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Teaching writing: Investigating the adopted approaches and the potential of implementing a cooperative language learning approach at the selected Kurdistan universities.

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the application of approaches adopted by teachers in teaching EFL writing, particularly the potential of the cooperative language learning approach. The design of the study followed a mixed-method approach. The data collection methods were classroom observation, questionnaire, and interview with the EFL writing teachers. The participants of the study were 203 second-year students and 12 teachers of the English Departments in three public universities in the Kurdistan Region. Three EFL writing classrooms both morning and evening were observed. The quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed through SPSS and thematic data analyses, respectively. The findings demonstrated that writing is taught through the communicative approach and mixed approaches, and the classes were mostly teacher-directed and almost interactive. Meanwhile, the cooperative language learning approach was not implemented; moreover, the shared techniques, such as group work, were not realized according to the principles and procedures of CLL in the writing classes. Above that, teachers had limited knowledge of the CLL approach. Thus, the study concluded that the writing skill and the proper implementation of the CLL approach call for further investigation due to its potential role in achieving improvements and modifications in teaching writing as the study revealed that the participants of the study had a positive attitude towards the various techniques of this approach like group work. Also, the teachers as the backbone of the process need training courses on writing approaches, especially the CLL approach.

Keywords: Teaching writing, Cooperative learning, student-centered learning, EFL teachers

1. Introduction

Many intellectuals like Byrne (1993) and Harmer (2004) discussed that one's language is not fully realized until he or she has mastered writing. Writing is where one's language skills are perfected. Writing is a process of meaning generation and a set of associated text-creation tasks that include creating, organizing, and developing ideas into sentences, as well as drafting, shaping, rereading, editing, and rewriting the text (Gould, et al, 1990). Because writing is the act of reaching out for one's thoughts and discovering them, it is also regarded as a creative process. Standard patterns of grammar, syntax, and word choice, not to mention solid mechanics, paragraph structure, and substance, are all required in a decent piece of writing. The writer's technique and goal should be to communicate ideas in a clear, fluent, and effective manner (Xu, 2016). According to Enre (2002), writing has some aims like: "the desire to explain or inform, the ability to speak something in a way it is heard, the desire to tell someone about something that happened, and the ability to persuade someone" (Hang-li, 2010: P, 25).

Generally, scholars like Steel (200), Harmer (2004), and Badger and Arndt (1991) have discussed that one's language is not fully realized until they have not mastered writing, and a good command of language can never be perfectly attained without it. However, unlike listening and speaking, one cannot acquire it without being properly taught. Harmer (2004) was the first educationalist who provided some different approaches to teaching writing, i.e., process and product approaches. He discussed that the

goal of the writing classroom is either to focus on the final product or the process in which the teacher must prepare different tasks and demonstrate various stages of writing. The second teaching approach is the genre approach. In this teaching model, the teacher will let the students examine different types of writing. For example, in teaching how to write announcements, the teacher asks the students to examine many examples of such writing (Yumi, 2015). The third approach is the creative writing approach which is based on imaginative activities, which means that students can base their tasks on whatever is in their mind (Akinyeye, 2012). Subsequently, the fourth approach is a cooperative activity, which evolved from help and cooperation between peers. When following this approach, the teacher can manage the students while working collaboratively to give them collective feedback and instruct them collectively rather than working individually.

In line with recent developments in pedagogy and a greater emphasis on learner-centeredness, educational policymakers and practitioners have adopted cooperative language learning for more than a decade (Leila, 2010). Accordingly, while the students learn in groups, they are better able to progress in the intellectual exchange that fosters both creative thinking and productive problem-solving (Jacobs & Lee, 1997). Therefore, cooperative learning has been regarded as an effective teaching method that takes into account students' emotions, mental abilities, and social backgrounds through working in small groups. Importantly, it emphasizes students' self-assessment, promotes group engagement, and increases student achievement, unlike the traditional methods, in which the teacher is the only speaker and the main focus is on the final writing product.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Investigating the current practices is regarded to be significant in the specific context of Kurdistan, as all the studies have demonstrated that writing skill is neglected compared to speaking as has been found in the study (Fitri, 2017). Further, the students' unintelligible and low-quality writing, weak language use, and inadequacy in working together have made their writing inaccurate (Mahmood, 2016). On the other hand, the approaches to teaching writing were not specified yet. Accordingly, the potential of the study is to observe the writing skill practices generally and declare whether the CLL approach is adopted by the teachers or not in the EFL writing classes because it is regarded as superior to all the traditional methods in learners' achievements (Akinoyeye, 2012). Further, teachers' perceptions of writing skills and their approaches have not been examined yet. For this reason, the adopted approaches have to be examined in terms of students' motivation, critical thinking, teacher-student and student-student interaction, to suit the 21st-century classes and to guarantee a positive attitude towards learning, and the teachers' beliefs of their practices of writing will be discussed with them to find the potential of CLL application. The collected data tries to answer the following research questions:

- 1- How is writing skill taught in KRG universities?
- 2- To what extent, are the teachers familiar with the CLL approach?

1.2. The research hypotheses

Five hypotheses are provided to investigate the current situation of the writing classes. The hypotheses are formulated in the form of both null and alternative hypotheses. The aim of using this type of

hypothesis is to offer enough knowledge of the current situation and to avoid the researcher's bias. (Killen, 2005).

2. Cooperative language learning approach

Many pedagogues have given different definitions to the cooperative language learning approach; some of them use it interchangeably with collaborative learning. Depending on Kagan's (1989) view, cooperative learning is a teaching procedure that refers to small and heterogeneous groups of students and peers working together, to acquire a shared goal. Moreover, each student is responsible for his or her learning and their teammates as well. According to Richard and Rodgers (2001), the approach concentrates on peer support and coaching, in which interaction is the main key in the models of cooperative learning as it enables the students to learn from each other.

There are some elements that CLL is based on, Johnson and Johnson (1999) have outlined five central elements of the CLL approach as follows:

- 1- Positive interdependence: Positive interdependence means that all group members have a clear goal and that the entire group works together to complete a certain task. Importantly, each group member has a specific role in implementing the task in the classroom (Arnold, 2011).
- 2- Individual accountability: Here, each group member is considered accountable for making the group succeed. Hence, individual accountability refers to evaluating the quality and quantity of each group member's contributions (Johnson & Smith, 1998).

- 3- Face-to-face interaction: According to Richard (2000), this core technique is based on the idea of promotion and motivation. Johnson and Smith (1998) affirm that group members discuss, negotiate, explain, and teach what they know to their groupmates. Based on Slavin's view, through interaction between the small group members, members acquire the problem-solving technique, critical thinking, the ability to explain new ideas, checking to understand, connecting present with past learning, and discussing what is being learned (qtd in Aicha, 2012).
- 4- Social skills: In this approach, students learn both interpersonal and small-group skills. By working in teams, they learn the skills of when to negotiate, how to tolerate, build trust and deliver mutual support. Therefore, the students will perceive communication skills as something special because everyone doesn't know how to communicate properly (Gillies, 2016).
- 5- Group processing: Group processing is a way of reflecting on a group session, to decide what member actions were helpful to the group and what were not, and also to decide what should be continued in the next session and what should be changed. It aims to determine the effectiveness of the group members in their joint efforts to obtain a group goal and to procure a positive relationship between the groups and their members (Alghasab, 2015).

On the other hand, Slavin (2003) discusses some classroom learning techniques for enhancing students' skills (p: 73) one of which is a jigsaw, in which the students work in heterogeneous groups. They are required to read a piece of writing; the teacher gives them an expert sheet that contains various topics for each group and they have to focus on them during reading. Thus, each student becomes an expert on the specific assigned topic. Finally, experts from various groups on the same topic meet each other, and they start discussing and sharing ideas on the topic

(Fitri, 2017). In the second activity called roundtable, the instructor asks a question and the students take turns giving answers using one shared paper, sharing their opinions and giving information in a written form. (Arnold, 2011)

The third one, proposed by Lyman (1981) is called think-pair-share. It fosters students' ability to contemplate a question or problem silently. In this type of activity, the teacher asks a question or discusses a topic; then, the students write down their ideas or merely keep them in their heads. After that, the students would be paired with their classmates, and each would talk, discuss his or her ideas, and listen to the other. Later, each student should talk about his/her idea to the whole group (Richards & Rodgers, 2000). The fourth one is numbered heads. During the implementation of this activity, the students are counted and numbered by the teacher. Then, when the teacher asks a question, the students have to prepare their answers. Later, the teacher picks them up by calling their number randomly (Torres, 2018). Another technique developed by Sharan (1980) is called, group discussion, in which students are divided into groups of three to six members who are responsible for planning, brainstorming, constructing, and presenting ideas. They have to choose a topic based on the class topic and present it to the whole class (Witchade & Swantarathp, 2010).

