RETHINKING BENINESE EFL WRITING SKILLS IN UPPER SIXTH CLASSES: A PARADIGM SHIFT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of innovative pedagogical approaches on Beninese EFL learners' writing skills in upper sixth classes, with a view to revolutionizing the teaching and learning of writing in EFL contexts. Employing a mixed-methods approach through the administration of questionnaires to 300 learners (sample size=169) and 10 EFL teachers, interviews conducted with 10 EFL teachers, and some classroom observations, the study reveals that process-oriented approaches, collaborative learning, and the use of digital tools and multimedia resources significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, and writing performance. The findings underscore the need for a paradigm shift towards innovative pedagogies that prioritize student-centeredness, creativity, and critical thinking.

Keywords: EFL writing skills, innovative pedagogies, process-oriented approaches, collaborative learning, digital tools, Benin

RESUME

Cette étude examine l'impact des approches pédagogiques innovantes sur les compétences en écriture des apprenants ALE (Anglais Langue Etrangère) béninois en classe de terminale, dans le but de révolutionner l'enseignement et l'apprentissage de l'écriture en contexte ALE (Anglais Langue Etrangère). En utilisant une approche mixte à travers l'administration de questionnaires à 300 apprenants (taille d'échantillonnage=169) et 10 enseignants d'Anglais, des interviews conduites avec 10 enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère, et quelques visites de classes, l'étude révèle que les approches axées sur le processus, l'apprentissage collaboratif et l'utilisation d'outils numériques et de ressources multimédias améliorent significativement l'engagement, la motivation et la performance en écriture des étudiants. Les résultats soulignent la nécessité d'un changement de paradigme vers des pédagogies innovantes qui priorisent la centralité de l'apprenant, la créativité et la pensée critique.

Mots-clés: compétences, écrit ALE, pédagogies innovantes, approches axées sur le processus, apprentissage collaboratif, outils numériques, Bénin

INTRODUCTION

The pedagogy of writing in EFL contexts has long been mired in traditional approaches, prioritizing form over function, and neglecting the very essence of writing as a tool for communication and self-expression. For decades, the teaching of writing in Beninese EFL classrooms has been characterized by a product-oriented approach, where students are presented with a topic and expected to produce a grammatically accurate piece of writing, devoid of creativity and originality (Raimes, 1983). This approach has been criticized for its failure to equip students with the skills necessary to engage in authentic writing activities, resulting in stilted and uninspired writing

(Hyland, 2003). The limitations of traditional approaches to teaching writing are manifold. By focusing solely on grammatical accuracy, teachers neglect the importance of content and meaning, relegating writing to a mere exercise in error detection (Silva, 1990). The reliance on textbooks and worksheets further exacerbates the problem, denying students the opportunity to engage in authentic writing activities that foster creativity and self-expression (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Moreover, the neglect of process-oriented approaches has led to a lack of emphasis on the writing process itself, leaving students struggling to navigate the complexities of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

In Benin, the situation is no different. Upper Sixth EFL students are often subjected to traditional approaches to teaching writing, resulting in a lack of motivation and creativity in their writing (Tribble, 1996). The need for a paradigm shift is clear. It is imperative that Beninese EFL writing instruction undergoes a revolution, one that prioritizes the process of writing, fosters creativity and self-expression, and equips students with the skills necessary to engage in authentic writing activities. This study proposes a paradigm shift in the teaching of writing in Beninese EFL classrooms, one that prioritizes process-oriented approaches, authentic writing activities, and creativity. By revolutionizing the way writing is taught in Benin, we can empower students to become proficient writers, capable of expressing themselves with clarity, creativity, and confidence.

The Imperative for Innovation: Rethinking Traditional Approaches to Teaching Writing in EFL Contexts: The pedagogy of writing in EFL contexts has long been plagued by the limitations of traditional approaches, which have been criticized for their narrow focus on grammatical accuracy and neglect of content, creativity, and critical thinking (Raimes, 1983). This myopic approach has resulted in a stunted learning experience, where students are denied the opportunity to develop their writing skills in a holistic and meaningful way (Hyland, 2003). The consequences of this approach are stark: disengaged and demotivated students, poor writing performance, and a failure to equip learners with the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex and interconnected world (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

At the heart of this problem lies a fundamental flaw in the traditional approach to teaching writing: the prioritization of form over function. By focusing excessively on grammatical accuracy, teachers neglect the very essence of writing as a tool for communication, self-expression, and critical thinking (Hyland, 2003). This approach has led to a dearth of creativity, originality, and intellectual curiosity in student writing, as learners are discouraged from taking risks and exploring new ideas (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). **Rationale for the Study:** The rationale for this study is clear: the traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts are no longer tenable. The rapidly changing landscape of global communication demands a more nuanced and effective approach to writing instruction, one that prioritizes creativity, critical thinking, and content (Raimes, 1983). This study seeks to address this pressing need

by exploring innovative approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts, with a view to revolutionizing the way writing is taught and learned.

