For a Real Generic and Textual Competence in Written Production Among Secondary School Students in Algeria. What Relationship to Writing?

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If, linguistically speaking, writing constitutes one of the two faces in the form of which discourse can be emitted, his place and his evaluation in didactics of the languages make anchor the feathers of the researchers in the field. To write or "to produce, to put in situation, to make happen in the direction of enaction" requires the mobilization of a generic and textual competence thus leading to the writing of different types of text according to various situations of communication. In language classes, our students often experience difficulties related to the practice of writing, sometimes causing inhibitions and avoidance strategies. We conducted a research entitled "For a real textual and generic competence in the written productions of high school students in Algeria (the case of three high schools of French Médéa)". This research is part of several hypotheses corroborated by field surveys with a sample of students from three high schools of Medea. Our pupils, especially at the three secondary school, write very little. If they write, they do so in short texts. The approaches by type of texts (the argumentative, the narrative, the descriptive…) dominate. The pre-text process is often underestimated. The genre, whether literary or non-literary, is rarely taken into account in written production. Our work advocates a reconsideration of gender as an input for the improvement of writing. It defends writing process rather than handwriting transmission. The pre-text, whether collaborative or individual, must be taken into account. The project is an essential concept for implementing a writing project.

Keywords: literacy, pre-text process, relationship to writing, textual competence, generic competence

Introduction

Enaction, according to Aden (2016, p. 35), is not a theory of language; it is a paradigm of knowledge in which language holds a central place because it constitutes the sap that connects us to others, to knowledge of the world, and to self-knowledge. According to her, it is through language that we are constantly co-creating this world that we inhabit. Language is not reduced to languages, but within language, oral and written languages reflect the level of totally unique precision and abstraction that our species is capable of as well as the weaving of affectivity with knowledge (Aden, 2012, p. 219). Language, in fact, is not what serves us to describe a given external world, but it is through the action of language that we bring about a common world (Aden, 2016, p. 35).

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Enaction, according to Varela, takes into account the immediate context and the effects of biological and cultural history on cognition and on action. Cognition, according to him, far from being the representation of a pre-given world, is the joint advent of a world and a mind based on the history of the various actions that a being performs in the world (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993, p. 35).

For Maturana and Varela (1994, p. 230), we forge our lives in a natural linguistic coupling, not because language allows us to reveal ourselves but because we are made up of language in a continuous becoming, which we make emerge with other human beings (Maturana & Varela, 1994, p. 230). We find ourselves in this ontogenetic coupling, neither as a pre-existing reference, nor in reference to an origin, but as a continuous transformation in the future of our linguistic world, the one we are building with others (Maturana & Varela, 1994, p. 231).

"Language", (verb of action), means, according to Varela and Maturana, that the meaning, which we bring out, constitutes a part of ourselves and partly constructs the environment in which we act. Through language we co-determine ourselves with others (Varela et al., 1993, p. 36).

Learning does not consist in intellectually discovering a predefined world, but in bringing out "a world that manifests itself through the action of sensorimotor regularities" (Valera, 1996, p. vi). Varela recalls that "the deepest and most fundamental intelligence is that of the baby who acquires language from a daily stream of scattered bits and pieces" (Valera, 1996, p. 56).

Each person says what they say, or hears what they hear depending on their own structural determination; speaking does not mean that we will be heard. If, for example, we are interested in languages in a more formal framework, we can say that the statements of a language represent their conditions of satisfaction.

Every teacher should be aware that the materials he offers to learners are subject to as many phenomenological interpretations as he has learners in his group (Aden, 2016, p. 35). Valera and Maturana maintain that there is no passing of information in communication. The phenomenon of communication does not depend on what is transmitted, but on what happens to the person receiving it. And it is quite another thing than the transmission of information (Valera et al., 1993, p. 54).

To write is first of all to exteriorize one's thoughts; it is also to put into practice one's acquired knowledge and knowledge; finally it is to reveal oneself to oneself and to others. "To write is to produce an object, a material trace that is to say to show this object, to oneself or to others" (Barré-De-Miniac, 2008, p. 33). Writing is then a concrete manifestation reflecting the cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of being a writer.

It is the writing that helps this writer on the one hand to free himself, and on the other hand to realize that he can express himself—through words, his voice is heard and his thoughts are. Writing is also work that is done on language and with language, "writing a text is to transform such writing in such a way as to increase the relations between its components. Explains Fenoglio (2007), because a page is a theater of metamorphosis" (Dabène, 2008, p. 23).