Regarding teachers' roles, unlike other traditional approaches, teachers are responsible for organizing a highly well-structured environment and creating an interactive atmosphere (Colak, 2015). In this method, the teacher also sets the goals, plans and structures the tasks, establishes the physical arrangement of the classroom, assigns students into groups determines their roles in the group and selects time and materials. Concerning the learner roles, each learner is required to make his/ her contributions to the group work.

Further, he or she is required to help other members to get to the task and work towards a shared goal, solve the group problems, and treat each other respectfully (Ekwat, 2010). Likewise, Hannifa (2018) states that, during cooperative group work, learners are expected to have different roles like encourager who encourages members who are shy or passive, praiser who shows gratitude for the group's accomplishments, the coach who assists the group in explaining the content, question commander who makes sure that students' questions are answered, a taskmaster who keeps the group on task, and reflector who is aware of the group progress and their lacks thereof. In an educational context, this assists the learners to follow a learning route (Johnson & Johnson, 2005)

3. Review of literature

An extensive search of the literature shows that many studies have pointed towards teaching writing. Some of these studies focus on examining the teaching approaches to writing. For instance, at Jimma University in Ethiopia, Feredre et al. (2012) conducted a case study, in which they found out that teachers do not have a suitable approach to teaching writing. The teacher-centred environment has resulted in a lack of proficiency in terms of content, context, and accuracy, in the interview with the teachers, it was expressed that writing has been regarded as a neglected skill at Jimma University. For that reason, the implementation of practical skills and interactive approaches like cooperative learning were the recommendations of the study. Similarly, other studies have also revealed that in most cases, classes followed traditional teacher-centred approaches that have resulted in several problems with students' writing. Milawati (2015) has illustrated that the students had many problems with their writing, including spelling, difficulty in generating ideas, and a lack of enough vocabulary. The study has

only focused on identifying the problems rather than introducing a suitable approach for teaching EFL writing.

In the same sense, Mo (2012) researched writing classes in five Chinese colleges. According to the study, writing is undervalued at those colleges. Additionally, the study revealed that some students struggled with their writing because of personal and educational issues, such as lack of interest in the subject matter, inadequate linguistic proficiency, a lack of cultural familiarity, and ineffective teaching. Moreover, it showed that the lecturers did not even provide the students with daily feedback. Teachers were therefore seen as majors who could enhance the process by advancing their development. Further, Hidayaty (2018) used observation and interviews to explore the difficulties in the ten instructors' Indonesian writing classes. The investigation reported the existence of both internal and external factors, the former including language proficiency, a lack of desire, and native language interference internal problems, and the latter being the classroom environment, a lack of instructional tools, and time constraints. However, this study did not identify the methods or procedures used by the teachers. Moreover, a few issues were found in the writing of Iranian university students, according to Derekhshan and Shernji (2020). The study found that in the classrooms, teachers tended to concentrate mostly on theoretical aspects, and students struggled with punctuation, grammar, writing, and other language-related skills. It was also mentioned that teachers let students speak in their mother tongue in class. Therefore, it is asserted that the environment is entirely teacher-directed and is not naturalistic. It was advised for curriculum designers to provide useful teaching strategies for writing.

In the Kurdish context, most of the studies have dealt with only the quality of students writing. These studies have supported the

existence of writing errors in university students' writing. Mahmood (2016) investigated the university students' writings at the University of Sulaymaniyah and found that the students had serious problems with their grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and punctuation. The study concludes that the classrooms were guided by the teachers, and the study has not examined the approaches. Therefore, the current study attempted to investigate the process of teaching writing through observation to provide an in-depth depiction through observation as well. Similarly, Salim et al. (2021) examined the writing skills of Kurdish university students at Koya and Salahadin universities. The findings illustrated that the students had problems with every component of writing. The study presented the implemented teaching methods as they claimed that the students worked alone, and they were observed to be less skilful in managing the writing components. Also, it was noticed they were either ignorant or did not pay attention to the writing features including grammar and text cohesion. Moreover, the study also reported that corrective feedback was teacher-guided.

Besides, Barzani and Omar (2022) have checked through the writings and classrooms of the EFL students at Cihan University/Duhok. The writings were judged to be lacking in coherence, grammar, spelling, and word choice. The study also made it clear that there was not enough interaction in the classroom, which resulted in a static environment. Thus, the study's recommendations were the implementation of interactive techniques. A variety of issues were highlighted in the writings of Duhok University third-year students by Mohamad and Sulaiman (2019), who concentrated on grammar and discovered that the students struggled with prepositions, punctuation, and articles as well as failing to construct complicated grammatical statements. As there was little time for learning the materials, the study concluded

that there was a lack of practice in the classroom. In other words, the study was unsuccessful in providing the teachers with methods of instruction.

Intending to study whether product or process approaches were followed in writing classes, Chaqmaqchi (2015) investigated writing skills at Salahaddin University. The findings demonstrated that the teachers mostly used a product approach in their teaching style. Likewise, Zainal et al. (2019) examined the writing methodologies used in Malaysian universities. According to the study, teachers adopted a product approach to a higher level. As it was advised, teachers should use a process approach to foster independent learners and encourage creative thinking in the classroom. In response, Razali and Li (2019) evaluated the implementation of the process approach in writing classes. The findings demonstrated that students' writing quality remained fairly low as a result of poor technique implementation and students' negligence. Additionally, it was noticed that the teachers were still unfamiliar with the aims and objectives of the process-based approach. In the Chinese context, the two methods of teaching writing received the majority of the researchers' attention. Therefore, Hang-Li (2010) noted that the methods used to teach writing were a combination of product and process in public colleges in China. The study also highlighted issues including students who were passive in class and struggled with their learning. In another sense, the study found that the issues in the classroom were brought on by the teachers, as they were not responsible.

To investigate the application of the CLL approach, Celik (2019) conducted a sequential explanatory mixed-method research to improve students' communication skills at Runaki Private School/ Hewler in Kurdistan. After having the intervention for

eight weeks, the experiment group performed with substantial success in their exams as a result of working cooperatively. Moreover, their critical thinking, interaction, and expression were improved. However, the study revealed that the teachers were not successfully managing the group work technique. Thus, examining the approaches to teaching writing in a variety of contexts in higher education is deemed necessary. Despite the Kurdish context, Mu and Carrington (2007) conducted research on Chinese EFL university students in an authentic Australian setting. The study's primary focus area was writing classes. The study's focus was on the student's linguistic and cognitive mechanisms to find out if they were managed by the students or not. However, the study indicated that certain psychological and social strategies of the students also should be investigated as they were not properly coped, and the students had trouble working together. Iranian university students' writing methods were examined by Raoofi et al. (2019). The findings of the study showed that the use of the effort strategy with the metacognitive strategy produced outstanding results. The students, however, did not use social strategy, which was in the highest category. The study concluded that students used more strategies as their writing ability increased. The study emphasized the use of interactive training activities for the students.

The review of the literature reveals that the adopted approaches by the teachers have not been investigated. Yet, the studies all proved the students' insufficient writing in various contexts. Also, research on cooperative learning in teaching communication skills has proved to be effective. This signifies the necessity for further investigation into teaching writing skills in the specific context of Kurdistan.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design

The type of research is a mixed-method design. According to Creswell and Clark (2018), mixed method research is a multiple way of visualizing and interpreting the phenomenon. It is acknowledged by researchers as a user-friendly mode of inquiry, in which the method best yields at answering the research questions in which its type is an exploratory research question. That is, it tries to explore more on the phenomenon by using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Hence, the type of the mixed method is a sequential transformative design. i.e., triangular convergent design, in which qualitative and quantitative data are both collected correspondingly and the results of each are produced (Immonen, 2013).

4.2. Participants

To obtain the quantitative data 203 second-year students in three public universities (Soran, Salahdin, and Raporin) participated in a survey. The researcher purposefully decided to choose second-year students as they had writing modules in their first and second years of study. Thus, depending on the nature of quantitative research, the probability simple random sampling method was used as everyone had a right to participate (Dörnyei, 2003). Concerning classroom observation, three EFL writing teachers with their classes, in which two teachers had two groups of students and one teacher had one group. Generally, five groups of students, each containing 20-28 students, were investigated in the observation phase. As for the interview, 12 teachers in the three public universities who were teaching writing for the academic year (2021–2022) participated in an interview.

4.3. Data collection tools

The data for answering the research questions was collected through the methods of questionnaire, observation, and interview for the quantitative and qualitative parts, respectively. Therefore, classroom observation is used in three teachers' EFL writing classes, in the faculties of arts and education. The aim of administering the observation was to observe the nuances that could not be obtained through a questionnaire. Depending on the nature of observation, as it is known to be naturalistic and is used to understand and get information from a real setting and explore certain situations and behaviours naturally (Waxman, et al. 2009), the researcher adopted this method in 6 sessions. The researcher conducted a non-participatory observation, using an observation checklist accompanied by note-taking (See Appendix 2).