Significance of the Study: This study has significant implications for the teaching and learning of writing in Beninese EFL contexts. The findings of this study will inform pedagogical practice, curriculum development, and teacher education, ultimately contributing to the improvement of Beninese EFL learners' writing skills and their ability to communicate effectively in English. **Research Problem**: This study seeks to investigate the limitations of traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts and explore alternative approaches that prioritize creativity, critical thinking, and content. **Problem statement:** The Limitations of Traditional Approaches to Teaching Writing in EFL Contexts: The traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts have been criticized for being limited and ineffective (Raimes, 1983). According to Hyland (2003), traditional approaches to teaching writing often focus too much on grammar and form, neglecting the importance of content, creativity, and critical thinking. As a result, students may become disengaged and demotivated, leading to poor writing performance (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

The Need for a Paradigm Shift: There is a growing recognition of the need for a paradigm shift in EFL writing instruction, towards more innovative and effective pedagogies (Cumming, 2013). According to Kern (2000), innovative pedagogies that focus on content, creativity, and critical thinking can help students develop their writing skills and become more engaged and motivated learners. As Warschauer and Ware (2008) note, technology-enhanced learning environments can also provide opportunities for innovative pedagogies and improve student writing outcomes.

Revolutionizing EFL Writing Instruction: To revolutionize EFL writing instruction, teachers need to adopt innovative pedagogies that prioritize student-centered learning, creativity, and critical thinking (Hinkel, 2015). According to Canagarajah (2015), teachers should focus on creating learning environments that are supportive, collaborative, and authentic, and that provide opportunities for students to engage in meaningful writing activities. Unveiling the Transformative Potential of Innovative Pedagogies: Exploring the Impact on Beninese EFL Learners' Writing Skills. This study embarks on a pioneering quest to investigate the efficacy of innovative pedagogical approaches in enhancing the writing skills of Beninese EFL learners in upper sixth classes, while concomitantly exploring the challenges and obstacles that impede the implementation of these approaches.

Primary Objective: The primary objective of this study is to scrutinize the impact of innovative pedagogical approaches on Beninese EFL learners' writing skills, with a particular focus on the upper sixth classes. Specifically, this study aims to:

- Examine the Effectiveness of Innovative Pedagogies: Investigate the extent to which innovative pedagogical approaches, such as project-based learning,

      inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning, enhance Beninese EFL learners' writing skills.

- Identify Challenges and Obstacles: Explore the challenges and obstacles that Beninese EFL teachers face in implementing innovative pedagogical approaches in their writing classrooms.

- Inform Pedagogical Practice: Provide insights and recommendations for Beninese EFL teachers, policymakers, and curriculum developers on the design and implementation of innovative pedagogical approaches to writing instruction.

Definition of EFL Writing: English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing refers to the process of writing in English by individuals who are non-native speakers of the language and are learning it in a context where it is not the dominant language (Hyland, 2003). EFL writing is a complex and multifaceted process that involves not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural, social, and cognitive factors (Kroll, 2001). **Importance of EFL Writing:** EFL writing is an essential skill for learners of English as a foreign language, as it enables them to communicate effectively with others in academic, professional, and personal contexts (Nation & Newton, 1997). Moreover, writing in English is a crucial aspect of language learning, as it helps learners to develop their language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, and syntax (White & Cormack, 2000). In addition, EFL writing is a vital tool for academic success, as it is often used as a means of assessment in academic settings (Hyland, 2006). Unveiling the Efficacy of Pedagogical Approaches: A Trio of Research Questions:This study is guided by a set of research questions that seek to scrutinize the complex dynamics of EFL writing instruction in Beninese upper sixth classes, with a particular focus on the effects of traditional and innovative pedagogical approaches.

Research Questions:

RQ1: Unpacking the Legacy of Traditional Approaches: What are the effects of traditional teaching approaches on Beninese EFL learners' writing skills in upper sixth classes, and how do these approaches shape their writing proficiency, motivation, and overall learning experience?

RQ2: Harnessing the Potential of Innovation: Can innovative pedagogical approaches, such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning, improve Beninese EFL learners' writing skills in upper sixth classes, and if so, what are the key characteristics of these approaches that contribute to their effectiveness?