The act of writing is an action taken by a writer, enhanced by the imagination, guided by instructions, and reinforced by erasures, drafts, and rewriting. In this process, knowledge about writing and about the world is organized and reorganized, mobilized and built.

This creative and spontaneous activity relates to the cognitive domain as argued by Weil-Baraisou through what she calls "the cognitive man"; Hayes and Flower, who see humans as an information processing system and advocates of the socio-cultural approach who posit social interaction as a building block of skills development. What Christine Barré-De-Miniac sums up by explaining that:

> The moment of writing is complex: it mobilizes knowledge about language, but also memories, knowledge acquired and built on the material and social world, capacities for reasoning, judgment on this world at the same time as this moment of writing is a place of construction and development of this knowledge, this knowledge, these forms of reasoning and judgment. From this point of view, writing is indeed a place of organization and reorganization, of mobilization and construction of knowledge, on itself and on the world. It therefore belongs in its own right to the domain of cognition. (Barré-De-Miniac, 2008, p. 33)

The writing process is the process by which the learner plans and carries out a writing task; it is in this way that he challenges previous knowledge and acquired knowledge, and that he calls upon experiences that he has had with read and written texts, with writing activities carried out with partners or individually.

> Writing requires everything at the same time as it promotes a significant change in production planning. The draft, whether it is a mental draft (assimilated to a form of inner language), characteristic of written language, necessitated by this language, is a component of the reflection that accompanies writing. (Barré-De-Miniac, 2008, p. 42)

Positioning of the Problem

Algeria is characterized by a scriptural bilingualism which gives the writer subject the latitude to write his text in Arabic or in French. It is in fact, if we use a neologism, of accepted "bi-literacy", certainly with nuances, where the graphic act of the writer often moves from right to left or from left to right in the same scriptural area despite (or thanks to) the status of each language in Algerian society. This bi-literacy is also widely mentioned in research focusing on the sociolinguistic landscape of Algeria, research which focuses more on the status of the different languages than on the order of the scriptural.

Writing, at the didactic level, is not always advantageous when learning to write. If written French is therefore not the only scriptural order used, it is not so foreign to scriptural uses in Algeria. This fact can lead the user to use the best mastered code, which is not often French. Therefore, the classroom space is, as we will see, of the utmost importance for the learner in mastering the scriptural in writing.

This more or less confirmed double-literacy can therefore be a source of wealth but also a handicap for a good learning of writing. It is not up to didactics to impose on the learner a language to write outside the classroom; it is society and the individual who decide. The role of the didactician in this case is to bring the learner to a satisfactory output and in addition, in our case, to make this learner capable of performing his task up to what is expected of him.

The doing of this language user therefore unfortunately does not always coincide with this expectation. Indeed, examining the written productions of secondary school students in Médéa shows, on the one hand, the difficulties of these same students in writing a text while conforming to the standards of cohesion/coherence, of textual genericity, so as not to go up to the limits of the morphosyntax of the tongue; and on the other hand, the absence of specific teaching or support with the aim of building scriptural competence allowing students to express themselves in writing in situations of requirement. Or perhaps we see a lack of a program adapted to their writing language needs. Writing is therefore an activity poorly assumed, or little assumed, by the subject learning in French class. It is not thought out enough by the teacher.

But is this reality purely Algerian? It is certainly undeniable that mastery of writing is a problem not only for the Algerian learner but for any learner even in French as a mother tongue:

It has been a good ten years since Quebec and Canadian universities began to be concerned about the linguistic deficiencies of the students they welcome in the first year. The problem was officially recognized in 1986, with the publication by CREPUQ (Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec Universities) of a

report on Language Knowledge Among University Students. Subsequently, the various Quebec universities adopted measures aimed at ensuring better mastery of the language, both through new admission requirements and through various upgrading programs for admitted students (Vandendorpe, 1995, p. 301).

> However, our purpose in this article is less general and we are particularly interested in the Algerian writer in French class before he arrives at university. Let us first remember that this learner has a specific profile that should be mentioned. He is not only a student of French who learns this language and then uses it in various situations, but also, it is a French learned for everyday use. The tasks he would assume are essentially verbal tasks, his linguistic know-how should help him to cope, as provided for in the different programs, in the various linguistic situations with which he will be confronted.