Second, the researcher administered a questionnaire to involve a larger number of participants. The participants were asked to pick their answers to 22 items ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree through a five-point Likert scale (See Appendix 1). Mostly, this type of questionnaire is used to measure the participants' attitudes towards something (Rani & Roopa, 2012). Hence, the researcher used that to find out the students' attitudes towards the nature of writing skills including the possibility of the implementation of the CLL approach.

Third, to answer the second research question, semi-structured interviews were held either face-to-face or virtually through Zoom Meeting and Google Meet. Moreover, depending on the teachers' time and availability, the interviews were implemented. As this method of data collection is qualitative, non-random sampling is

used. Hence, the researcher conducted a purposive sampling method in which certain teachers were selected depending on the objective of the study, to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Taherdoost, 2016).

4.4. Research validity and reliability

Before administering the tools, to assure validity, the tools were sent to a jury committee of 12 members who were senior lecturers and PhD holders of the KR universities, specialising in TESOL, applied linguistics and ELT. As a result, the agreement degree by the jury committee was 85%; and except for suggestions for some slight changes in their wording, all items were retained. Finally, the researcher and the supervisor discussed their comments, revised the content tools, and applied all the necessary changes.

On the other hand, the degree to which a measurement of a phenomenon produces consistent, trustworthy, and objective results is referred to as its reliability (Savic, 2008). Testing for reliability is significant since it applies to the consistency of a measuring instrument's parts. Hence, the researcher has used a triangulation method to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and results. According to Bekht and Zauszniewski, (2012), methodological triangulation comprises using more than one method so that the results will be more objective. Hence, the researcher used three methods for data collection, which were observation, questionnaire, and interview.

However, to assess the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha reliability measurement was used. According to Field (2009), Cronbach's alpha is used to find out the consistency between the questionnaire items and to explore

how closely the items are related as a group. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha is considered the most appropriate measure for internal consistency reliability, especially when using a Likert scale.

5. Data analysis and findings

5.1. Quantitative data analysis

5.1.1. Questionnaire analysis

As it is stated before, the questionnaire consists of 22 items to which participants choose their level of agreement through a five-point Likert scale. For the academic year (2021-2022), the population proportion which was the students of English departments in the Kurdistan universities was approximately 9000. Hence, 203 samples were randomly chosen, from the three universities. According to the sample size formula, 125 participants must be taken in that the total population number is 9,000. As such, the margin of error was 5% and the confidence level was 95% (Ahrens & Zascerensska, 2015).

5.1.1.1 Questionnaire's reliability and validity results

Firstly, the data is tested for its internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha. Generally, Alpha scores are considered reliable when the estimates of the items are 0.70 and above, which means 70% of the variance in the scores is a reliable one. Hence, the Cronbach's Alpha scores of the whole 22 items were 0.767, so the results indicate that the questionnaire is reliable and there is a correlation between the items.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.767	22

5.1.1.2. Normality of distribution

To ascertain if data samples were taken from a regularly distributed population, a normality test is performed. A normality test determines whether the data is normally distributed or not according to the certain tests implemented. Thus, by examining the skewness and Kurtosis values of the scales and histograms, the normality of the data is checked (Pallant, 2011). Skewness is an indicator of the distribution's symmetry, while Kurtosis values show how far the distribution has peaked. If the skewness is zero, centred and symmetrical in shape, then the data is normally distributed. Also, the standard Kurtosis data is identified to be 3, then it denotes that the graphs' tails are normal (Demir, 2022).

Accordingly, the test of the 22 items shows that the skewness is negative (-1.498), which suggests that the distribution is slightly towards a higher score, indicating that the data is not normally distributed. The kurtosis is 2.479, in which it is positive and closer to 3, again it shows that the distribution is peaked. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Sahpiro-Wilk statistic values are 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05, indicating a significant result. The histogram shows that the data is almost highly picked (Figure 1). However, the Q-Q plot line shows a rather normal distribution and some of the points of the Detrended Q-Q Plot are closer to the zero

line (Figures 2 and 3). It can also be noted that there is no outlier in the boxplot (Figure 4), it can imply a rather normal distribution. According to (Field, 2009), the large sample size causes the data to be not normally distributed. In light of that, the non-parametric tests are used for testing the hypotheses.

Table (1)

		Statistic	Std. Error
Totalnorm	Mean	5.4010	0.04993
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	5.3025
		Upper Bound	5.4994
	5% Trimmed Mean	5.4564	
	Median	5.5556	
	Variance	0.506	
	Std. Deviation	0.71133	
	Minimum	2.63	
	Maximum	6.81	
	Range	4.19	
	Interquartile Range	0.67	
	Skewness	-1.498	0.171
	Kurtosis	2.479	0.340

Table (2)

Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a				Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Totalnorm	0.166	203	0.000	0.862	203	0.000

Figure 1: Bar chart of the overall items

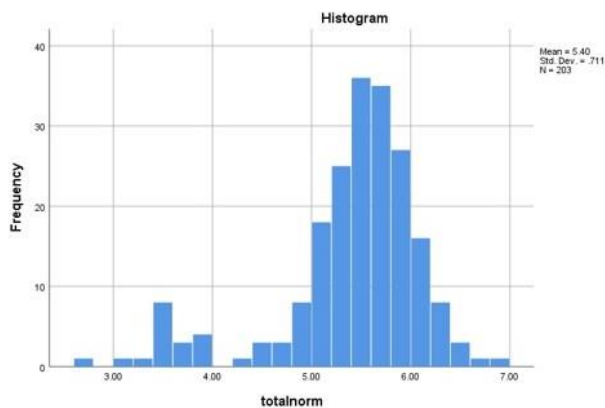


Figure 2: Normal Q-Q plot of the overall items

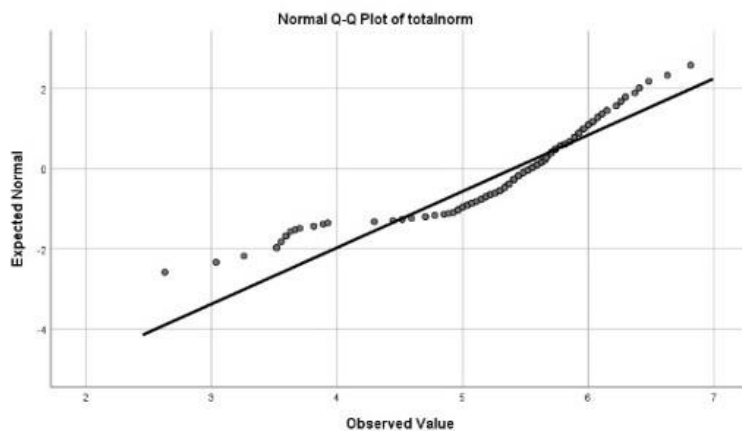


Figure 3: Detrended Normal Q-Q Plot of the overall items

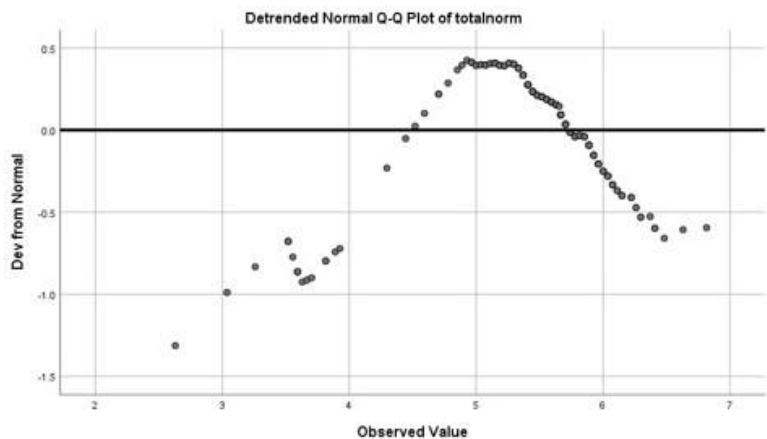
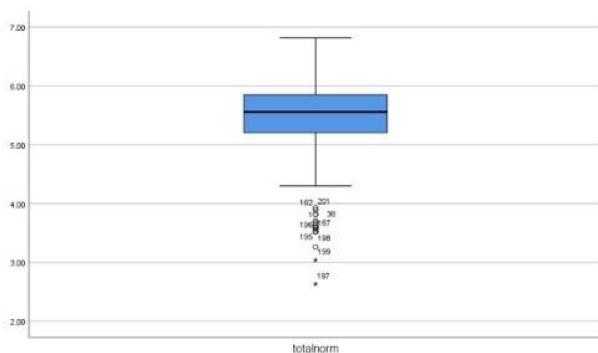


Figure 4: Box plot of the overall items



5.1.1.3. Hypotheses testing

To investigate the writing approaches and find out whether the cooperative language learning approach is implemented or not, and indicate its level and approach. the items were divided into five subscales depending on the five hypotheses provided. The students

were asked to choose one of the rating scales, and each scale was coded as Strongly agree= 5, Agree = 4, Neutral, = 3, Disagree= 2 and strongly disagree = 1. However, (8) negative items, the items (2- 8- 11- 13- 19- 22) were recorded as Strongly agree= 1, Agree = 2, Neutral, = 3, Disagree= 4 and Strongly disagree = 5. This means, that the more the statements are disagreed with, the more the results become positive indicating lesser implementation of the CLL approach.