RQ3: Navigating the Challenges of Innovation: What are the challenges and obstacles that impede the implementation of innovative pedagogies in Beninese EFL classrooms, and how can these challenges be addressed to ensure the successful adoption of these approaches and enhance the quality of writing instruction? These research questions

are designed to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between pedagogical approaches, learner outcomes, and contextual factors in Beninese EFL contexts, and to inform the development of effective writing instruction that prepares learners for success in an increasingly globalized world. Unveiling the Transformative Potential of Innovative Pedagogies: A Set of Research Hypotheses: This study is anchored by a trio of research hypotheses that seek to scrutinize the efficacy of innovative pedagogical approaches in enhancing Beninese EFL learners' writing skills, motivation, and engagement.

Research Hypotheses:

RH1: The Innovative Pedagogies Paradigm: The use of innovative pedagogical approaches, such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning, will significantly improve Beninese EFL learners' writing skills in upper sixth classes compared to traditional teaching approaches, as these approaches foster a learner-centered, interactive, and authentic learning environment that promotes language acquisition and writing proficiency.

RH2: The Motivation-Engagement Nexus: There is a significant relationship between the implementation of innovative pedagogies and Beninese EFL learners' motivation and engagement in writing classes, as these approaches promote autonomy, creativity, and self-expression, thereby enhancing learners' intrinsic motivation and engagement in the writing process.

RH3: Overcoming the Challenges of Innovation: The challenges and obstacles to implementing innovative pedagogies in Beninese EFL classrooms, such as limited resources, large class sizes, and teacher resistance, can be overcome through targeted teacher training and support, including professional development workshops, mentoring, and peer support, which enable teachers to develop the skills, confidence, and motivation needed to effectively integrate innovative pedagogies into their teaching practices. These research hypotheses are designed to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between pedagogical approaches, learner outcomes, and contextual factors in Beninese EFL contexts, and to inform the development of effective writing instruction that prepares learners for success in an increasingly globalized world.

1. Literature Review

Towards a New Era in EFL Writing Instruction: Embracing Innovation and Effectiveness: The limitations of traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts have become increasingly apparent, underscoring the imperative for a paradigm shift towards more innovative and effective pedagogies (Cumming, 2013). As the global landscape of communication continues to evolve, it is no longer tenable to rely on outdated methods that prioritize form over function, neglecting the very essence of writing as a tool for self-expression, critical thinking, and creativity (Kern, 2000). Innovative pedagogies that focus on content, creativity, and critical thinking

offer a beacon of hope for revitalizing EFL writing instruction (Kern, 2000). By empowering students to explore complex ideas, engage with diverse perspectives, and develop their unique voice, these approaches can help learners develop their writing skills and become more engaged, motivated, and autonomous writers (Cumming, 2013).

Moreover, technology-enhanced learning environments have revolutionized the possibilities for innovative pedagogies, providing unparalleled opportunities for students to engage with authentic audiences, receive feedback, and refine their writing skills (Warschauer & Ware, 2008). As digital natives, today's learners are accustomed to interacting with technology in multifaceted ways, and it is incumbent upon educators to harness the potential of technology to create immersive, interactive, and transformative learning experiences. The need for a paradigm shift in EFL writing instruction is clear. It is time to move beyond the limitations of traditional approaches and embrace innovative pedagogies that prioritize creativity, critical thinking, and content. By doing so, we can empower students to become proficient writers, capable of expressing themselves with clarity, nuance, and conviction, and equip them with the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Revolutionizing EFL Writing Instruction: A Paradigm Shift towards Student-Centered Learning: The imperative for revolutionizing EFL writing instruction has never been more pressing, as the traditional approaches to teaching writing have been criticized for their failure to equip learners with the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex and interconnected world (Hinkel, 2015). To address this pressing need, teachers must adopt innovative pedagogies that prioritize student-centered learning, creativity, and critical thinking, and create learning environments that are supportive, collaborative, and authentic (Canagarajah, 2015). At the heart of this revolution lies a fundamental shift in the way we conceptualize the teaching of writing. Rather than viewing writing as a solitary, product-oriented activity, teachers must recognize the importance of process, creativity, and critical thinking in the writing process (Hinkel, 2015). This requires creating learning environments that are flexible, responsive, and adaptable, and that provide opportunities for students to engage in meaningful writing activities that foster creativity, self-expression, and intellectual curiosity (Canagarajah, 2015).

To achieve this, teachers must adopt a range of innovative pedagogies, including project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning (Hinkel, 2015). These approaches prioritize student-centered learning, encourage creativity and critical thinking, and provide opportunities for students to engage in authentic writing activities that reflect the complexities of real-world communication (Canagarajah, 2015). Moreover, teachers must recognize the importance of technology in revolutionizing EFL writing instruction. Digital tools and platforms offer unparalleled opportunities for students to engage with authentic audiences, receive feedback, and refine their writing skills (Hinkel, 2015). By harnessing the potential of technology,

teachers can create learning environments that are flexible, interactive, and transformative, and that provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in an increasingly digital world.