But it seems that the reality on the ground shows something else; this learner, once he leaves the school benches, is not always in tune with what we wanted from him as a user of the language.

So, we should question our teaching and learning practices, especially within our classes: Are the activity or scriptural activities frequent so that they can remedy this problem of poorly mastered writing? Are the types of activities able to make the learner more efficient in scriptural doing? Is the language in use taken in its generic and textual variations? Does the learner frequently assume their scriptural doing in a singular way from a text in the process of being constructed? Are the French programs created each year and adopted institutionally able to meet the language needs of our learners in written expression?

In response to these questions, we could say that for the learner, the writing activity is generally done in a sporadic manner. Without being here a follower of Freinet, can one be a good writer if one does not continuously practice the graphic act in its most salient materiality?

> It is really by forging that you become a blacksmith; it is by speaking that you learn to speak; it is by writing that you learn to write. There are no other sovereign rules, and failure to abide by them is making a mistake with incalculable consequences. The child learns to speak in record time because he can't stop talking, and his mom won't stop listening and talking to him either. Likewise, the child would learn to write perfectly without any systematic exercise and without special rules if the same indispensable conditions were fulfilled, i.e. if the child wrote and read not only a few minutes a day, but for so to speak permanently. (Reuter, 2002, pp. 24-25)

Shouldn't we also consider writing as manual labor as the writers themselves invite us to do:

> You make a distinction between manual and spiritual professions to which I cannot subscribe. The spirit keeps the hand […]. If I were in the situation you are specifying, I would take, as a manual profession, precisely the one I currently exercise; writer (Against Sainte-Beuve, 604). (Proust cited by Viollet, 1996, p. 156)

Moreover, if our learner writes, his writing resembles that of a transmitter more than that of a text maker. Rather, his writing is comparable to the activity of a scribe who takes up another's words or that of a "copier" who does not know the boundaries between his own writing and that of others. As if we are still, and in the best case, in the write-resume or write-transmission phase according to the definition of Barré-De-Miniac:

> From copying to taking notes and dictating the course, writing is used to record the knowledge imparted. It is also used for the restitution of this knowledge during the various controls and exams, whether this restitution takes the form of a quasi-repetition in the beginnings of schooling or of a reasoned presentation in the most elaborate forms that are the dissertation or explanation of texts or documents. (Barré-De-Miniac, 1996, p. 13)

On the other hand, if our learners write anyway, they often do so in short utterances in almost total ignorance of genericity, textuality, and scriptural planning, as our survey confirmed to us conducted with students from three secondary schools in Médéa.

On the other hand, scriptural activity is seen as a product rather than as a production, it is not seen as labor. The foreword is underestimated in the scriptural process. The exercises offered to our students are sometimes dependent on a representation of mythical French which should only be approached through school activities such as dissertation or composed commentary. As for written expression as a subject, the main emphasis is on the micro-structural process by minimizing the process of writing whole texts by learners.

Moreover, the genericity of texts is rarely taken into account in an efficient manner. Literary writing is underestimated; we are still, despite a facade of modernism, in the lineage of a poorly understood Lanson. In addition, and from another perspective, there is a real ignorance of ways of learning research writing; we are often content to rehash instructions on the methodology without didactic implementation activities offered to the learners. We should also point out that writing is not always related to reading in a dialectical relationship.

To verify our hypotheses, we conducted a survey of students from three high schools in the city of Médéa during the year 2013/2014 and in part 2012/2013. This survey aims first to question teaching and "learning" practices in the field of written expression. We especially emphasize the relationship to writing of these learners. The questions were divided into closed, open, and semi-open questions. The questions related to at least three dimensions:

- Relationship to scriptural practices;
- Relation to psychological investment;
- Relationship to representations.

But before relating the results of this survey, we will try to define the notion of "relationship to writing", a notion widely debated in science teaching.

