focuses on discussing the two studies' results for the sake of drawing pedagogical implications and providing recommendations. Relevant to this, the chapter comprises four major sections. The first and the second sections discuss the findings of both Study 1 and Study 2 in terms of the independent and dependent variables. The third one draws some pedagogical implications and recommendations, which can enable educational practitioners to promote students' fluency development through the use of topic control as an instructional practice.

6. 1. Discussion of the Findings from Study 1

As it has been previously mentioned in this thesis, the main objective of Study1 is to investigate the effect of topic control on EFL learners' spoken fluency. The study is guided by a number of research questions. While the major research question attempted to investigate the effect of topic control on the participants' speaking fluency, the related sub-research questions addressed the participants' perceptions of this teaching practice in their speaking classes. They also tried to examine its impact on the students' intrinsic motivation and situational interest in class. To facilitate this discussion, we will interpret the study's results in relation to each of the raised research questions.

MRQ: What is the effect of topic control on EFL students' speaking fluency?

This question can be answered by discussing the pre- and post-tests findings of the present study. In the pre-test, the speaking fluency level of the students of both experimental and control groups was approximately equal. The independent samples t-test findings (See Table 5. 3. and Figure 5.1.) revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in the spoken fluency scores attained by the experimental group and the control group. The p-value across the four fluency measures, namely speech rate, pause, pause length, and length of runs, was more than the significance level (>0,05). This homogeneity between the two groups in the pre-test encouraged us to assume that the topic control treatment sessions may affect the experimental group's fluency in terms of speech rate, number and length of pauses, as well as the mean length of runs at the expense of the control group that did not receive a similar teaching practice.

This assumption was confirmed by the different statistical findings obtained from the pos-test. First, The analysis of the paired-sample t-test (See Table 5.5 and Figure 5.2.) showed important statistical differences in the experimental group's fluency level before and after the treatment sessions, where the p-value was less than the significance level (<0,05) in the four fluency measures. The paired-sample t-test results confirmed that the topic control treatment sessions enhanced the participants' spoken fluency in terms of rate (it increased from 14,99 wpm to 98,38 wpm), the number as well as the length of pause (number of pauses decreased from 118,27 to 112,29 and the mean length of silence decreased from 0,94 to 0,75), and the length of sound syllables produced between pauses (mean length of runs increased from 6,46 to 8,61). Consequently, the students' scores in the post-test showed that they could express themselves fluently with more words per minute, longer sound syllables between pauses, and with few pauses and hesitation. This indicated that the experimental group students achieved progress in their fluency after the treatment sessions.

Second, the paired-sample t-test used to compare the fluency means for the control group in the pre- and post-tests revealed that there were some significant statistical variances in the students' spoken fluency in terms of speech rate and mean length of runs (See Table 5.7. and Figure 5.3.). For these two fluency measures, the p-value was less than the significance level (<0,05), indicating an important statistical change in the students' fluency level. However, a closer look at the control group's pre- and post-test fluency scores showed that the students' mean rate decreased from 49,17 to 26,41 wpm and their mean length of runs, which was 6,06 in the pre-test, decreased to 4,85 in the post-test. The results obtained from the paired-sample t-test also showed that there were no significant statistical variances between the pre-and post-test scores in terms of the mean number of pauses and the mean pause length, with a p-value that exceeded the significance level (>0,05). The students' mean number of pauses, which was 118,16 in the pre-test, increased to 134,50 and their mean for total silence per minute in the post-test remained approximately similar to that average registered in the pre-test. These findings indicate that the change that happened to the control group's spoken fluency was quite negative rather than positive.

Third, the findings obtained from the independent-samples t-test (See Table 5.8. and Figure 5.4.) confirmed that the participants' speaking fluency was positively affected by the topic control teaching practice. The independent t-test results revealed that there were important statistical differences between the post-test means fluency scores of the experimental group that received the topic control treatment and the control groups that did not receive similar training sessions. The p-value for the four spoken fluency measures did not exceed the significance level (<0,05) in favor of the experimental group. As a result, the topic control treatment sessions played an important positive role in enhancing the experimental group's speaking fluency. Furthermore, the effect size of the topic control treatment

sessions on the experimental group's fluency in terms of speech rate, mean number of pauses, pause length, and length of runs was large (See Figure 5.4.).

In the light of these statistical findings, we conclude that topic control practice allowed for the most fluent performance in terms of the speech rate, the number as well as length of pauses, and the length of sound syllables between pauses. The fluency gains in the experimental group might be attributed to the topic control sessions they were exposed to. These findings are consistent with the results of other studies, which proved the effectiveness of topic control on L2 learners' speaking fluency, notably the studies of foster and Skehan (1998), Skehan (1998), Chang (1999, 2002), Rahimpour and Hazar (2007), and Bui (2014, 2018).

The fluency gains in the experimental group might be attributed to the topic control sessions they were exposed to. According to Levelt's (1989) and Kormos (2006) speaking models, discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, speaking is a cognitively demanding skill, which engages learners in the processes of conceptualization, formulation, articulation, and self-monitoring. Counterbalancing the control of the speaking topics in Study1 had an important role in reducing these cognitive loads. During these treatment sessions, the students were allowed to speak on both teacher-assigned and self-selected topics. As such, they benefited from their own background knowledge when doing the speaking activities. Obviously, the participants achieved a certain extent of conceptualization and formulation balance, which enabled them to increase their speech rate and mean length of runs. It also helped them to reduce the number as well as the length of pauses in their speech.

As it has been explained previously in this thesis, conceptualization is the first cognitive stage through which a speaker proceeds when producing utterances. According to Levelt (1989) and Kormos (2006) speaking

models, the load on this conceptual stage is minimized if the speaker has sufficient knowledge about the topic he wants to speak about. The topic control treatment sessions allowed the participants to access their content knowledge for idea generation more easily and rapidly. This may have significantly lessened the burden on attention at the conceptualization stage and enabled the students to focus on formulating the message.

As such, the topic control treatment sessions appear to have some significant positive influence on the participants' formulation stage. According to the aforementioned speech production models, this stage represents a real challenge to many L2 learners due to the difficult and various linguistic choices they have to make in order to transform the message that has been processed in the conceptualization stage into a verbal one. Study1 experimental group students have successfully decreased the number as well as the length of pauses and have achieved high levels of speech rate and length of runs, showing that they were able to easily access their linguistic resources, which reduced the need for online processing.