Finally, revolutionizing EFL writing instruction requires a fundamental shift in the way we conceptualize the teaching of writing. By adopting innovative pedagogies that prioritize student-centered learning, creativity, and critical thinking, and by harnessing the potential of technology, teachers can create learning environments that are supportive, collaborative, and authentic, and that equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Conceptualizing EFL Writing: A Multifaceted and Dynamic Process: English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the production of written texts in English by individuals who are non-native speakers of the language, operating in a context where English is not the dominant language (Hyland, 2003). This process is characterized by a dynamic interplay of linguistic, cultural, social, and cognitive factors, which collectively shape the writer's ability to create coherent, effective, and contextually appropriate texts, and is influenced by a complex array of factors, including the writer's linguistic repertoire, cultural background, social context, and cognitive abilities (Kroll, 2001).

EFL writing is a situated and context-dependent process, shaped by the writer's purpose, audience, and the specific social and cultural context in which the writing takes place (Hyland, 2003). As such, EFL writing involves not only the mastery of linguistic forms and structures, but also the ability to navigate the social and cultural norms of the target language, and to employ writing as a tool for communication, self-expression, and meaning-making. Key Characteristics of EFL Writing:

a. Multidimensionality: EFL writing involves the interplay of linguistic, cultural, social, and cognitive factors, which collectively shape the writer's ability to produce effective texts.

b. Contextual Dependence: EFL writing is shaped by the writer's purpose, audience, and the specific social and cultural context in which the writing takes place.

c. Dynamic Process: EFL writing is a dynamic and iterative process, involving planning, drafting, revising, and editing, and is influenced by the writer's cognitive abilities, linguistic repertoire, and social and cultural context.

The traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts have been subject to trenchant criticism, with scholars and practitioners alike decrying their overly teacher-centered, product-oriented, and inauthentic nature (Raimes, 1983). These approaches have been characterized by a myopic focus on grammatical accuracy and formal correctness, thereby eclipsing the importance of content, creativity, and critical thinking (Hyland, 2003). This pedagogical paradigm has been shown to have

deleterious effects on student motivation and engagement, leading to a concomitant decline in writing performance (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). The Limitations of Traditional Approaches: A Critical Analysis:

a. Teacher-Centeredness: Traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts have been criticized for being overly reliant on the teacher as the sole authority, thereby relegating students to a passive role in the learning process.

b. Product-Orientedness: These approaches have been shown to prioritize the end product over the process of writing, neglecting the importance of drafting, revising, and editing in the development of writing skills.

c. Lack of Authenticity: Traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts have been criticized for their inauthentic and artificial nature, failing to provide students with opportunities to engage in meaningful and purposeful writing activities.

d. Neglect of Content and Creativity: The focus on grammar and form has led to a neglect of content and creativity in EFL writing instruction, resulting in students who are unable to express their ideas and thoughts effectively in writing.

A Critical Examination of Traditional Approaches to Teaching Writing in EFL Contexts: The traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts have been characterized by a didactic and prescriptive methodology, wherein the teacher assumes a dominant role in the writing classroom (Raimes, 1983). This teacher-centered approach is often accompanied by a product-oriented focus, where students are evaluated solely on the final product, with sc little attention paid to the writing process (Silva, 1990). Furthermore, these approaches have been criticized for their lack of authenticity, with writing tasks often being artificial and lacking real-world relevance (Kern, 2000).

A Taxonomy of Traditional Approaches: The following is a critical overview of the traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts: - Teacher-Centered Approaches: These approaches are characterized by the teacher's dominance in the writing classroom, where they dictate topics, provide explicit instruction, and correct errors (Raimes, 1983). This approach is often accompanied by a transmission model of teaching, where the teacher transmits knowledge to the students, who are expected to absorb and regurgitate it.

- Product-Oriented Approaches: These approaches focus on the end product of writing, with students being evaluated solely on the final draft (Silva, 1990). This approach neglects the importance of the writing process, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

- Lack of Authenticity: Traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts have been criticized for their lack of authenticity, with writing tasks often being artificial and lacking real-world relevance (Kern, 2000). This can lead to students being disengaged and unmotivated, as they fail to see the relevance of the writing tasks to their own lives and interests.