The calculated range for the scale where the range $5-1 = 4$ By dividing it by the number of categories (5), the result is going to be $4/5 = 0.80$, which denotes the length of each category of the five scales. Then the length of the category was added to the lowest grade of the scale, which is the number (1). So, the first category was $(1+0.80 = 1.80)$ (Dörnyei, 2003) & (Joshi & Pal, 2015). This process was used for the rest of the categories. Hence, the criteria of the Mean range of the null hypotheses to be accepted is above the range of (3.40). Thus, the mean is calculated as:

Strongly disagree: 1.00- 1.80

Disagree: 1.81 to 2.60

Neutral: 2.61 to 3.40

Agree: 3.41 to 4.20

Strongly agree: 4.21 to 5.00

First hypothesis: The implementation of group work

The researcher wanted to find out whether group work is administered in the writing classes or not. For that reason, the items (2,3, and 7) are used for testing this hypothesis. Therefore, Table (1) shows the total score of the three items. Generally, the Mean score is (3.36) and the standard deviation is (0.751). Thus, the obtained score is smaller than the criteria score (3.40), i.e., it is neutral, and consequently, falls below the agreed level. Nonetheless, it cannot be suggested that the group work is implemented properly. Thus, the result is not significant enough to accept the null (H0) Hypothesis. However, it is more in favour of accepting the alternative hypothesis.

H01: Group work is implemented in the writing classes.
(Failed to accept)

H1: Group work is not implemented in the writing classes.
(Accepted)

Table (1)

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
203	1.67	5.00	3.3695	0.75110

Second hypothesis: The group work implementation according to the principles of CLL approach

Here, the researcher deepens the process to perceive whether the group work (in which the score was 3.36) was administered through cooperative learning techniques or not. That is, this

subscale contains 7 items (4,5, 9,11,13, 16, and 18). Table (2) shows that the total (M= 3.27, SD= 0.498). That is, the total score is smaller than the preferred range; the participants are neutral, and the results fall closer to disagree. Moreover, among the (203) participants, no one has stated (strongly agrees). This is why it can be demonstrated that the principles of the CLL approach are not implemented; therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted.

H02: Group work is implemented according to the principles of the CLL approach. (**Not accepted**)

H2: Group work is not implemented according to the principles of the CLL approach. (**Accepted**)

Table (2)

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
203	1.57	4.43	3.2730	0.49817

Third hypothesis: using the techniques of cooperative learning approach in the writing classes

For testing this hypothesis, 6 items from the questionnaire are included (6, 14, 15, 17, 19, and 20). As it is shown (Table 3), the total Mean score is (3.24) and the Standard deviation is (0.522). Thus, it is lower than the criterion (3.40). Hence, it can be implied that the participants' opinions on implementing the CLL techniques

are neutral. That is, the results cannot be used to conclude that those techniques are being used. In light of that, the null hypothesis is not accepted.

H03: Cooperative techniques are implemented in the writing classroom. (**Not accepted**)

H3: Cooperative techniques are not implemented in the writing classroom. (**Accepted**)

Table (3)

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
203	1.67	5.00	3.2406	0.52234

Fourth hypothesis: Students' attitude towards group work

To investigate the students' attitude towards group work, a hypothesis is provided that contains five items (1, 8, 10, 12, and 21). As Table (4) demonstrates, the total Mean score is (3.75) and the Standard deviation is (0.766), so the total Mean score is larger than (3.40) and it tells us that they agree. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students have a positive attitude towards group work. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted.

H04: Students have a positive attitude towards the group work. (**Accepted**)

H4: Students do not have a positive attitude towards group work. (**Rejected**)

Table (4)

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
203	1.60	5.20	3.7596	0.76672

Fifth hypothesis: Giving homework to the students

For testing this hypothesis, one item is included (22). As it is displayed in (Table 5), the total Mean score is (2.43) and the Standard deviation is (1.121). Thus, the obtained score is smaller than the research criterion (3.40), i.e., it states that the participants disagree. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted.

H05: The students are not given homework in the writing classrooms. **(Accepted)**

H5: The students are given homework in the writing classrooms. **(Rejected)**

Table (5)

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
203	1.00	5.00	2.4335	1.12102

5.2. Qualitative data analysis

5.2.1. Observation analysis

To further investigate the real situation of the writing classes in Kurdistan universities, the researcher started a six-session classroom observation on March 4th, 2022 which lasted for six weeks. The first five sessions are selected for analysis. Hence, three EFL writing classes with three teachers from two English departments (Faculty of Arts, and Faculty of Education), both morning and evening studies at Soran University, were chosen. After gaining their consent through an official form, see (Appendix 3). The researcher attended the classrooms during the normal hours of the lecture. In order not to cause any harm or discomfort, she sat back and did not intervene in the process, having a non-participatory role. The teachers of the Faculty of Arts are given pseudonyms of Ameen and Sardar for the morning and evening classes, respectively, and Blind, from morning classes in the Faculty of Arts as well as Blind being the teacher of the morning studies at the Faculty of Education.

Classroom setting

During all five sessions of the classroom observation, all the teachers always presented their new subject at the beginning of the lecture. The students were seated in the traditional rows, and they would listen silently. Concerning the classroom setting, the teacher's classroom settings were always traditional and the students never depended on each other as they were all sitting in the traditional rows. Only in one session (Session 3 in Sardar's class), the students were asked to work together and move to do the exercise from the book. Mostly, the girls and boys were separated, and the teachers were often the only speakers in the classroom, but

the individual students would sometimes participate when they were asked to do the exercises like filling up the blanks and answering the questions, except the few sessions (session 2, Sardar's class). Meanwhile, in most of Blind's sessions, (sessions 3,4 and 5), the students were sometimes asked to work in pairs or groups; but after the exercises, the students would return to their seats. Through the teacher's encouragement, the students would sometimes help one another in the final three sessions. The teacher was sometimes the only speaker; and through his activities, the students would sometimes talk and give their ideas in the final two sessions.

Writing process

During the five sessions of the observation, the writing process never took place in Ameen's classes. Apart from session 3, in which he asked the students to write a paragraph about one of the topics of their interest, the teacher emphasized working alone and asked them not to look at each other. This was to have their ideas on one of the topics that students presented during the presentations, but not on the writing elements. As the teacher's focus was never on the final writing product nor the writing process, he would sometimes check the writing features with the individual students from the book exercises. Thus, it seems that Mr., Ameen's classroom was fully teacher-directed- directed and the classroom was taught in a way that a grammar class would be taught. Similarly, in the first three sessions, the text writing activity never took place in Sardar's class, apart from session 4, in which he asked the students to write a paragraph with their partners. Otherwise, he gave the students text-writing homework in the three first sessions and asked them to upload them on their portal. Generally, his focus was sometimes on the final writing product in the second and third sessions; but in the fourth session, he went

through the students' writings individually, and he checked their linguistic features. However, in Blind's classes, the writing process would often take place in the classroom on those features in which they were studying daily in pairs or groups. In the final two sessions (4 and 5), the students were given writing homework to practice the features of unity and coherence in their texts. Moreover, the teacher's focus was sometimes on the final writing product in the three first sessions, but in the final two sessions, he would check the students' writing steps and investigate how they compose and interact. Thus, only the Blind would sometimes focus on the process of writing. Otherwise, the aim was mostly to have a final draft.

Thus, it can be concluded that the classes were mostly teacher-although Mr. Blind and Mr. Sardar would do group work but it was not the one that the cooperative approach sought. On the other hand, although the system requires the teachers to adopt the Bologna process, hardly the teachers would do group work except for Mr. Blind who insisted on working together. Moreover, the interaction was recorded to be at the lowest level which was quite far from the elements of the cooperative approach.

1- Students' motivation

Concerning the students presenting their work, the students were rarely motivated to present their work, as the teachers rarely asked and motivated them, except in very few cases in the classes of one teacher after the fourth session (Sessions of 4 and 5 in Blind's class). The students felt stressful to do that. Whether the students were asked to interact with one another or not, during the observations, they would rarely interact with each other, there were only a few instances of commenting on the presentations of their peers or when a question was posed by the teacher (Session 3 of

Ameen's Class). In only one of the classes, the teacher sometimes asked the students to work in pairs, but only once, he asked to work in groups (Session 4 Of Sardar's Class). Meanwhile, the students would often work together or in groups during the last three sessions in another class (Sessions of 3-4-5, in Blind's classes) and they were enhanced and encouraged by the teacher to interact.