This might happen because the topic control practice trained the participants to practice the spoken language by allowing them opportunities to select their own topics, along with those topics initiated by the teacher. This teaching practice proved to be effective for helping the students to access their linguistic resources in a short period of time. This, indeed, has enabled them to reduce the need to pause for choosing words and formulating utterances. The effect of this experience was reflected in the observed increase in the experimental group's spoken fluency in the post-test.

SRQ 1: How do students perceive the topic control practice in their speaking classes?

In order to answer this sub-research question, we need first to interpret and discuss the findings obtained from the students' questionnaire (Part I). The analysis of the participants' responses to Q1 and Q2 revealed that the great majority of the participants believed that this sort of topics are familiar and motivating at the same time. Furthermore, the findings from Q3 showed that more than fifty percent of the students perceived their performance when speaking about teacher-assigned topics as good, reflecting a satisfactory perception of their speaking skill. This reveals that the participants have positive perceptions of the teacher-assigned topics in their speaking classes.

Nevertheless, the results obtained from Q4 showed that when speaking about the teacher-assigned topics, the participants face a number of difficulties, which constitute a real challenge to them. The major difficulties mentioned by the participants are affective, informational, and linguistic in nature. The majority of the students claimed that, for most of the time, they do not seem to able to express themselves easily because they lack words, expressions, as well as background information and arguments to support their ideas while talking in class. They also asserted that when the topic is nominated by their teacher, they generally feel anxious, uninterested, and less confident about their speaking performance.

In fact, these issues have already been identified and discussed by Ellis and Fotos (1999). The latter observe that since meaning-negotiation in the L2 classroom is largely dependent on students' control of the discourse, teachers' nomination of topics may reduce the amount of meaning negotiation and lead students to feel reluctant and unable to freely express themselves (223). An effective solution to this issue is suggested by

researchers like Hatch (1978), Van Lier (1988), and Slimani's (1989) who claim that in order to build a strong interactional basis in the L2 classroom, teachers need to be more flexible in allowing their learners the freedom to control the discussion topics.

These observations and suggestions were confirmed by the results obtained from the participants' responses to Q5, Q6, and Q7. The great majority of the students positively perceived the self-selected topics in their speaking classes. According to students' answers to Q5, 86,67% of them liked this teaching practice. More than 90% of the students claimed that the self-selected topics can motivate them to speak in class even without waiting for any sort of rewarding because it makes them feel confident, free, and creative. And more than 59% of the students perceived their performance when speaking about the self-selected topics as very good. These results are consistent with the claims made by Ellis (1984) and Ellis (1992) who consider self-selection as a teaching practice that has the power to enhance (1) students' willingness to communicate in L2, (2) students' motivation, and (3) students' L2 production.

SRQ2: Will topic control influence the participants' perceived situational interest in their speaking classes?

The answer of this sub-research question can be found in our analysis of students' responses to the second part of the questionnaire (See Table 5. 10.). The majority of the participants agreed that topic control was a teaching practice that grabbed their attention (M=4,02, STD=0,94) and created an excited environment within their speaking classroom where attention was easily attained (M=4,27, STD=0,89). They also considered that this experience encouraged them to actively participate in class (M=4,10, STD=,838). The majority of the students wished that this experience would be maintained as a teaching practice (M=3,98,

STD=1,00) due to its positive impact on their involvement with the speaking tasks (M= 3,68, STD=1,24).

Accordingly, the topic control sessions have positively influenced the participants situational interest in their speaking classes because it promoted autonomy and provided choice (Deci, 1992). These results are consistent with those of other studies, such as Schraw et al. (1998), Flowerday and Schraw (2000), and Shraw, et al, (2001), demonstrating that students' control is particularly important to sustain their situational interest in class.

SRQ3: Will self-selected topics result in higher intrinsic motivation of students in the speaking classes?

As it has been explained in the research methodology chapter, the aim of this sub-research question is to examine the impact of self-selected topics on the participants' intrinsic motivation to speak English as a foreign language. The analysis of the four intrinsic motivation subscales showed that allowing the students to control topics had important positive effects on their intrinsic motivational levels. The results from the Interest/Enjoyment subscale (See Table 5. 11.) indicate that the majority of the participants found the self-selected topics practice interesting and enjoyable (with a mean of 4,17 and an Std=0,07). The findings obtained from the perceived competence subscale (See Table 5. 12.) also reflects the participants' satisfaction with their speaking performance (with a mean of 3,82 and an Std=0,18). Similarly, the findings from the perceived choice subscale (See Table 5. 13.) reveal that the majority of the students agreed that the self-selected topics have helped them to reach a high level of perceived choice in their speaking classes (with a mean of 3,79 and an Std=0,44). As for the stress/pressure subscale, the majority of the participants (See Table 5. 14) agreed that they did not experience a high

level of stress and pressure while speaking about the free topics in class (with a mean of 3,72 and an Std=0,30). What is evidenced here is that allowing the students the opportunity to control the topics of their speaking activities had a positive impact on their intrinsic motivation.

These findings are consistent with the results obtained in a number of self-determination studies, which proved that self-selection has a paramount positive impact on intrinsic motivation. Most notably the studies conducted by Reynolds and Symons (2001), Patall, et al, (2008), Patal, et al, (2010), and Meng and Ma (2015). The findings obtained from part 3 of the present study's questionnaire suggest that providing students with opportunities to control their speaking activities' topics can effectively enhance their sense of intrinsic motivation due to its ability to create a classroom environment supportive of autonomy, competence, and control (Deci, 1980; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Furthermore, it is interesting to mention that the positive effects of topic control on the students' intrinsic motivation may be attributed to the design of the self-selection activity used in this study. As it has been shown in the research methodology chapter, in manipulating the students' topic control practice for Study 1, the researcher considered the constructs of autonomy, competence, and control that research has demonstrated to be effective for enhancing intrinsic motivation and the related performance outcomes (Deci & Ryan (1980); de Charms (1968); Deci, Koestner, & Ryan (1999); Cordova & Lepper (1996); Reeve et al., (2003); Tafarodi et al., (1999). This manipulation may have reduced the detrimental effects of self-selection as a teaching practice in this study.