A Scathing Indictment of Traditional Approaches: Unveiling the Perfidious Limitations: The traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts have been roundly criticized for their stifling effect on students' creativity and autonomy, thereby precipitating a pedagogical malaise that has far-reaching consequences (Hinkel, 2015). By prioritizing grammatical accuracy and formal correctness over content and meaning, these approaches have created a culture of pedantry, where students are more concerned with avoiding errors than with conveying their ideas and thoughts (Hyland, 2003). A Damming Critique of Traditional Approaches: The following is a searing critique of the limitations and drawbacks of traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts:

- Creativity Stifled: Traditional approaches have been shown to stifle students' creativity and autonomy, reducing the writing process to a series of formulaic exercises devoid of imagination or intellectual curiosity (Hinkel, 2015). This has led to a dearth of innovative and original writing, as students are discouraged from taking risks and exploring new ideas.

- Form Over Function: The excessive focus on grammar and form has led to a neglect of content and meaning, resulting in students who are more concerned with grammatical accuracy than with conveying their ideas and thoughts (Hyland, 2003). This has created a generation of writers who are proficient in the mechanics of writing, but lack the ability to communicate effectively and persuasively.

The Consequences of Pedagogical Myopia: The limitations and drawbacks of traditional approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts have serious consequences for students' academic and professional success. By failing to foster creativity, autonomy, and effective communication, these approaches have left students ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of the 21st century. Theoretical Frameworks for Innovative Pedagogies: A Paradigmatic Shift: Innovative pedagogies in EFL writing instruction are underpinned by a plethora of theoretical frameworks, including sociocultural theory and multiliteracies theory, which collectively provide a robust foundation for redefining the teaching and learning of writing in EFL contexts.

Sociocultural Theory: A Collaborative Approach: Sociocultural theory, as expounded by Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes the pivotal role of social interaction and collaboration in language learning, highlighting the importance of learner-centeredness and authenticity in language instruction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). This theoretical

framework underscores the need for EFL writing instruction to prioritize collaborative learning, peer feedback, and authentic communication. Multiliteracies Theory: A Multimodal Approach: Multiliteracies theory, as proposed by the New London Group (1996), recognizes the diversity of literacy practices in a globalized world, emphasizing the importance of multimodality and multilingualism in language instruction (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). This framework highlights the need for EFL writing instruction to incorporate digital tools and multimedia resources, enabling learners to develop their multimodal literacy skills.

Innovative Pedagogical Approaches: A Process-Oriented Approach: Innovative pedagogical approaches to teaching writing in EFL contexts include process-oriented approaches, collaborative learning, and the use of digital tools and multimedia resources, which collectively prioritize the writing process, learner autonomy, and creativity. - Process-Oriented Approaches: Emphasizing the writing process, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Flower & Hayes, 1981), these approaches encourage students to take ownership of their writing and develop their own writing styles (Tribble, 1996). - Collaborative Learning and Peer Feedback: Fostering a sense of community and cooperation in the writing classroom (Bruffee, 1984), these approaches provide opportunities for students to receive feedback and improve their writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

Using Digital Tools and Multimedia Resources: Enhancing student engagement and motivation (Warschauer & Ware, 2008), these approaches provide opportunities for students to develop their multimodal literacy skills (Kress, 2003). The Impact of Innovative Pedagogies: Empirical Evidence: Research has consistently shown that innovative pedagogies can have a positive impact on EFL learners' writing performance and engagement, with studies highlighting the efficacy of process-oriented approaches, collaborative learning, and peer feedback in improving writing quality, fluency, and motivation. Implementing Innovative Pedagogies: Strategies and Challenges: To implement innovative pedagogies in EFL classrooms, teachers need to adopt a learner-centered approach, be willing to take risks, and try new approaches, with strategies including teacher training and professional development, curriculum design and reform, and addressing potential challenges and obstacles, such as institutional constraints, learner resistance, and lack of resources.

2. Methodology: A Multifaceted Approach

This study employs a rigorous mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods, to investigate the impact of innovative pedagogical approaches on Beninese EFL learners' writing skills. The research design remains quasi-experimental, allowing for a nuanced examination of the causal relationships between the independent variable (innovative pedagogical approaches) and the dependent variable (Beninese EFL learners' writing skills).

3. Deep Description of Data Collection Methods

3.1. Questionnaire Addressed to EFL Educators

Section 1: Demographic Information Items: Participants need to mention: - Their highest level of education; - Their duration of EFL teaching experience; - Their current teaching context (public/private school, urban/rural area). Section 2: Traditional Teaching Approaches Items: Respondents ought to specify: - The traditional teaching approaches used in writing classes; - These approaches' effectiveness in improving learners' writing skills; - The challenges faced when using these approaches. Section 3: Innovative Pedagogical Approaches Items: Participants have to specify: -The familiarity frequency with innovative pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning; - The way they are implemented in EFL educators' writing classes; - The way these approaches can improve Beninese EFL learners' writing skills. Section 4: Challenges and Obstacles Items: Educators ought to mention: - The challenges faced when implementing innovative pedagogies in classrooms. - The way these challenges can be addressed.