The Relationship to Writing

The notion of the relation to, borrowed from the field of educational sciences, was first introduced in mathematics education by Chevallard. Christine Barré-De-Miniac then used it in the field of language teaching, insisting on the relationship to writing which she defines as follows: "The relationship to writing is used to designate all the relationships established with writing, that is to say images, representations, conceptions, expectations and judgment" (1996, p. 12) that a writer subject develops through contact with the writing itself as well as with other writers. Reuter and Delcambre stress that the report to writing consists in considering it

> according to the meaning it takes for the singular subject who writes, in the singular context of the writing task in which he is engaged and in the singular history which is his, even though some of that meaning and that story is socially constructed. (2002, p. 3)

This singular relationship to writing was already pointed out by Barré-De-Miniac in 1996 in a rewarding didactic sense, "a didactic of writing is to be built and must give the student the means to become the subject of his work writing (Barré-De Miniac, 1996, p. 15). This notion was also seen as a singular relationship in the case of educational sciences; it was about the relationship to knowledge. In this case Barré-De-Miniac refers to Beillerot to mention that the relationship to knowledge takes into account the singular subject:

> J. Beillerot takes this notion [relation to] for the first time as a central notion (1989, p. 9). A concept frequently used in the field of education and training research, it "appears to be the most likely to organize our questions and our research on education and training", he says for three main reasons: • It refers to the appropriation of knowledge to a process or to an activity in which a desiring subject is at stake, in its dimensions both conscious and unconscious, with its inhibitions and also its creative moments. • It allows us to think about the articulation between the subject wishing to know (or not to

know) and group or social dimensions. • Finally, it is the basis of a clinical (or socioclinical) approach in the understanding of educational and training phenomena. Later in the book, the clinical term, if it is not explicitly defined, is implicitly: it designates work on subjects taken as individuals in their singularity. (Barré-De Miniac, 2008, p. 12)

Questionnaire Analysis

Let's start with some questions relating to scriptural practices. "What type of writing do you practice in class?"
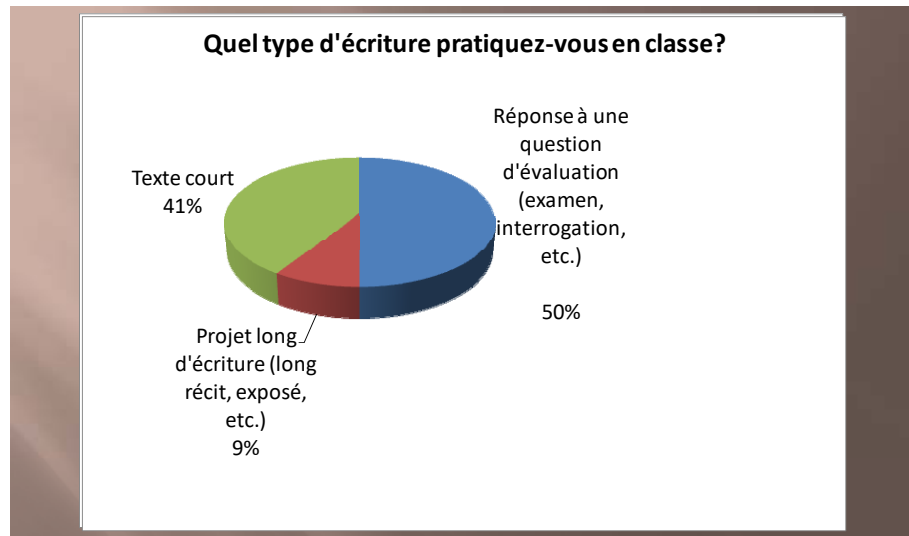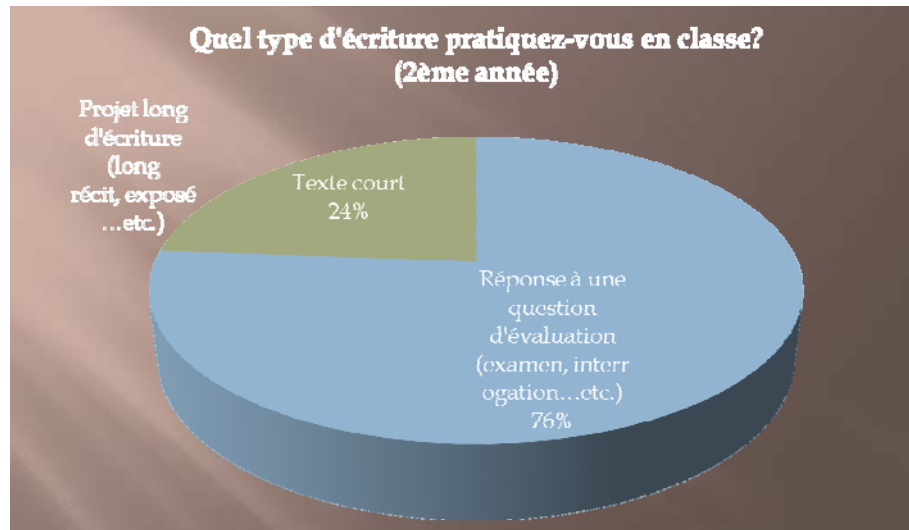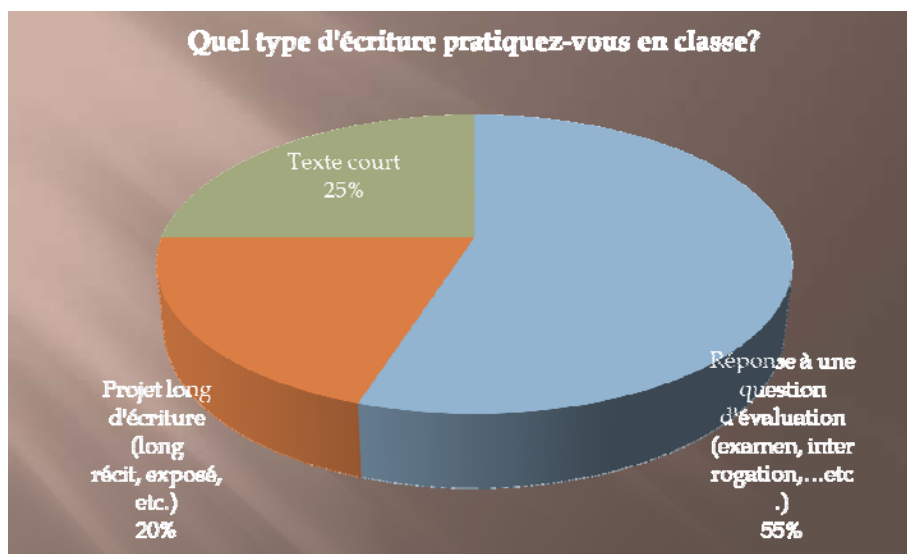
It is surprising to see, from the responses of the learners to this question, that writing is only a sporadic phenomenon in the learning/teaching of French and that the exam is the only writing moment for a large number of people fringe of our students. More than half of the students confirm this. Even if there is progressive development, from Year 1 to Year 3, this development remains insignificant and does not invalidate our assumptions. Writing is not really a habit, in the sense of continuous productivity, throughout the learning process. However, writing, if it is practiced, mainly concerns productions of short texts. Long-term writing is therefore ignored in didactic scriptural practice.