2- Group work

Concerning forming groups of students, during the observation, group working never happened in (Ameen's classes), nor did the students perform any roles as they were sitting traditionally and listening to the teacher or presenters. The teacher dedicated an hour a week to the students' presentations on general topics like education, psychology, motivation, movies and anything that the students were interested in. Moreover, the evening classes have never had group working, except few cases in the last sessions (sessions 4 and 5, in Sardar's class), The groups were formed randomly and not every member participated in this activity. Differently, the students would often work in pairs and groups containing four to six members in the last three sessions of Blind's classes. Generally, the teachers would give students time to brainstorm but it was not done cooperatively and even the ideas of each member were not shared with the other members for the sake of improving their writing. Generally, during the observation, it has been noted that the groups are formed randomly depending on the students' closeness and the students did not perform different roles while working together. Generally, one or two would work and the others would sit passively. On the other hand, except for one teacher (Ameen), the other two teachers had an active role in the classroom, they would turn around the groups and ask the students if something was unclear to them, and they would explain further to those who did not understand. Also, Blind would often ask the

students to work collaboratively, but he did not explain how to be collaborative. Thus, the observation demonstrated that the group work that the teachers managed was not cooperative.

3-Feedback

It was observed that the students never provided feedback to one another, neither on their writing nor during the exercises. Moreover, the less advanced learners (poor learners) have neither been assisted by the advanced ones during the activities, nor by the teachers. It was mostly the teachers who wanted to explain and comment in class. However, it was noted that, in session 3, Mr. Blind went to the students who were working together on a piece of writing. He suggested that the lower-level ones ask for help from their peers. Additionally, with the help of higher-level students, he tried to give explanations to those who couldn't understand well. Based on that, it can be demonstrated that peer reviewing which is a potential element of a cooperative approach, as it is based on assistance among the students, did not exist in the writing classrooms as the teachers did not adopt that except Mr. Blind, as he motivated to help one another, but it only happened in one session and he would not monitor everyone equally.

5.2.2. Interview analysis

For investigating the teachers' knowledge and perceptions of the CLL approach and teaching writing practices generally; to answer the second research question, the interview data revealed some significant findings about the teachers' beliefs and knowledge. Instead of referring to their real names, the researcher

has given pseudonyms to the teachers as part of the ethical considerations. As it was mentioned before, the researcher decided to conduct the qualitative interview to gain an in-depth understanding and ensure valid answers to the second research question. The interview questions total 16, and they are designed to elicit teachers' opinions on their teaching style, preferred writing classroom strategies, and classroom management techniques (see Appendix 4). After transcribing the interview recordings, they were put into a Nvivo package. All the transcripts were coded inductively, and then categorized and, consequently, the themes emerged from them. Therefore, below are some points which are taken out from the interviews and they are categorized as follows

5.2.2.1. The teachers' perception of teaching writing

All the participants stated that "writing is the most difficult skill to be taught." Thus, they related it to the difficulty of the skill itself, as it needs the knowledge of language and mechanisms to be applied. Furthermore, they declared another potential of the difficulty of teaching the skill, in which getting students into it is more challenging. As they specified, the students make mistakes in their writing, even those written in their mother tongue. Notably, they have illustrated that due to the prioritizing of speaking on the other skills, writing is a neglected skill. This is why teachers have found it to be challenging. As Mr. Ahmad from "Salahadin" University stated:

It is one of the most challenging subjects to teach, as many people think that writing is not teachable. So, teaching writing is victimized. The importance is given to speaking skills as they only see it in students.

Above that, four teachers from the three universities declared that the mechanisms of teaching writing are typically ignored to be provided even by the curriculum designers and educational decision-makers. As a result, they affirmed that each teacher may teach from their own angle and that it results from improper teaching. This is why, they claimed that the ignorance of the curriculum designers in terms of investigating approaches and how they should be different from other skills, resulted in the teachers' being unable to deal with the skill. As Mr. Ahmad and Mr. Zhyar elaborated further:

I think that part of the difficulty in managing a writing skill classroom is due to the ignorance of the decision-makers of the ministry. As, the skill has received the least attention, but it is only through speaking that they consider students to be proficient language users.

5.2.2.2. Adopting random pedagogical writing methods

In investigating the teachers' pedagogical writing methods, none of the teachers mentioned the cooperative language learning approach. Consequently, half of them stated that they use the process approach and the other half indicated the student-centered approach method, communicative method, desuggestopedia, direct method, and learner autonomy. Thus, it seems that due to administering the Bologna process in the higher educational system, the teachers are familiar with the term "student-centred approach" and some of them were trying to use some elements of it like group working and monitoring. On the other hand, Mr. Blind,

who has been working in the field and accomplished many courses for universities, claimed that:

It is very important to follow a student-centred approach, but we have misunderstood the concept. I have noticed that it is not implemented correctly in our classrooms, because the student-centred approach is very helpful for a writing classroom. We put the students into groups, let them correct their mistakes, and encourage them. So, there are a variety of ways and techniques, but as I said, the teachers don't use them properly.

However, all the teachers emphasized their interactive roles in the classroom as they monitored, supported, and encouraged the students. Moreover, they found interaction between the teacher and students to be remarkable in the writing classroom. Despite their active role in the classroom, they all agreed that full mastery of the writing process is never achieved in their classrooms, as they thought that students don't like writing and they can't be assured that everyone's mastery of the writing features is guaranteed. In terms of assisting students whose level is low, half of them believed in motivation and grouping them; others believed that nothing could be done because they had decided not to learn. Meanwhile, four of them believed that teachers should use their power, especially the power of marks. For instance, Mr Sahand from Raparin University specified that:

I have passive students. One day I called and told them if you don't like the subject, it was okay, but if they didn't listen to me, I wouldn't let them be in my class. You should be ready. If you don't, I won't give you even one mark. So, teachers should have reactions about that... and show them the power of marks.

5.2.2.3. Practices of teaching writing

In asking the teachers' practices and activities that they adopt or think are important to use, the majority of them stated that they were using one of these activities: brainstorming, composing, diagramming, gap-filling, and question and answer, either individually, then coming to the stage to share it with others or through working in groups. As Mr. Zhyar from Salahadin University clarified further:

They write, they brainstorm. Sometimes I have gap-filling activities, I give them academic words like linking words. Then I ask each one to put the words in the correct place. I also have a checking activity by giving the students a wrong text and asking them to correct it.

Among all the participants, only one mentioned using a jigsaw activity sometimes while doing activities, When he was asked for the reason for conducting it, he said "It was a modern way" as he declared he tried that through his six-month training course of pedagogy. Thus, Mr. Sardar from Soran University declared:

I use different activities in my classroom, I sometimes use a jigsaw activity, I divide the work among the groups, and I give the students different responsibilities, I have found that challenging, but I want to examine different activities in my classroom.

Yet, during the classroom observation, it was noted that he didn't use the jigsaw technique while implementing activities. Thus, it can be supposed that the teacher knows as he had a pedagogy training course for six months, even though he regards it as significant. Yet, he didn't use it in the classroom.

5.2.2.4. Teacher's perceptions of group working

Among 12 teachers, 9 of them regarded group work as beneficial in that students all work together on a piece of writing and they exchange ideas. Yet, three of them considered group work as a way of wasting time and producing passive students, even though they stated that they don't adopt it in their teaching style. Concerning the division of groups, among the nine of them, five teachers stated that their criterion was English proficiency level. Meanwhile, the other four signified students' preferences and shared interests, as they believed that it would be more effective if they decided on their groups. As Mr. Dara from Salahadin University stated:

I divide them randomly; I don't believe in English proficiency level. I usually give them a game (a sports game), and I tell them to write the name of the sport that they like. Then those who have chosen the same type become friends together, and I make one group of them. So, it is based on their shared interests.

Additionally, most of them believed that although they have adopted group work, it produces dominant figures in the classroom. Hence, they portrayed that while working in groups, one student takes responsibility for the whole work. In turn, the majority of them stay passive as they become happy that someone is doing everything. As Mr Mahmood from Raparin University claimed,

Some of them are passive and some of them are dominant. Some of them are busy with their phones, and mostly they use their mother tongue. So... I go and ask them: Is the instruction clear? Well, yeah... As students in our community are not taught to work in collaboration, it creates these issues, and... this is

why, though I use group work, I don't see it as preferable.

However, teachers raised some other concerns about group work, such as noise, disagreements among members, using their mother tongue, and the difficulty of managing all of them. So, Mr. Ahmad mentioned that "who has done the work is a big question..." Hence, it can be implied that the cooperative elements are not implemented in the classroom while working in groups, because in the cooperative approach, there isn't one student who should be praised, but it is the whole group who participates in the task accomplishments, and the praise is given to all the group members. Therefore, it is not a big deal for a teacher who has done the work, because everyone must participate. However, task completion is critical. Concerning giving students roles, only two of them stated that they are giving the students roles, but they reported that they can't monitor all of them due to having large classes. Meanwhile, the rest declared that once a week they have a practical lesson and they don't have time to give everyone roles and monitor all of them. As Mr. Zhyar from Salahadin University noted,

I don't tell them that you have different roles. However, I provide guidelines such as using academic vocabulary, correcting punctuation, correcting tenses, and so on. You know, I let them be independent because if I give them roles I am sure they won't like and they will spoil it. Despite that, we are not sure who has done the work ...!! yeah.