6. 2. Discussion of the Findings from Study 2

As it has been explained in the preceding chapters of this thesis, the main purpose of Study 2 was to investigate the impact of topic control on EFL students' fluency in writing. The present discussion is structured around the study's four research questions.

MRQ: What is the effect of topic control on EFL students' writing fluency?

The answer of this research question can be found in the analysis of the data collected from the study's pre- and post-tests findings. Before the start of the topic control treatment sessions, the homogeneity of the experimental group and the control group in terms of their writing fluency levels was confirmed by the pre-test results. The independent samples t-test findings for the two groups showed that there were no statistical differences between them, with a p-value, in the two fluency measures (writing rate and dysfluencies) exceeding the significance level (>0,05). These statistical results confirmed the two groups' homogeneity, which signifies that before the topic control treatment sessions both the experimental group and the control group revealed approximately the same level of writing fluency (See Table 5. 17. and Figure 5. 11).

However, after the topic control treatment sessions, a comparison of the two groups' scores in the post-test indicated that the participants' writing fluency level in the experimental group was higher than that of the control group. The findings obtained from the independent samples t-test (See Table 5.22. and Figure 5.14.) showed that there were statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of writing rate and the number of dysfluencies, with a p-value of less than the significance

level (<0,05) and a large effect size of the treatment sessions on the experimental group's writing fluency.

Furthermore, this positive effect of the topic control treatment sessions on the participants' writing fluency was confirmed by the findings attained from the paired-sample t-test that compared the experimental group's fluency scores in the pre and post-tests. This test proved that the experiment group's fluency gains were attributed to the topic control treatment. The students' writing rate increased from 9,87 wpm in the pre-test to 11,27 wpm in the post-test. The participants' dysfluencies decreased from 0,09 in the pre-test to 0,07 in the post-test (See Table 5. 19 and Figure 5. 12).

The paired-sample t-test that compared the control group's fluency scores in the pre and post-tests revealed that were some statistically significant differences in its students' fluency level, with a p-value of less than the significance level (<0,05). However, it is necessary to note that the control group's fluency level decreased in term of writing rate and increased in term of the mean number of dysfluencies the students committed in their writing production (See Table 5. 21. and Figure 5. 13). Therefore, the paired-sample t-test showed that the control group's writing fluency was not promoted during the six-months period between the pre-test and the post-test.

These findings are, in fact, consistent with the results of L2 researches that advocate the positive effects of topic control on students' writing fluency. These studies included the work of Bonzo (2008), Dickenson (2014), Ferriera (2013), and Ritting-Miki and Sholdt (2014).The findings of these studies, as reviewed in Chapter Three of this thesis, showed the extent to which control over the writing expression topics, as compared with teacher-assigned topics, can enhance EFL students' fluency.

However, it is interesting to note that most of these studies measured fluency in terms of students' writing words only. In addition to this important fluency measure, Study2 of the current thesis measured the participants' writing fluency by means of the mean number of dysfluencies. The latter measure proved that the topic control treatment had played an important role in reducing the number of dysfluencies committed by the students in the experimental group.

In addition, this study sought to maintain a balance between the teacher-assigned and the self-selected topics. The rationale behind this was that this balance would reduce the affective and linguistic challenges that students generally face when writing in a foreign language, as discussed in Chapter Two of the present thesis. Therefore, we can attribute the positive effects yielded by the topic control treatment sessions on the students' fluency to this established balance between the student-selected as well as teacher-assigned topics.

SRQ1: How do students perceive the topic control practice in their writing classes?

This sub-research question can be answered by interpreting the results of the first part of the students' questionnaire. The findings obtained from Q1 and Q2 revealed that the students positively perceived the teacher-assigned topics, considering them as familiar and motivating (See Figures 5. 15. and 5. 16.). These findings are inconsistent with the results obtained from Q3, which reflected their dissatisfaction with their performance level when writing about the teacher-assigned topics, with more than 50% of them rating their performance as "average" (See Figure 5. 17.). Furthermore, the analysis of the students' answers to Q4 revealed that teacher topic control was regarded as a teaching practice that may cause a

number of informational, affective, and linguistic difficulties to the participants. To some extent, this finding is consistent with Bonyadi and Zeinalpur's (2014) qualitative study, which reveals that teacher-assigned topics may result in some affective difficulties to students, such as low levels of motivation and interest. In the present study, the results obtained from the students' responses to Q4 indicate that this type of writing topics may have other serious performance problems, such as reducing the students' ability to express their ideas due to the lack of enough background knowledge about the topic.

On the other hand, the analysis of the results obtained from Q5, Q6, and Q7 proved that the participants positively perceived the self-selected topics and see it as a motivating teaching practice that can effectively enhance their writing performance in English. For Q5, more than 96% of the students appreciated writing about their own topics (See Figure 5. 18). Similarly, more than 93% of the participants agreed that this practice can motivate them to write even without receiving any sort of rewards (See Figure 5. 19). And more than 38% perceived their performance as good when writing about the self-selected topics (See Figure 5. 20). In line with Study1 of this thesis, the findings of these three questions in the students' questionnaire confirm the assertions made by Ellis (1984) and Ellis (1992) about the positive effects of self-selection in the L2 classroom, including increased motivation and willingness to communicate.

SRQ2: Will topic control influence the participants' perceived situational interest in their writing classes?

The analysis of the participants' responses to the second part of the questionnaire allow us to claim that the topic control treatment sessions had positively influenced their situational interest in the writing classroom. The great majority of the students (See Table 5. 23) perceived that this teaching

practice increased their attention, effort, and persistence in class. Therefore, in line with Study1 of this thesis, these findings show that topic control may be considered an effective teaching practice to support the development of students' situational interest, which may result in more positive learning outcomes (Deci, 1992). In other words, alternating the choice of topics between teachers and students permitted the participants to develop some positive feelings towards their writing classrooms (Renninger & Hidi, 2002; Hidi, 1990; Schraw and Dennison, 1994; Shirey, 1992). As such, the results of this part of the questionnaire are consistent with the studies of Schraw et al. (1998), Flowerday and Schraw (2000), and Shraw, et al, (2001) reviewed in Chapter One of this thesis.

SRQ3: Will self-selected topics result in higher intrinsic motivation of students in the writing classes?