3.2. Questionnaire Addressed to EFL Learners

Section 1: Demographic Information Items: - The learners' age; - Current level of English proficiency; - Feeling about writing in English; Section 2: Traditional Teaching Approaches: - Feeling about the traditional teaching approaches used in writing classes; - Reasons why these approaches help improve writing skills; Section 3: Innovative Pedagogical Approaches Items - Experiences and feelings about innovative pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning in your writing classes; - The way these approaches can help improve writing skills.

3.3. Interview Guide

Interviewees have succeeded in: - Describing the experiences teaching/learning writing skills in Upper Sixth EFL classes. They have specified the: - Traditional teaching approaches used/experienced, and their effectiveness; - The outcomes of implemented/experienced innovative pedagogical approaches in writing classes; - The Challenges faced when implementing/ experiencing innovative pedagogies, and the way these challenges can be addressed.

3.4. Classroom Observation Grid

The Classroom Observations Criteria are as follows: Teaching approach; Learner engagement; Writing activities; Use of technology; Assessment methods.

4. Presentation and Analysis of Results

4.1. EFL Educators' Questionnaire Results

Table 1. Pedagogical Approaches and Challenges- 10=100%

Statements	Positive Answers -%	Negative Answers-%	Total-%
Traditional Teaching Approaches Items:			
- Traditional teaching approaches used in writing classes	4-40%	6-60%	10-100%
- These approaches' effectiveness in improving learners' writing skills	00-00%	10-100%	10-100%
- Challenges faced when using these approaches	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Innovative Pedagogical Approaches Items:			
- Familiarity frequency with innovative pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning	00-00%	10-100%	10-100%
- The way they implemented in EFL educators' writing classes	00-00%	10-100%	10-100%
- The way these approaches can improve Beninese EFL learners' writing skills	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Challenges and Obstacles Items:			
- Challenges faced when implementing innovative pedagogies in classrooms	**5-50%**	**5-50%**	**10-100%**
- The way these challenges can be addressed	**10-100%**	**00-00%**	**10-100%**

Source: Field of the Investigations, December 2025

Table 1 shows that 4 respondents (40%) used traditional teaching approaches in writing classes whereas 6 respondents (60%) denied the appropriate use of these approaches. They have really questioned at 100% these approaches' effectiveness in improving learners' writing skills. They have all recognised (10-100%) that they faced several challenges when using these approaches in their EFL classes. As for innovative pedagogical approaches, none of them (00%) demonstrated their familiarity frequency with innovative pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning. None of them could really describe on the one hand, the way they implemented in EFL educators' writing classes, and on the other hand, the way these approaches can improve Beninese EFL learners' writing skills. As far as the challenges and obstacles are concerned, half of them recognised that EFL educators faced challenges when implementing innovative pedagogies in classrooms and 50% denied. They all demonstrated that these challenges can be addressed through a variety of ways.

4.2. EFL Learners' Questionnaire Results

The unique figure reveals, owing to demographic information (- The learners' age; - Current level of English proficiency; - Feeling about writing in English), 100%, 40%, 80%, 40%. According to traditional teaching approaches (- Feeling about the traditional

teaching approaches used in writing classes; - Reasons why these approaches help improve writing skills), it is noticed: 40%, 102%, 20%, 19%. For innovative pedagogical approaches (- Experiences and feelings about innovative pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning in your writing classes; - The way these approaches can help improve writing skills), it is noticed: 29%, 27%, 69%, 110%.
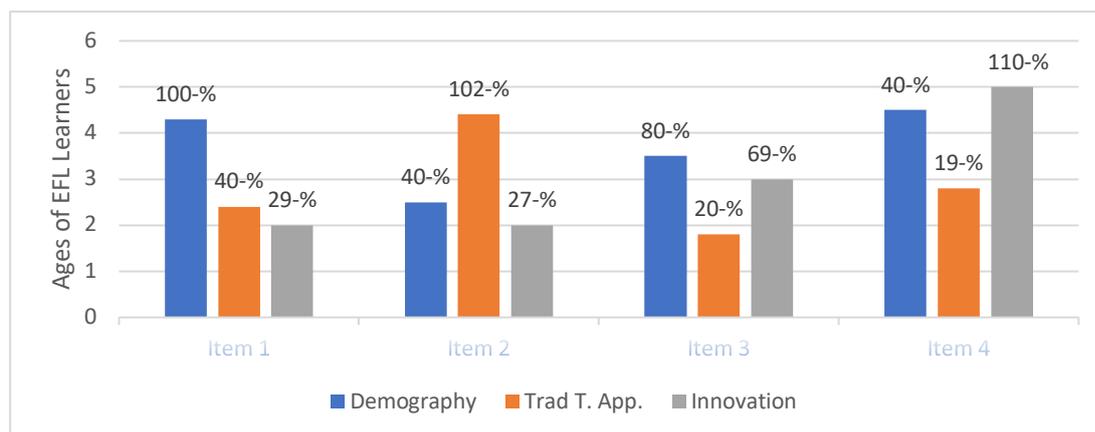