5.2.2.5. Teachers' preferred assessment tools

All the teachers emphasized that their assessment tools are mostly quizzes, exams, daily activities, presentations, projects, and other daily activities. The reason for using these shared tools is due to the adoption of the Bologna process in the universities of Kurdistan. The assessment instructions are all generalized and the teachers are following them. However, two of the twelve teachers (Blind and Mahmood) stated that they use peer assessment, and their motivation for doing so was to allow students to learn from one another, "Despite the quizzes and monthly tests, I use peer assessment among the students. Because I think it is a way of making students learn from each other", (Mahmood).

In addition to the writing tasks and tests, 10 of them preferred giving homework to the students, and they stated that through Google Classroom and Messenger Group, and sometimes through handouts, they receive their homework. Their potential for giving homework was that they couldn't do everything in the classroom as the infrastructure was not suitable because they claimed that their time was limited in the classroom and they couldn't dedicate half of the class to students to write. Meanwhile, Mr. Blind signified that students should work not even in the class, as he elaborated further:

I think homework is necessary to give feedback. Homework should be followed by the teacher's feedback, and maybe resubmitted. I try to give them feedback and they resubmit. We should make the process of learning not only inside the classroom but also transform it outside, to the students' homes.

Meanwhile, the other two teachers (Mr. Rebar and Mr. Dana) demonstrated that they do not give their students homework, as they stated that everything is done in the classroom. Their reason was that they could not be sure if the students did the homework by themselves or not. Thus, in cooperative learning, everything is done cooperatively in the classroom. It seems that two teachers wanted their students to do everything in the classroom, but their justification was not cooperation, they claimed that they could supervise and monitor them better.

5.2.2.6.Motivating competition

As the researcher mentioned the idea of competition and asked them whether their cases are competitive or whether they encourage it or not, 11 teachers regarded competition among peers as helpful for pushing students to work and try further. In light of that, they concentrated that they do encourage competitiveness and they reported that it can be done in different ways: showing the power of marks, i.e., daily marks for the daily participation, picking up students to present their work and choosing the best ones and they also regarded group work as a remarkable way so that students compete with each other to be the best among the others, "Our system is competitive..., so I think competition can be helpful even for those learners who don't try", demonstrated Mr Rebar. Similarly, Mrs. Tara from Soran University acknowledged that "I use a process approach in the writing classroom, so my students compete against each other."

Additionally, a majority of them used group working in their teaching style, but it seemed that their groups were not cooperative, that they didn't regard cooperation to be the core, and that not everyone participated in the work fulfilment. Their criteria of group construction were mostly random, in that they were mostly based

on the students' preferences and their closeness in the classroom. The interview explored that not even the cooperative language learning approach was not familiar to them but the implementation of a student-centred approach was not in a well-instructed manner due to the majority's statements, as they stated that "culture, atmosphere, classroom setting, and even some teachers believed that they should have total power in the classroom", were all the reasons for teaching writing randomly.

Lastly, the findings illustrated that although the teachers didn't mention the CLL approach in their teaching style, four of them used some of its elements, like using the jigsaw, motivating collaboration, and giving students roles. Moreover, the teachers had different majors like ELT, linguistics, and literature. Only those who had taken a pedagogy training course for six months have used some cooperative elements in the classroom and they regard it as part of the student-centered approach, and they regarded a teacher as being a monitor in the classroom.

6. Discussion

This section is dedicated to the presentation, interpretation and discussion of the most important findings. Specifically, the first research question has revealed several realities: the observation of the three writing classes rendered several findings.

(Research question 1)

- The nature of teaching EFL writing in the KRIG universities.

First, it was determined that two of the classrooms had a traditional setting with a fixed set of tables and chairs, apart from one teacher (Blind), who organized certain sessions of group work. Only, in a few instances the students were asked to work in pairs and occasionally in groups, the teachers were frequently the only speakers in the classroom. Therefore, the above-mentioned points as well as the classroom setting are an indication that still similar traditional approaches are being used. That is, the findings of this study are consistent with those of a study carried out in the Chinese setting by Mo (2011), who discovered that writing activities were absent from classrooms and that teachers lacked a strong interest in, ability to, or knowledge of creating an interactive learning environment.

Concerning the text-writing activity, it was discovered that this activity only occurred in one instructor's last two sessions, but rather the teachers frequently assigned text-writing homework to their students. Meanwhile, the responses to the questionnaires revealed that the text-writing homework Mean was (2.43), which was below the agreed level. However, writing was not a common activity in those classes. One implication could be the adoption of the Bologna system and its requirements. Since all Kurdish universities are compelled to implement that approach in their teaching and learning methods. Because the system demands students to undertake the majority of the work themselves, including posters, presentations, and other projects. It became evident that the teachers' concentration, particularly those from the faculty of Arts, was on the final product, and they would take a

product-based approach. That is similar to Zainal et al. (2019), Razali and Li (2019), and Chaqmaqchi (2015) that the majority of writing teachers use a product-based approach.

In terms of student motivation, except for a few examples in a class, in general, students were not motivated in the classroom, and they were stressed when the teacher urged them to work together. Regarding this point, it is often said that it is the responsibility of instructors to employ various activities or skills to assist students in decreasing their affective filter. As a result, it can be concluded that students' motivation is always linked to teachers' strong classroom management skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2005) in using interactive activities, such as the cooperative language learning strategy since students are typically more motivated in classrooms that use the CLL approach. Findings related to motivation are in line with those made by Ning and Hornby (2014), who concluded that teachers and teacher-directed classes caused anxiety and stress among students.

The teachers' adopted approaches were a combination of diverse ones. The observation revealed that there was minimal student engagement in the classes, which were primarily teacher-directed. When the teacher requested the students to collaborate in one class, it was reported that the teacher adopted a communicative learning strategy. Adopting the practices depended on the individual teacher since they adopted those methods differently, i.e., implementing some elements of the Bologna process was different from one teacher to another due to the different training courses the teachers had had. Surprisingly, it was demonstrated that two teachers were giving presentations in the writing classes on various subjects that had nothing to do with writing under the pretext of the Bologna system. As the teachers in the interview declared having 60 marks in daily activities renders them to use

different activities including presentations, posters, reports, and essays. It seems that they have not specified the activities with the requirements of the skills. Similar findings were made by Derekhshan and Shernji (2020) in an Iranian context, where they claimed that the environment was entirely teacher-directed rather than naturalistic and that curriculum designers were urged to develop training for university teachers to raise the students' writing skills to encourage teachers to use a variety of student-centred teaching techniques.

In addition to the classroom observation, a questionnaire was also administered. The first hypothesis demonstrated that group work is not being applied at the appropriate level since the Mean (3.36) is low. Even the five sessions of classroom observation demonstrated that one teacher did not use it. Further, the interview reached the point that not every teacher enjoyed the group work as they stated that “it is a waste of time”. So, it implies that they do not know about applying modern approaches because individual work is a traditional method of teaching (Alghasab, 2015). Investigating the use of group work by the principles of the cooperative language learning approach, however, resulted in a (3.27) score that was below average, i.e., the teachers did not adopt cooperative group work, which was also confirmed during the observation. Even when the teachers employed this technique, neither did they assign students roles, nor emphasized peer cooperation, and, chose them based on their level of English proficiency. This suggests that the kind of group work was not cooperative, but traditional group work. This finding is in agreement with Aicha (2012) that all types of group work are not cooperative and do not always assist in improving students' writing, but sometimes result in producing dominant figures in the classroom.

Another objective of the study was to determine whether or not teachers used cooperative approach techniques. The hypothesis was that teachers did not use the techniques because the mean score was only 3.24, which was lower than the required acceptance criterion. As a result, it was noted that teachers did not use the cooperative approach techniques. The peer review did not take place in the classroom at the time of the observation. In addition, the more advanced students did not help the less advanced ones. Correspondingly, Alhebaishi (2018) observed that, although the lectures occasionally become interactive, the writing classes at Taibah University in Saudi Arabia were not taught using CLL methodologies. Johnson (1998) noted that students are not always cooperative in interactive classes. Every group member in the CLL approach has a distinct task in a way that fosters individual accountability.

On the other hand, the student's attitude toward the application of group work was positive, and the null hypothesis was accepted since it was 3.75. Therefore, the implementation of the CLL technique could have had bigger benefits on their writing accomplishments as long as their attitude towards the group work was positive. The findings therefore reflect those of Nudee (2010), who discovered that students at Songka University in Thailand showed a positive view toward group work. This is an indication that the CLL technique has the potential to be implemented successfully. Additionally, it was discovered that the students were rarely motivated to submit their work, which was because they lacked cooperation and the teachers did not assign them roles in group projects. They felt a lot of tension doing it because of working alone. According to Smith (1998), cooperative group writing can increase motivation and the desire to attempt more through exchanging ideas among the group members.