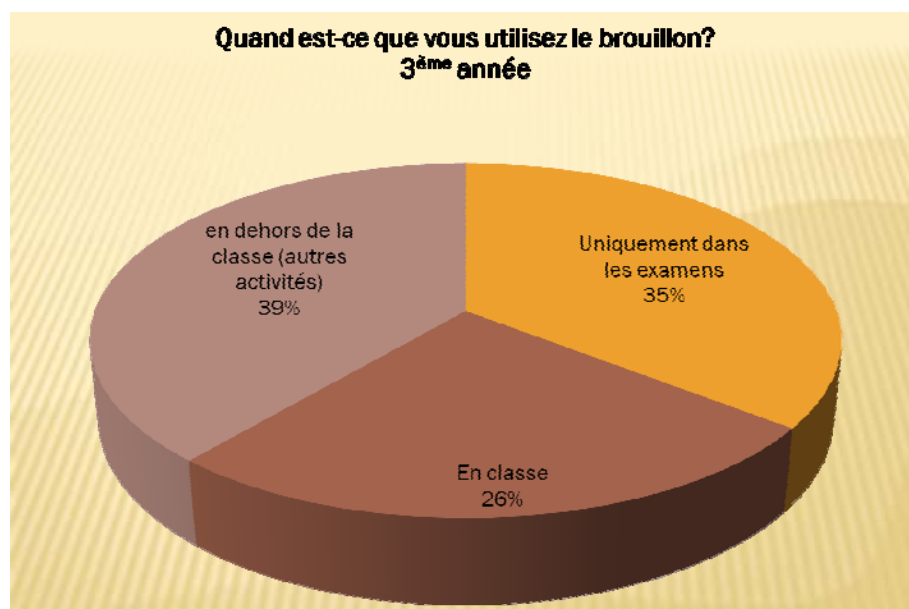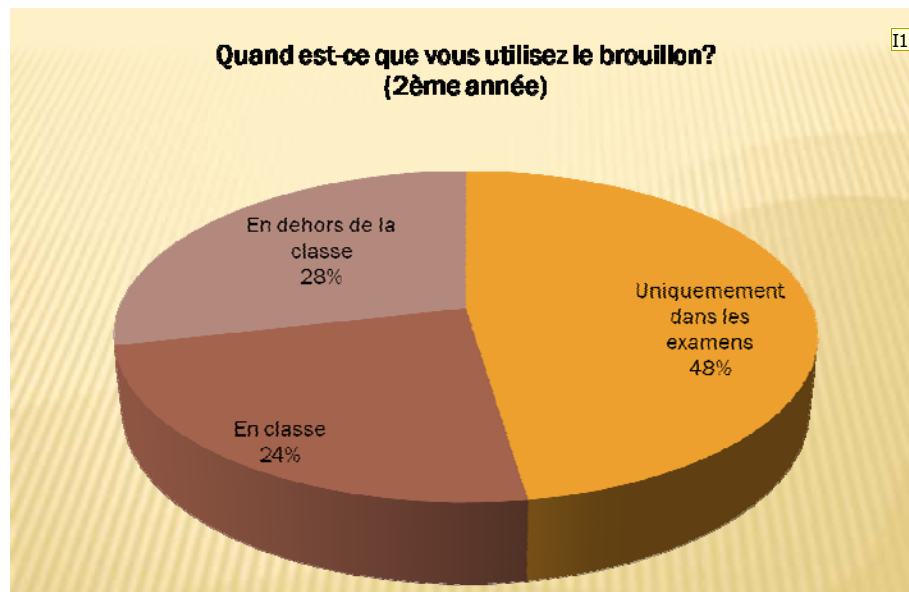**The Relationship to Writing as a Process**