The analysis of the third part of the questionnaire revealed that the self-selected topics had positively influenced the participants' intrinsic motivation in their writing classes. The findings obtained from the four intrinsic motivation subscales indicated that the students showed a great interest and enjoyment when writing about the self-selected topics (According to Table 5. 24. the Interest/Enjoyment level was 4,13 and the Std equaled 0,12); they positively perceived their writing competence (The total mean for the Perceived Competence level was 3,86 and the Std was 0,22. as illustrated in Table 5. 25.); they perceived themselves as having a high level of choice (The recorded Perceived Choice level was 3,86 (Std=0,22), as it is shown in Table 5. 26.); and they viewed the self-selected topics as a stress free experience in their writing classes (The total mean for the Stress/Tension level was 3,88 (Std=0,16), according to Table 5. 27.).

The positive results attained from this part of the questionnaire can be explained by using the self-determination theory, reviewed in Chapter One of this thesis. This theory considers self-selection as an essential intrinsic motivational factor, especially in the classroom context due to its positive impact on students' sense of autonomy, competence, and control (Deci, 1980; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, the topic control treatment sessions allowed the participants not only to write about topics assigned by their teacher, but they also permitted them to choose their own writing topics. This alternation of topics between teacher and students may have developed in them positive feelings of autonomy, competence, and control of their own learning. The results of Study2 questionnaire (Part III) are, indeed, consistent with the results of the self-determination classroom studies reviewed in the first chapter of this thesis, including Meng and Ma (2015), Reynolds and Symons (2001), Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008), Patal, et al, (2010).

6. 3. Pedagogical Implications

Fluency development is often a neglected aspect in many EFL classrooms. Indeed, a combination of factors are responsible for this situation, including large class size, time constraints, and the difficulty to balance between the different language performance aspects: complexity, accuracy, and fluency. However, the development of fluency in our classrooms is not a very difficult task. Accordingly, Brown (2003) claims that:

> [...] We can certainly teach fluency by giving
> lectures that help expand our students' knowledge
> of the choices, tools, and strategies at their
> disposal. However at a certain point, we will have
> to admit that teaching fluency is different from
> teaching other aspects of language. In teaching
> fluency, we must be willing to let go of some of

the control in our classrooms; we must be willing
to let the students have some of the control and let
them do some of the work; we must be willing to
set up situations in which fluency can develop, and
then encourage the students to actually
communicate.

This perspective has been confirmed by the findings obtained from Study 1 and Study 2 of the current thesis. The two studies showed that fluency can be promoted when learners are involved in controlling the selection of topics in their classes.

Therefore, the two studies' findings may have some significant implications for EFL teachers of speaking as well as writing. The results of Study 1 provide evidence that students' fluency can be enhanced through the use of topic control as a teaching practice in the speaking classroom. This practice had a significant role in increasing the students' speech rate and length of runs and in decreasing their pause time and length. As such, at the end of this study, the students have developed an ability to speak English fluently, with an adequate speech rate and less pauses.

Similarly, the findings obtained from Study 2 reveal that topic control has many positive effects on students' writing fluency. At the conclusion of this study, the participants have shown an ability to produce lengthily writing pieces in English, with more words and less dysfluencies. Subsequently, the findings from both Study 1 and Study 2 pedagogically suggest that involving students in choosing the topics of their speaking as well as writing activities may help them in achieving a greater fluency level.

The second implication that we can draw from the findings obtained from Study 1 and Study 2 is that balancing between teacher-assigned and self-selected topics is a necessary condition in the speaking as well as

writing classrooms. The analysis of Study 1's questionnaire (Part One) shows that the students' perceptions about their teacher-assigned topics are as positive as their perceptions of the self-selected topics. In other words, the students consider the teacher-assigned topics as familiar, motivating, and helpful to their speaking performance. In the same vein, they appreciated the self-selected topics and regard them as source of motivation. Furthermore, the students' answers to Study 2's questionnaire (Part One) indicate that they positively perceived the self-selected topics and at the same time, they feel that the assigned topics are familiar and motivating.

This implies that EFL teachers of speaking as well as writing should establish a balance between assigning topics and allowing their students with opportunities to self-select the topics. In the writing classroom, such a balance is expected to reduced the affective, informational, and linguistic challenges students may encounter when writing in English. In this respect, Schraw et al., (2001) claim that such a balance may be helpful, especially for "Less-knowledgeable or less-self-regulated students".

Furthermore, the studies' findings reveal that topic control can be viewed as an effective teaching practice for sustaining students' situational interest. The results obtained from Study 1 questionnaire (Part II) indicate that the students reported a high level of attention, effort, and involvement about their participation in the study. Similar results are provided by Study 2 questionnaire (Part II) in which the students showed a high level of effort, engagement, and persistence as a result of the topic control sessions they experienced in their writing classes. Such findings imply that teachers may benefit from this practice in their speaking as well as writing classes as a means to support their students' situational interest, which will lead to more positive learning outcomes.

Another interesting implication that can be derived from the present thesis studies is that allowing students to choose topics may promote a high sense of intrinsic motivation. Findings from Study 1 questionnaire (Part III) indicate that students' control of the speaking topics may generate positive feelings of autonomy, competence, and control, which can result in higher intrinsic motivation and performance levels. In the same line, the students' answers to the questionnaire of Study 2 (Part III) show that the self-selected topics helped to create a classroom environment supportive of intrinsic motivation.

The two studies' findings imply that speaking as well as writing teachers should allow their students opportunities to choose topics. The latter is, in fact, a simple, practical teaching practice with many positive affective as well as performance outcomes. In this respect, Ryan and Deci (2009) claim that "providing people the opportunity for choice can allow them to satisfy their need for autonomy, resulting in an internal perceived locus of causality and enhanced intrinsic motivation".

However, not all types of self-selection can lead to enhanced intrinsic motivation, especially in the classroom context. As it has been previously explained in this thesis, researchers as well as teachers who seek to incorporate this teaching practice in their classrooms should consider the avoidance of factors leading to its detrimental effects.

These factors include the use of rewards and option choice. As it has been previously explained in this thesis, researchers in the fields of self-determination and educational psychology have warned against the simultaneous use of self-selection and rewarding in the same activity. The main reason behind this is the fact that many students may perceive their autonomy to be external and their behavior as controlled (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, (1999); Zuckerman et al, (1978); Cordova and Lepper, (1996). Furthermore, providing students with a list of choices (e.g., a list of topics

from which students can choose one topic to speak or write about) may lead them to feel that they are forced to or pressured to make a choice (Moller, et al, 2006). Therefore, in the context of teaching speaking as well as writing, teachers should consider that learners need to feel that they are experiencing autonomy and they are actively involved in the self-selection process.