Research question 2:

-Teachers' perceptions and knowledge of writing and the CLL approach.

The teachers' interview revealed some significant facts about their approach to teaching EFL writing. "Writing is the hardest skill to teach", according to all of the teachers. The first thing the interview revealed was how challenging writing is from a teacher's point of view. In other words, they provided evidence to support their claim that both teaching the skill and engaging the students in it are challenging. It should be noted that writing requires teachers who have specialized skills due to the various parts and stages of the process as well as the need to connect theory to practice. Teachers admitted that having students participate in class was very difficult for them. As a result, a variety of problems were offered because they thought the skill was difficult. Given this, Jashari and Fojkar (2019) agreed when they stated that Slovenia teachers' perceptions of writing ability were negative. As they pointed out, writing hasn't developed as much as the other three skills. The process of writing may be laborious because students need more practice and guidance, and if teachers do not fulfil their duties effectively, it leads to incompetence.

Above all else, speaking skill has received significant attention and priority in the majority of EFL contexts. Eleven of the twelve teachers agreed, claiming that speaking is valued more highly than writing. Three of them claimed that even curriculum designers had failed to create specific writing practices. Therefore, it can be concluded that a variety of activities and projects, such as presentations, projects, posters, and debates, are based on speaking skills in the higher educational system. In other words, it led to a sense of carelessness toward writing ability, as one's proficiency is

always proven by speaking accuracy and fluency. Another issue is that the ministry and universities haven't given teachers enough courses or training on how to teach writing skills. Three of the twelve of them had taken a writing course for personal development outside of the university. It can be inferred that teachers' perceptions of the skill as challenging were influenced by their lack of familiarity with the procedures for teaching writing. This point, however, is in line with the findings of a study done by Susanto and Yusephine (2017) who interviewed 25 EFL writing teachers in Indonesia and showed that writing is a challenging task since they lacked sufficient guidelines in teaching it even though their students had numerous issues with their writings. Likewise, Ahmadi et al. (2014) claimed that Iranian EFL writing teachers needed training courses because they were unable to deal with some of their students' issues, such as writing elements, a lack of appropriate writing activities, and difficulty managing time.

A key finding of the interview was that none of the teachers mentioned incorporating the cooperative learning approach into their teaching methods. This indicates that none of Kurdistan's three universities use the CLL approach to teach writing skills fully. The majority of them claimed to use a process-based approach, and they talked about how the students were working independently. The student-centred approach, direct approach, and communicative approach were all mentioned by the other half. They claimed that the Bologna process has rendered the teachers in the Kurdistan region to adopt those practices and that this has nothing to do with their familiarity with the CLL approach. Three teachers, on the other hand, emphasized that they closely monitor and assist their students in class, but they insisted that it had no impact on their achievement or advancement. Through the teachers'

declarations, similar findings by Leila (2010) and Aicha (2012) showed the absence of the CLL in the EFL writing classes.

Given that, it can be seen that the teachers had limited knowledge of the CLL approach because they failed to mention either the term or the need for implementation. Nearly all of the teachers asserted that they had a proactive role in supervising the groups when necessary. Teachers are expected to monitor the CLL approach to promote understanding among the participants, (Johnson & Smith, 1998). However, the Bologna process' guiding principles urge teachers to monitor and help students work equally. However, to assist low-achieving students, half of the teachers claimed that they use group work, while the others asserted that forcing them to work by emphasizing the importance of the mark and four of them claimed that there is nothing that can be done with students who dislike learning. These facts suggest that the CLL approach was not the motivation behind the techniques they specifically used. Additionally, pushing students to work through marks has only been practised in teacher-directed classes, according to Richard and Rodgers (2000), who argued that when students work to avoid losing marks, their learning is insufficient.

However, some teachers demonstrated how they make use of group projects. Therefore, they all concurred that dominant members of their groups carry out all group activities while the rest remain passive. In other words, despite knowing some of its components, it seems that teachers do not have that much knowledge in creating cooperative groups. Although the teachers declared that they form groups based on English proficiency level, during the observation, it was noted that they would ask the students to be divided based on their preference. That is, they declared that due to having large classes they cannot perform their duties well. Some teachers also complained that there was noise,

arguing, and mother tongue usage during group projects. It appears that students were not given roles, though. Only two of them claimed that they assigned the students roles. Giving students roles paves the way for them to feel responsible in the lectures being learned, claims Larsen-Freeman (2004). Similar findings were made in the Syrian context by Shammaout (2020), who discovered that the groups produced controlled figures and passive students, making it difficult for the teachers to monitor and supervise them all.

Since this study is founded on cooperation, it rejects competition in EFL classes as it is a means of maintaining controlled students in the class. Eleven teachers then discussed the necessity of competition in the classrooms. As a result, they would set various criteria because they believed that this was the only way for students to try to learn and raise their levels. Given this fact, it is clear that the teachers' goal in employing a particular practice or technique was to encourage competition in the classroom. Additionally, they employed the traditional form of group work—group projects—but it is not cooperative because they value student competition. As is evident, the cooperative learning group's goal is to support, assist, and work together (Axelrod & Greer, 2004). Given this, teachers were criticized by (Mu & Carrington, 2007) for encouraging competition among Chinese students attending Australian universities, which ultimately led to lower achievement levels and an inability of the students to use their psychological and cognitive coping mechanisms.

Conclusions, recommendations, and limitations

This study is intended to investigate the writing approaches adopted by the EFL writing teachers and the probability of implementing the CLL approach in the three universities. It can be

concluded that the qualitative data results from Soran University denoted that the writing approach is taught through various approaches of communicative and direct approaches in which there was an interaction between the teacher and students but lesser interaction among the students. Furthermore, the quantitative data findings from the three public universities displayed that group work was sometimes implemented. However, the application of the CLL approach was absent because the types of group work were neither cooperative nor the CL techniques utilized by the teachers. This is why the study implies that the writing approach was taught through random methods.

On the other hand, the interview with the teachers revealed some important aspects of their beliefs and knowledge about writing approaches. It became clear that the teachers had limited knowledge of the CLL approach, as most of them did not value group work, and they encouraged competition. Further, they adopted mixed approaches and two of them were using two types of cooperative activities, but their justification for using that was not cooperation but they justified student-centeredness as they had taken a pedagogy training course. So, it can be illustrated that those teachers who have taken pedagogy training courses were using modern practices in their teaching style. To this end, training courses for approaches of writing and more specifically CLL approach are necessary for the teachers to achieve greater achievements.

However, the study recommends that the writing approach needs further investigation. It is also hoped that through this study, the teachers will be encouraged to use the cooperative learning approach to enhance students' proficiency through making interactive groups and assigning different roles to the members of each group. Although the questionnaire was administered to three

public universities with a shared system, the quantitative data from the three universities demonstrated similarities in these three contexts, and the results could be generalizable. Nonetheless, the observation was conducted at Soran University only. Due to the researcher's time shortage and distance, she couldn't attend the classes at the other two universities. Thus, it is recommended that a similar method be used in other universities. In light of that, conducting an experiment or conducting action research could be the suggestions of this study for future researchers on the CLL approach in writing classes.

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Appendix 1: A questionnaire was administered to the students.

Dear students

Greetings...

We would be so grateful if you could dedicate some minutes to answering the questions below on investigating the approaches to teaching EFL writing skills in the universities of the Kurdistan Region. Your answers are going to be very supportive in the research project which we are undertaking. Please circle one option for each question.

Age:

Gender:

Year:

University:

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1-I like the teaching atmosphere in the writing classroom.					
2-We work individually in the writing classroom.					
3-My teacher asks us to work in groups.					
4-The teacher divides us into groups according to					

our interests.					
5-The teacher is a monitor of our groups.					
6-We have peer review in the writing classroom. (Note: Peer reviewing means the evaluation of the academic, or professional work by others working in the same field.).					
7-My teacher prefers using group work to working alone.					
8-There is so much noise in the classroom while working in groups.					
9- The teacher divides us based on the English proficiency level.					
10-I am very motivated when the teacher puts us into groups.					
11-When we work in groups, one student dominates the whole group.					
12- I learn better in group work than in working with the teacher.					
13- The teacher divides us into groups based on gender.					

14-I use my knowledge about writing to do activities.					
15-I have different responsibilities in the writing classroom.					
16-There are discussions and exchanging ideas in the writing classroom.					
17-The less advanced learners are assisted by the advanced ones during the writing classroom.					
18- The group consists of four to five members.					
19-My teacher is the only source of my learning motivation in the classroom.					
20-We have a specific time in the classroom for brainstorming.					
21- I can freely share my ideas with my classmates in the writing classroom.					
22- We have a text writing homework weekly.					