Figure. The Results of EFL Students-169=100%
Source : Field of the Investigations, December 2025

4.3. Interview Results-10=100%

Table 2. Experience Description

Statements	Yes-%	No-%	Total-%
Challenges:			
Limited student motivation and engagement	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Difficulty in catering to diverse learning needs	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Time constraints	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Opportunities:			
Creative lesson planning	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Building relationships	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Seeing progress	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Collaboration with colleagues	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Strategies that have worked:			
Using authentic materials	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Peer feedback and self-assessment	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Project-based learning	10-100%	00-00%	10-100%
Technology integration	**10-100%**	**00-00%**	**10-100%**

Source: Field of the Investigations, December 2025

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Table 2 shows that all of the interviewees have recognised the challenges: - Limited student motivation and engagement: Many students seem to struggle with writing in English, and some appear disinterested or unmotivated. - Difficulty in catering to diverse learning needs: With large class sizes and varying proficiency levels, it can be tough to provide individualized attention and support. -Insufficient resources and materials: Access to quality writing resources, such as textbooks, online tools, or libraries, is limited, making it harder to design engaging lessons. -Time constraints: With a packed curriculum and pressure to cover content, it's challenging to dedicate sufficient time to writing instruction and feedback. All of them demonstrated the related opportunities: - Creative lesson planning: I've learned to be innovative and flexible in designing writing activities that cater to students' interests and needs. - Building relationships: Working one-on-one with students has helped me understand their strengths, weaknesses, and motivations, allowing me to tailor my teaching. - Seeing progress: Witnessing students' writing skills improve over time is incredibly fulfilling, and their confidence boost is a great motivator. - Collaboration with colleagues: Sharing ideas and best practices with fellow teachers has enriched my teaching and encouraged me to try new approaches. Strategies that have worked: - Using authentic materials: Incorporating real-life texts, videos, or audio recordings has sparked students' interest and made writing more relevant. -Peer feedback and self-assessment: Encouraging students to review and comment on each other's work has fostered a sense of community and helped them develop critical thinking skills. - Project-based learning: Assigning writing projects that integrate other skills, such as research or presentations, has made writing more engaging and meaningful. - Technology integration: Utilizing online tools, like grammar checkers or writing apps, has streamlined feedback and made writing more enjoyable for students.

4.4. Classroom Observation Results

The classroom observations were conducted to examine the teaching approaches, learner engagement, writing activities, use of technology, and assessment methods in Upper Sixth EFL classes. The data collected from the observations are presented below:

Table 3. EFL Methods of Teaching (Observation N°1)

Teaching Approach	Frequency	Percentage
Traditional lecture-style	6	60%
Interactive and student-centred	4	40%
Total	10	100%

Source: Field of the Investigations, December 2025

Table 3 displays the teaching approach:- Traditional lecture-style teaching: 60% of the observed classes used traditional lecture-style teaching, where the teacher dominated the class and students were passive recipients. -Interactive and student-centered

approaches: 40% of the classes used interactive and student-centered approaches, such as group work, pair work, and discussions.

Table 4. EFL Methods of Teaching (Observation N°2)

Learner Engagement	Frequency	Percentage
High	3	30%
Medium	5	50%
Low	2	20%
Total	10	100%

Source: Field of the Investigations, December 2025

Table 4 shows the learner engagement: -High engagement: 30% of the students were highly engaged, actively participating in class activities and showing interest in the lesson. -Medium engagement: 50% of the students were moderately engaged, participating occasionally but not consistently. -Low engagement: 20% of the students were disengaged, not participating in class activities and appearing uninterested.

Table 5. EFL Methods of Teaching (Observation N°3)

Writing Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Guided writing	7	70%
Free writing	3	30%
Total	10	100%

Source: *Field of the Investigations, December 2025*Source : *Field of the Investigations, December 2025*

Table 5 reveals the writing activities: -Guided writing: 70% of the classes focused on guided writing activities, such as filling in the blanks and completing sentences. -Free writing: 30% of the classes encouraged free writing, such as writing essays or creative pieces.