6. 4. Recommendations

The findings obtained from Study 1 and Study 2 of the present thesis allow us to end with a group of recommendations, which may help EFL practitioners in the fields of speaking and writing. These recommendations are provided in the following lines.

1. Fluency development should be accepted as a major component of a balanced speaking as well as writing course. Teachers of these important language skills should think about useful, practical teaching practices in order to help their learners develop their fluency along with the other language aspects of accuracy and complexity.

2. Students should be involved in the selection of their own learning materials. In the contexts of speaking and writing, alternating the selection of topics between teachers and learners may be considered a significant practice that teachers could incorporate into their courses. In the light of the two studies' findings, topic control may be particularly important due to its many positive effects on learners' fluency, situational interest, and intrinsic motivation. Accordingly, teachers are recommended to provide their learners with opportunities to choose topics along with those assigned topics, especially in the speaking and writing classrooms.

3. Teachers should maintain a balance between the teacher-assigned and the self-selected topics. The two studies covered by this thesis, along with

other experimental studies, have confirmed the positive effects of students' control of the speaking as well as writing topics. However, the results obtained from the students' questionnaires showed that the students considered the teacher-assigned topics as familiar, motivating, and helpful for their performance. As such, teachers are recommended to establish a balance between assigning their topics and providing their students with the opportunity to speak and write about the self-selected topics.

4. The balance between teacher-assigned and self-selected topics in the speaking as well as writing classrooms could be simply achieved by following a specific sequence through which learners can begin the class by using their own topics then the teacher can gradually move towards the use of his assigned topics. The rationale behind this suggested sequence is that it may help students to not only develop an acceptance to their teacher-assigned topics, but also to value them and compare their own performance when the topic is self-selected and when it is assigned.

5. For an effective self-selection experience in the classroom, teachers are recommended to consider the three major constructs of autonomy, competence, and control. In other words, teachers should avoid the detrimental effects of self-selection by following these suggestions:

a. Teachers are recommended to avoid using the self-selected topics and rewards (e.g., adding extra marks) simultaneously in a single activity because this practice may lead students to perceive that their locus of causality to be external and may interpret those rewards as a means to control their behaviors in class.

b. Teachers are recommended to avoid the use of "option choices". The latter is considered as autonomy-decrement because it does not allow students to experience autonomy. Rather, this type of choices may lead learners to feel that they are forced to make a choice.

c. Teacher are recommended to consider the use of "action choices" in class. This type of self-selection has a paramount role in eliciting students' sense of autonomy and intrinsic motivation to do the activity at hand.

d. Teachers are recommended to consider to sustain their students' perceived competence by providing positive feedback to students about the choices they make.

Conclusion

The discussion of the key findings in the first two sections of this chapter provided answers to the research questions raised by Study1 and Study2. Accordingly, the findings of Study1 indicated that topic control yielded valuable positive effects on the students' speaking fluency. Such positive results were attributed to the important role that this teaching practice had played in reducing the cognitive load of the speaking skill among the experimental group's students who showed an ability to speak English with high mean rate and less pauses at the end of the study's treatment sessions. Furthermore, the results obtained from the students' questionnaire suggested that balancing between the teacher-assigned and the self-selected topics may be an effective teaching practice in the speaking classroom. This is because the great majority of the students showed their appreciation towards this teaching practice, which permitted them to speak about their own topics and about those topics assigned by their teacher. This appreciation was also reflected in the students' responses to the second and the third parts of the questionnaire, which showed that the topic control practice could enhance their situational interest as well as their intrinsic motivation in class.

The discussion of Study2 key findings revealed that topic control resulted in important positive effects on the students' writing fluency. This

teaching practice enabled the participants in the experimental group to produce lengthily writing pieces with a reduced dysfluency. This result was attributed to role that this teaching practice had played in reducing the affective and linguistic demands of the writing skills on the experimental group's participants. The positive effects of topic control were also reflected in the discussion of Study2 questionnaire. The students' positive perceptions of this practice were reflected in their answers to the first part of the questionnaire. Moreover, the discussion of the key findings obtained from the questionnaire's last two parts revealed the effectiveness of topic control in enhancing the students sense of autonomy, competence, control, and interest in their writing classes.

In the light of the findings obtained from Study1 and Study2, the third section of this chapter highlighted a number of pedagogical implications for using topic control as an instructional practice in the speaking as well as the writing classroom. The last section provided some recommendations that may assist teachers in integrating topic control in their speaking and writing classes.

General Conclusion

The main objective of this thesis was to investigate the effect of topic control on EFL learners' fluency in the two language productive skills, namely speaking and writing. Relevant to this, the thesis included two quasi-experimental studies in which topic control was considered as the independent variable and the productive skills as the dependent variables. As such, Study1 examined the impact of topic control on a group of EFL second year university students' fluency in speaking and Study2 focused on the effect of the same independent variable on the written fluency of another group of students enrolled at the English Department in the UB2, Algeria. In other words, the two studies' participants represented samples from the same population.

The thesis was structured into six interrelated chapters. The first three chapters represented the theoretical part of the thesis. The first chapter was devoted to reviewing the theoretical underpinnings of self-selection as a teaching practice advocated by the major social psychology as well as educational psychology theories. For these theories, self-selection is an effective teaching practice due to it numerous positive impacts on learners' intrinsic motivation, situational interest, and performance. This first chapter summarized a number of research studies conducted in the fields of social psychology and educational psychology. The findings obtained from these studies allowed the researcher to understand both the advantages and disadvantages of topic control as a teaching practice. As such, the researcher attempted to consider the major characteristics of an effective self-selection teaching practice in designing the two quasi-experimental studies involved in the present thesis.

The second chapter focused on the language productive skills, namely speaking and writing. The objectives of this chapter were threefold. First, it highlighted the important role of these skills in L2 learning. Second, it explored the challenges faced by many students in the process of learning

these critical skills. Third, it explained the differences between speaking and writing. This last section was particularly important for the studies included in this thesis because it

revealed that the divergent natures of the speaking and writing skills make the comparison of the results obtained from this thesis studies quite difficult.