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix 2: An Observation Checklist

The learning environment	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
The teacher presents the materials at the beginning of the lecture					
The students are motivated to present their work					
The students interact with each other					
The writing process takes place in the classroom					
The students are divided into groups of four to five					
Each student has a different role in the writing classroom					
The students perform their roles well					
The groups are formed randomly					
The teacher is the facilitator and monitors the classroom					
The students depend on each					

other					
The students give feedback to each other					
The teacher encourages students to collaborate					
The less advanced students are assisted by the advanced ones.					
The students present their writing product without hesitation					
The teacher's focus is on the final writing product					
The language features are checked in the classroom					
The teacher dedicates time for students to brainstorm					
The teacher is the only speaker in the classroom					
The classroom setting is a traditional					

The teacher gives students a text-writing homework					
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Appendix 3: A consent letter for the teachers

A letter of permission for classroom observation

This letter is to inform () from the faculty of () of () university, that I am (Ameera Mamar) a master's student at Soran University, I kindly ask for permission to take observation of your writing classrooms. I would like to request your permission because there is a need for research that I'm conducting. Your consent will be of great value in reaching some conclusions about the nature of teaching writing at Kurdistan universities. I would like to assure you that you and, the names of your students will be kept confidential. Also, I would like to make sure that my attendance will not cause any harm or destruction to your classroom environment and your students. Finally, the data will be used for this academic research only.

Thank you for your cooperation

Master student:

Ameera Mamar Nabee

Supervisor:

Dr. Ali Yousif Aziz

Appendix 4: An interview questions guide with the EFL writing teachers

- 1- How long have you been teaching EFL writing? Have you ever had any training in teaching writing skills?
- 2- Do you think that teaching writing skills is different from teaching other skills? How?
- 3- What strategies do you consider successful for managing a writing classroom?
- 4- How many stages of the writing process do you cover in a lesson? How?
- 5- Do you divide your students into groups in the writing sessions? How often? On what base? Do they have problems together? How do you solve their problems?
- 6- Do you give your students different roles while writing? how?
- 7- What are your main activities in teaching writing?
- 8- What are the strategies you use to help under-achieving learners?
- 10-Do you pre-plan for the tasks? How?

11- Do you think that your writing classroom is competitive?
How?

12- How do you assess their level in writing? what are your
assessment tools for the students' writing?

13- Do you prefer fixed groups for the whole year? Why?

14- How are your students' feelings during the writing
sessions?

15- Can you describe your classroom setting while teaching
writing?

16- What is your pedagogical writing method? Why?

پوخته

ئامانجى ئەم توۋىژىنەۋەيە برىتتە لە لىكۆلىنەۋە لە و رېبازانەى كە لەلايەن مامۇستايانى فېركردنى كارامەيى نووسىنى EFL گىراۋنەتەبەر، بە تايىبەتى لىكۆلىنەۋە لە بەكارهيتانى رېبازى فېربوونى زمان، لە رېنگاى فېربوونى ھاوبەش دا. لە دىزايىنى توۋىژىنەۋەكە دا، رېبازى شىۋازى تىكەلاۋ پەيرەۋ كراۋە. شىۋازەكانى كۆكردنەۋەى زانىارىيەكان برىتى بوون لە چاۋدىرى پۆل ، راپرسى، و چاۋپىكەۋتنى مامۇستايانى نووسىن. بەشداربوۋانى توۋىژىنەۋەكە ۲۰۳ خويندكارى قۇناغى دوۋەمى بەشى زمانى ئىنگلىزى بوون، لە سى زانكۆى حكومى لە ھەرىمى كوردستان. سى وانەى نووسىنى EFL لە خويندنى بەيانىان و ئىۋاران چاۋدىرى كران. ھەروەھا، چاۋپىكەۋتنى ۱۲ مامۇستاي وانەى نوسىن كراۋە. داتاي چەندايەتى لە رېگەى SPSS و داتايى چۆنايەتى لە رېگەى شىكارى داتا بابەتتەيەكانەۋە شىكرانەۋە. دەرئەنجامى توۋىژىنەۋەكە ئەۋەى خستەرو، كە نووسىن لە رېگەى رېبازى پەيوەندى و رېبازى تىكەلاۋەۋە دەۋترىتەۋە ھەروەھا پۆلەكان زياتر بە شىۋازى مامۇستا- ئاراستەكراۋ بو، لەگەل كەمىك پەيوەندى لەنيوان قوتابيانى پۆلەكاندا. لەم نيۋەندەدا رېبازى فېربوونى زمان لە رېگەى فېربوونى ھاوبەش جىيەجى نەكرا لەوانەى نوسىن دا، سەرەراى ئەۋەى تەكنىكە ھاوبەشەكان، ۋەك كارى گروپى، بەپىيى بنەما و رېكارەكانى فېربوونى ھاوبەش لە پۆلەكانى نووسىندا پەيرەۋ نەدەكرا. ھەروەھا، چاۋپىكەۋتنى مامۇستا گەيشتە ئەۋ دەرئەنجامەى كە مامۇستايانى وانەى نوسىن شارەزايىيەكى سنوردارىيان ھەيە لە بەكارهيتانى رېبازى خويندنى ھاوبەش و كەمتر كارى گروپى پەسەند دەكەن. بەم شىۋەيە توۋىژىنەۋەكە گەيشتە ئەۋ ئەنجامەى، كە كارامەيى نووسىن و جىيەجىكردىن دىروستى رېبازى فېربوونى ھاوبەش پىۋىستى بە لىكۆلىنەۋەى زياتر ھەيە، بەھۋى ئەۋ پۆلە سەرەككەيە لە گەشەپىندانى ئاستى زمان و گۇرپانكارى لە فېركردنى نووسىندا ھەيەتى،

چونكه توڙينه وه كه دهريخستوه كه به شداربووانى توڙينه وه كه هه لويستى ئه رينيان هه بووه به رامبه ر به ته كنكه جوراوجوره كاني ئه م ريبارزه به نمونه شيوازي گروپى. له لايه كى تره وه، توڙينه وه كه پيشنيارى راهيتاني كردارى دهكات له لايه ن به ش و زانكوكانه وه له سه ر ميتوده كاني نووسين و به تاييه تيش ميتودي كاري هاوبه ش بو گه شه پيداني ئاستى نووسيني خويندكار.

وشه كليليه كان: فيركردنى نووسين، ريبارزي فيربوونى هاوبه ش، شيوازي قوتابى - ئاراسته كراو، ماموستايانى EFL

الملخص الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث عن الأساليب التي يتبعها مدرسو مهارات كتابة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، ولا سيما البحث عن استعمال منهج تعلم اللغة عن طريق التعلم المشترك في تصميم الدراسة، ولقد اعتمدت الدراسة على مناهج وطرق مختلطة، تتضمن طرق جمع البيانات في مراقبة الصف والاستبيان، وكتابة مقابلات المعلمين. وقد شارك في الدراسة (٢٠٣) طلبة، جميعهم من المرحلة الثانية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، وكانوا يمثلون ثلاث جامعات حكومية في إقليم كردستان، ولوحظت ثلاثة دروس في الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في دراستي الصباحية والمسائية، وتمت مقابلة (١٢) فردا من مدرسي الكتابة، وكان تحليل البيانات الكمية عن طريق نظام (الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية) والبيانات الكيفية كانت عن طريق تحليل البيانات الموضوعية.

ولقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الكتابة كانت تتم عن طريق التواصل والأساليب المختلطة، وأن الفصول كانت موجهة بشكل أساسي من قبل المعلم، مع تواصل ضئيل بين الطلاب، وفي الوقت نفسه لم يتم تنفيذ أسلوب تعلم اللغة عن طريق التعلم المشترك في مادة الكتابة، علاوة على ذلك، أن التقنيات التعاونية، مثل العمل الجماعي، لم تطبق وفقا لمبادئ وإجراءات التعلم المشترك في فصول الدراسة. كما توصلت مقابلة المعلم إلى أن معلمي مادة الكتابة كان لديهم خبرة محدودة في استعمال منهج التعلم المشترك، وأقل ما كانوا يفضلون العمل الجماعي. وهكذا، توصلت الدراسة إلى أن مهارات الكتابة والتنفيذ السليم لمنهج التعلم المشترك يحتاجان إلى مزيد من البحث والدراسة، لأهمية دورهما الرئيسي في تطوير مستوى اللغة، والتغيير في التدريس الكتابي؛ كما أظهرت الدراسة أن المشاركين في البحث كان لديهم موقف إيجابي تجاه التقنيات المختلفة لهذا المنهج، على سبيل المثال الأسلوب الجماعي. ومن ناحية أخرى، أوصت الدراسة بالتدريب العملي من قبل الأقسام والجامعات على أساليب ومناهج الكتابة، ولا سيما أساليب العمل المشترك؛ لتطوير مستويات الكتابة لدى الطلاب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس مهارة الكتابة، التعلم المشترك، المنهج المختلط، التعلم المتمركز على المدرس، معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.