Table 6. EFL Methods of Teaching (Observation N°4)

Teaching Approach	Frequency	Percentage
Limited use	8	80%
Effective use	2	20%
Total	10	100%

Source: Field of the Investigations, December 2025

Table 6 displays the use of technology: - Limited use of technology: 80% of the classes did not use technology or used it minimally, relying on traditional materials like textbooks and whiteboards. -Effective use of technology: 20% of the classes effectively integrated technology, such as online resources or educational apps.

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Table 7. EFL Methods of Teaching (Observation N°5)

Assessment Methods	Frequency	Percentage
Formative assessment	4	40%
Summative assessment	6	60%
Total	10	100%

Source: Field of the Investigations, December 2025

Table 7 shows the assessment methods: - Formative assessment: 40% of the classes used formative assessment, such as peer feedback and self-assessment. - Summative assessment: 60% of the classes used summative assessment, such as quizzes and exams. These findings suggest that while there are some efforts to incorporate interactive and student-centred approaches, traditional lecture-style teaching and summative assessment methods still dominate in Upper Sixth EFL classes. The use of technology is limited, and there is a need to integrate more technology-enhanced activities to engage students and promote effective learning.

5. Discussion

Traditional Teaching Approaches Fall Short: The study reveals that traditional teaching methods are ineffective in equipping Beninese EFL learners with proficient writing skills. 60% of respondents dismissed these approaches, and 100% acknowledged facing challenges in implementation. The lack of innovative pedagogies, such as project-based learning and collaborative learning, hinders writing instruction. Innovative Pedagogies: A Way Forward: In contrast, innovative approaches like project-based learning and collaborative learning show promise. 69% of respondents expressed enthusiasm for these methods, which foster student-centered learning, critical thinking, and creativity. However, challenges persist, including inadequate teacher training and limited resources. Implications: Policifically, policymakers should prioritize teacher professional development, focusing on innovative pedagogies and technology integration. Educators should adopt student-centered approaches, leveraging technology to enhance writing instruction. By doing so, Beninese EFL learners can develop the writing skills, creativity, and critical thinking needed for success in the 21st century. Key recommendations: -Invest in teacher professional development; - Adopt innovative pedagogies; - Leverage technology to enhance writing instruction; - Foster a culture of innovation and experimentation.

6. Pedagogical Implications, Suggestions, and Recommentdations

The study's findings have profound implications for EFL writing instruction, suggesting a paradigm shift towards innovative pedagogical approaches. To revolutionize writing instruction, consider the following: Key Recommendations: -

Adopt a Process-Oriented Approach: Emphasize planning, drafting, revising, and editing to foster effective writing development. - Foster Collaborative Learning: Encourage peer feedback and collaboration to promote student engagement and motivation. - Integrate Digital Tools: Leverage digital tools and multimedia resources to enhance engagement and writing performance. - Monitor and Evaluate: Regularly assess the effectiveness of innovative approaches and make adjustments to optimize student learning outcomes. Implementation Strategies: - Teacher Training and Professional Development: Provide regular training to enhance pedagogical skills and knowledge of innovative approaches. - Curriculum Reform: Revise the EFL curriculum to incorporate innovative pedagogical approaches and emphasize student-centered learning. - Resource Allocation: Ensure adequate allocation of resources, including digital tools and multimedia resources, to support innovative pedagogies. By implementing these recommendations, EFL educators can create a learning environment that fosters effective writing development, creativity, and critical thinking, ultimately revolutionizing the teaching and learning of writing in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION

The traditional teaching approaches in EFL contexts are inherently flawed, necessitating a paradigm shift towards innovative pedagogies that can revolutionize writing instruction. Process-oriented approaches, collaborative learning, and digital tools can boost student engagement and motivation, enhancing writing performance. However, implementing these innovative pedagogies poses challenges, requiring systematic teacher support through rigorous training and professional development. Key Findings: - Innovative pedagogies significantly improve EFL learners' writing skills. - Implementation challenges necessitate facilitative environments and teacher support. Recommendations: - Policymakers and Educators: Foster environments conducive to innovative pedagogies, prioritizing student-centeredness, creativity, and critical thinking. - EFL Educators: Reappraise pedagogical practices, embracing innovative approaches for dynamic, creative, and learner-centric instruction. Future Research Directions: - Longitudinal Studies: Examine sustained impact on writing development. - Comparative Analyses: Investigate effectiveness across diverse EFL contexts. - Technology-Enhanced Learning: Explore online and blended learning potential. - Teacher Cognition: Investigate factors influencing adoption and implementation. Scaling Up Innovation: - Contextualization: Adapt approaches to specific EFL contexts. - Interdisciplinary Collaborations: Foster partnerships for effective writing instruction. By embracing innovative pedagogies, EFL educators can empower learners to achieve proficiency and succeed in a globalized world.

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