The third chapter investigated the effect of topic control on fluency development as it is highlighted in the existing literature. In this respect, the chapter examined the term fluency and the measures used for analyzing it. Furthermore, it reviewed the major studies conducted about the impact of topic control on L2 learners' fluency development in the areas of speaking and writing research.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters formed the practical parts of this thesis. Chapter four presented a detailed explanation of the research design adopted for the conduct of both Study1 and Study2. It also described the data collection and analysis techniques. On the other hand, chapter five and six presented and interpreted the key findings obtained from the two quasi-experimental studies. These findings provided evidence that topic control is an effective teaching practice with significant positive effects on fluency in both productive skills.

Relevant to this, the results obtained from Study1's pre-and post-tests revealed that this teaching practice enhanced the experimental group's spoken fluency. At the end of the study, the students in the experimental group, as compared to the control group, showed an important increase in their speech rate as well as the number of sound syllables between the pauses (mean length of runs) and were able to speak with few pauses. Such positive outcomes were also reflected in the analysis of the post-study questionnaire results. These latter indicated that topic control was

positively perceived by the participants who showed their acceptance to both teacher-assigned and self-selected topics in their speaking classes. The students' satisfaction about this teaching practice was also reflected in their answers to the questionnaire's third part questions. The findings obtained from these answers revealed that topic control yielded positive impacts on the students' situational interest. These findings were consistent with those findings attained from the participants' answers in the questionnaire's third part, which indicated that the self-selected topics helped to increase the students' intrinsic motivation.

In the same vein, the pre-and post-tests' findings of Study2 confirmed its hypothesis that topic control increased the students' writing fluency. Accordingly, at the end of the study, the students in the experimental group, as compared with the control group, showed an ability to produce lengthily writing pieces with a reduced number of dysfluencies. Furthermore, the findings obtained from the post-study questionnaire revealed that the participants positively perceived the topic control practice, which allowed them to write about their own topics and about those topics assigned by their teacher. Such positive results were also reflected in the students' responses to the second and the third parts of the questionnaire, which showed that the topic control practice could enhance their situational interest and intrinsic motivation in class.

In the light of the two studies' findings a number of pedagogical implications were provided. Prominent to these is that students' fluency in both speaking and writing skills can be developed through the use of topic control as a teaching practice. The findings from both Study1 and Study2 showed that topic control is an effective practice that teachers can easily incorporate in their classes in order to help their students develop their fluency levels.

More pedagogical implications have also shown the need for establishing a balance between teacher-assigned and self-selected topics while teaching the language productive skills. Such a balanced approach is a necessary condition in order to satisfy the self-regulated as well as the less self-regulated learners. According to the two post-study questionnaires (Study1's questionnaire and Study2's questionnaire), the students showed positive perceptions to both types of topics: teacher-assigned and self-selected topics. This means that the majority of the learners felt satisfied with the self-selected topic activities because they allowed them to speak or write about topics of their own choices and at the same time they expressed their need for doing teacher-assigned topic activities, which make them feel more confident about their performance.

Another interesting pedagogical implication was that establishing a balance between the teacher-assigned and self-selected topics could increase students' situational interest in class. The results obtained from Study1 and Study2 revealed that the students showed high levels of effort, engagement, and persistence as a result of the topic control sessions they experienced in their respective classes.

The last implication provided by this thesis was that allowing students to choose their speaking as well as writing topics is necessary due the many positive effects that this teaching practice yields on intrinsic motivation. The results of Study1 and Study2 indicated that the self-selected topics enabled the learners to feel autonomous, competent, and in control of their learning. However, teachers should consider that in order to incorporate the self-selected topics in their speaking or writing classes, they should avoid some factors that can make students feel that they are controlled by their teacher. In this respect, in order to promote intrinsic motivation through the self-selected topics practice, teachers should avoid the use of rewards and option choices.

As with any other research, this study contains some limitations. First, the two studies involved in this thesis examined the effect of topic control (teacher-assigned and students' self-selected topics) on second year EFL university students' fluency in speaking as well as writing. The question that we can raise at this level is "how the fluency level of students from other EFL levels is influenced by this teaching practice?". Second, the two studies investigated the effect of topic control on students' fluency in speaking as well as writing. Future research may examine the impact of this independent variable on the other language performance aspects, including accuracy and complexity. Third, the questionnaires used in both Study1 and Study2 were designed to collect data about students' perceptions only. Therefore, it would be better if these studies examined teachers' perceptions about topic control as an instructional practice in the speaking as well as writing classroom.

To conclude, in spite of all these limitations, the present thesis was an attempt to shed light on the importance of topic control in enhancing students' fluency in the two productive skills, speaking and writing. The findings obtained from the two studies included in this thesis provided evidence that this practical instructional practice yields many positive outcomes in our EFL classrooms. It does not only help students develop their fluency levels in speaking as well as writing, but it also generates in them a sense of intrinsic motivation, which can lead them to feel more interested in class.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Speaking Pre-Test

Part 1: **Collaborative Task**

I'd like you to talk about something together for about **(04) minutes**

Imagine that a town wants more tourists to visit. Here are some ideas they're thinking about **and a question for you to discuss.** First you have **one (01) minute** to look at the task.

The ideas are:

- Building a large nightclub.

- Putting up security cameras.

- Having more shops.

- Building holiday flats.

- Providing parks.

Now talk to each other about why these ideas would attract more tourists to the town.

Which idea would be the best for the town?

Part 2: Discussion

T: Use the following questions, in order, as appropriate:

1 - Some people say we travel too much these days and shouldn't go on so many holidays. What do you think?

2- Why do you think people like to go away on holiday?

3- Do you think you have to spend a lot of money to have a good holiday?

(Why / Why not?)

4- Do you think people have enough time for holidays these days?

Select any of the following prompts, as appropriate:
• **What do you think?** • **Do you agree?** • **And you?**

Speaking Post-Test

<u>**Part 1**</u>**: Collaborative Task**

T: I would like you to talk about something together for about four **(04) minutes**

Here are some things people often do to keep fit and healthy and a question for you to discuss. First you have **one (01) minute** to look at the task.

> **How important are these things for keeping fit and healthy?**
>
> - sleeping eight hours every night
>
> - eating at regular times
>
> - visiting the doctor regularly
>
> - spending time outdoors each day
>
> - going to the gym

Q2: You have one(01) minute to decide which option is **best** to keep fit and healthy.

<u>**Part 2**</u>**: Discussion**

T: Use the following questions, in order, as appropriate:

1- What is the advantage of keeping fit with friends?

2- some people say it is a waste of time going to a gym because you can exercise outside for free. What do you think?

3- It is possible to live healthy without spending a lot of money?....(why?/why not?)

4- Do you think the government should spend more money on sports and leisure facilities?....(why?/ why not?)

6- Do you think advertising makes people worry too much about keeping fit and how they look? …(why?/ why not?)

> Select any of the following prompts, as appropriate:
>
> - **What do you think?**
> - **Do you agree?**
> - **And you?**

Appendix B

Study 1

Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire seeks to survey your views and perceptions of teacher-assigned and students-selected topics in your **Speaking class**; it is not a test and there are no **"right"** or **"wrong"** answers. I am interested in your personal opinion. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation.

Thank you in advance for your help.

I. Please, tick the appropriate answer (√) and make full statements whenever necessary.

1. Do you find the topics assigned by your speaking teacher familiar to you?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

- If **No**, please explain why?

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2. Do you feel motivated to develop a topic assigned to you by your teacher?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

3. How do you perceive your performance when speaking about a teacher-assigned topic?

☐ **Excellent**
☐ **Very good**
☐ **Good**
☐ **Average**
☐ **Bad**

4. What are the difficulties that you encounter when speaking about a teacher-assigned topic?

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5. Did you like the idea of free topics in your speaking class?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

6. Do you think that free topics is a teaching practice that can motivate you to speak in English without waiting for any sort of rewarding (for example adding marks) from your teacher's part?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

- Please explain why?

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7. How do you perceive your performance when speaking about the self-selected topics?).

☐ **Excellent**
☐ **Very good**
☐ **Good**
☐ **Average**
☐ **Bad**

II. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by placing an 'X' next to each of the statements below (choose only one).

Statements	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true
1. The topic control experience grabbed my attention.					
2. The topic control experience made the class so exciting, it was easy to pay attention to .					
3. I put in a lot of effort during the topic control experience.					
4. I wish we could still continue doing topic control in my speaking class for a while.					
5. When doing the topic control speaking tasks, I was so involved that I forgot everything around me.					

III. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by placing an 'X' next to each of the statements in the table below (choose only one).

Statements	Not true at all	Not True	Neutral	True	Very True
1. While I was speaking about the self-selected topics, I was thinking about how much I enjoyed it.					
2. I did not feel at all nervous while speaking about the self-selected topics.					

3. I felt that it was my choice to do the task when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
4. I think I am pretty good at the task when speaking about a self-selected topic.					
5. I found the task very interesting when my teacher allowed me to speak about a self-selected topic.					
6. I felt tense while speaking about a self-selected topic.					
7. I think I did pretty well at the activity, compared to other students when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
8. Doing the task was fun when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
9. I felt relaxed while speaking about a topic of my own choice.					
10. I enjoyed doing the task very much when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
11. I did not really have a choice about doing the task when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
12. I am satisfied with my performance at the task when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
13. I was anxious while doing the task when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					

14. I thought the task was very boring when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
15. I felt like I was doing what I wanted to do while I was working on the task when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
16. I felt pretty skilled at this task when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
17. I thought the task was very interesting when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
18. I felt pressured while doing the task when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
19. I felt like I had to do the task when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
20. I would describe the task as very enjoyable when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
21. I did the task because I had no choice when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
22. After working at this task for a while, I felt pretty competent when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					

Appendix C

The Writing Pre-Test

Write an essay about the following topic:

"The fast pace and stress of modern life is having a negative effect on families". To what extent do you agree or disagree?

- Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

- Write at least 250 words.

- Write your essay on the following pages.

The Writing Post-Test

Write a well-structured essay about the following topic.

"Computers are being used more and more in education and some people believe there will soon be no role for the teacher in education". To what extent do you agree or disagree?

- Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

- Write at least 250 words.

- Write your essay on the following pages.

Appendix D

Study2

Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire seeks to survey your views and perceptions of teacher-assigned and students-selected topics in your **Writing class**; it is not a test and there are no **"right"** or **"wrong"** answers. I am interested in your personal opinion. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation.

Thank you in advance for your help.

I. Please, tick the appropriate answer (√) and make full statements whenever necessary.

1. Do you find the topics assigned by your writing teacher familiar to you?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

- If **No**, please explain why?

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2. Do you feel motivated to develop a topic assigned to you by your teacher?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

3. How do you perceive your performance when writing about a teacher-assigned topic?

☐ **Excellent**

☐ **Very good**

☐ **Good**

☐ **Average**

☐ **Bad**

4. What are the difficulties that you encounter when writing about a teacher-assigned topic?

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5. Did you like the idea of free topics in your writing class?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

6. Do you think that free topics is a teaching practice that can motivate you to write in English without waiting for any sort of rewarding (for example adding marks) from your teacher's part?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

- Please explain why?

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7. How do you perceive your performance when writing about the self-selected topics?

☐ **Excellent**

☐ **Very good**

☐ **Good**

☐ **Average**

☐ **Bad**

II. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by placing an 'X' next to each of the statements below (choose only one).

Statements	Not true at all	Not true	Neutral	True	Very true
1. The topic control experience grabbed my attention.					
2. The topic control experience made the class so exciting, it was easy to pay attention to .					
3. I put in a lot of effort during the topic control experience.					
4. I wish we could still continue doing topic control in my writing class for a while.					
5. When doing the topic control tasks, I was so involved that I forgot everything around me.					

III. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by placing an 'X' next to each of the statements in the table below (choose only one).

Statements	Not true at all	Not True	Neutral	True	Very True
1. While I was writing about the self-selected topics, I was thinking about how much I enjoyed it.					
2. I did not feel at all nervous while writing about the self-selected topics.					

3. I felt that it was my choice to do the task when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
4. I think I am pretty good at the task when writing about a self-selected topic.					
5. I found the task very interesting when my teacher allowed me to write about a self-selected topic.					
6. I felt tense while writing about a self-selected topic.					
7. I think I did pretty well at the activity, compared to other students when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
8. Doing the task was fun when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
9. I felt relaxed while writing about a topic of my own choice.					
10. I enjoyed doing the task very much when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
11. I did not really have a choice about doing the task when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
12. I am satisfied with my performance at the task when my teacher allowed me to speak about a topic of my own choice.					
13. I was anxious while doing the task when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					

14. I thought the task was very boring when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
15. I felt like I was doing what I wanted to do while I was working on the task when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
16. I felt pretty skilled at this task when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
17. I thought the task was very interesting when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
18. I felt pressured while doing the task when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
19. I felt like I had to do the task when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
20. I would describe the task as very enjoyable when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
21. I did the task because I had no choice when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					
22. After working at this task for a while, I felt pretty competent when my teacher allowed me to write about a topic of my own choice.					

« INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF STUDENTS-SELECTED AND TEACHERS- ASSIGNED TOPICS ON EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' WRITING AND SPEAKING FLUENCY: THE CASE OF FIRST AND SECOND YEAR ENGLISH LMD STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BLIDA 2»

Abstract :

This thesis investigates the effect of topic control (topic selection as counterbalanced between teachers and students) on EFL learners' fluency in the two productive skills, namely speaking and writing. Relevant to this, the thesis contains two quasi-experimental studies in which topic control is considered as the independent variable and the productive skills as the dependent variables. As such, Study1 examines the impact of topic control on a group of 121 EFL second year university students' fluency in speaking and Study2 investigates the effect of the same independent variable on the written fluency of another group of 127 students enrolled at the English Department in the UB2, Algeria. Both studies were accomplished by means of two research instruments: pre and post-tests (speaking tests and writing tests), and post-study questionnaires developed by the researcher. The collected data was statistically analyzed using the SPSS software, Version 20. The findings of the two studies provided evidence that topic control is an effective teaching practice due to its numerous positive effects not only on the participants' spoken and written fluency, but also on their intrinsic motivation and situational interest. In the light of these findings, a set of pedagogical implications and recommendations were put forward to help teachers enhance their students' fluency through the use of topic control in the speaking as well as the writing classrooms.

Key words : : EFL; teacher-assigned topics; student-selected topics; spoken fluency; written fluency.

« ÉTUDIER L'EFFET DES SUJETS SÉLECTIONNÉS PAR LES ÉTUDIANTS ET LES ENSEIGNANTS SUR L'ÉCRITURE ET L'EXPRESSION DES ÉTUDIANTS DE L'UNIVERSITÉ EFL :

LE CAS DES ÉTUDIANTS LMD ANGLAIS DE PREMIÈRE ET DEUXIÈME ANNÉE À L'UNIVERSITÉ DE BLIDA 2»

Résumé :

Cette thèse étudie l'effet du contrôle du sujet (sélection du sujet comme contrebalancée entre les enseignants et les étudiants) sur l'aisance des apprenants EFL dans les deux compétences productives, à savoir parler et écrire. À cet égard, la thèse contient deux études quasi expérimentales dans lesquelles le contrôle du sujet est considéré comme la variable indépendante et les compétences productives comme les variables dépendantes. En tant que tel, Etude1 examine l'impact du contrôle du sujet sur l'aisance orale d'un groupe de 121 étudiants universitaires de deuxième année EFL et Etude2 examine l'effet de la même variable indépendante sur l'aisance écrite d'un autre groupe de 127 étudiants inscrits au département d'anglais de l'UB2, Algérie. Les deux études ont été réalisées au moyen de deux instruments de recherche : des pré-tests et des post-tests (tests d'expression orale et tests d'expression écrite) et des questionnaires post-étude élaborés par le chercheur. Les données collectées ont été analysées statistiquement à l'aide du logiciel SPSS, version 20. Les résultats des deux études ont fourni la preuve que le contrôle du sujet est une pratique d'enseignement efficace en raison de ses nombreux effets positifs non seulement sur la fluidité orale et écrite des participants, mais aussi sur leur motivation intrinsèque et leur intérêt situationnel. À la lumière de ces résultats, un ensemble d'implications pédagogiques et de recommandations ont été avancées pour aider les enseignants à améliorer la fluidité de leurs élèves grâce à l'utilisation du contrôle du sujet dans les classes d'expression orale et écrite.

Mots clés : EFL ; sujets assignés par l'enseignant; sujets choisis par les étudiants ; aisance parlée; aisance écrite.

" التحقيق في تأثير الموضوعات المختارة من الطلاب والمعلمين على الكتابة والتحدث لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية:
حالة طلاب السنة الأولى والثانية ل.م.د اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة البليدة2"

الملخص:

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الأطروحة هو التحقيق في تأثير التحكم في الموضوع (اختيار الموضوع باعتباره متوازنًا بين المعلمين والطلاب) على طلاقة متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مهارات التحدث والكتابة . و على هذا الأساس تحتوي الأطروحة على دراستين شبه تجريبيتين يعتبر فيهما التحكم في الموضوع المتغير المستقل والمهارات الإنتاجية كمتغيرات تابعة .و على هذا النحو ، تفحص الدراسة1 تأثير التحكم في الموضوع على طلاقة التحدث لدى مجموعة من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بالسنة الثانية، جامعة البليدة2 . كما تحقق الدراسة2 في تأثير نفس المتغير المستقل على الطلاقة الكتابية لمجموعة أخرى من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في نفس القسم. تم إنجاز كلتا الدراستين عن طريق أداتين بحثيتين: الاختبار القبلي و ألبعدي (اختبارات التحدث والاختبارات التحريرية) واستبيان ما بعد الدراسات التي طورها الباحث. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها إحصائيًا باستخدام برنامج SPSS ،الإصدار 20. أثبتت نتائج الدراستين أن التحكم في الموضوع هو ممارسة تعليمية فعالة نظرًا لتأثيراته الإيجابية العديدة ليس فقط على الطلاقة المنطوقة والمكتوبة للمشاركين ، ولكن أيضًا على دوافعهم الجوهرية واهتمامهم الظرفية. في ضوء هذه النتائج ، تم طرح مجموعة من الآثار التربوية والتوصيات لمساعدة المعلمين على تعزيز طلاقة طلابهم من خلال استخدام التحكم في الموضوع في فصول المحادثة وكذلك الكتابة.

كلمات مفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ الموضوعات المخصصة من قبل المعلم؛ الموضوعات التي يختارها الطلاب ؛ الطلاقة المنطوقة ؛الطلاقة المكتوبة.