As theory teaches us, reading and writing allow the user to behave with an objectified text, which allows the reader or writer to go back to another text or to his own text in progress to develop or already developed:
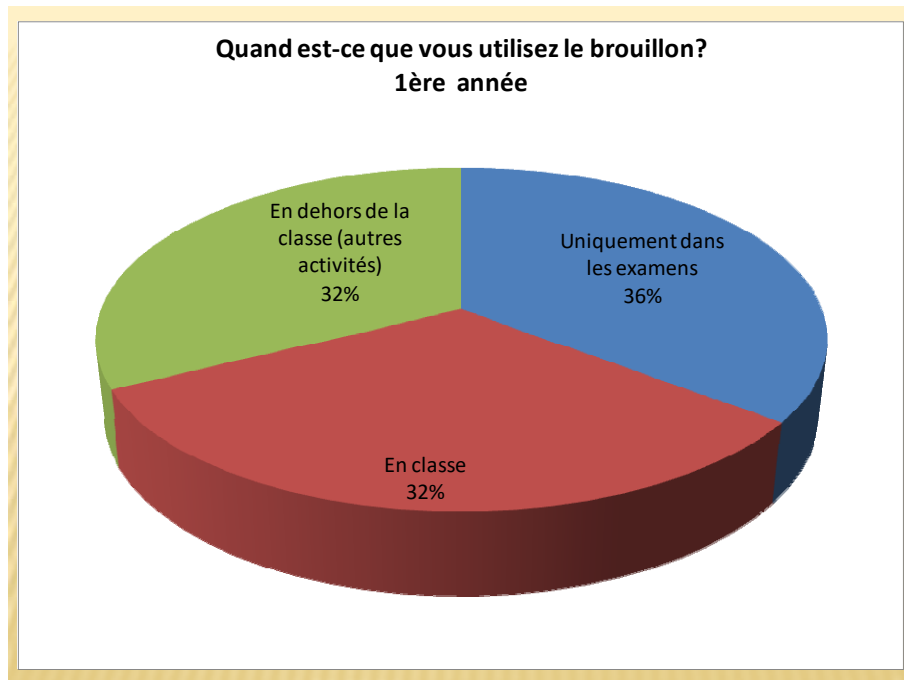
> A written text is both a message and a "text" or "document", an artifact that can be read and re-read by oneself or by others. While, as a message, a written form may, in the simplest case, be very little different from the spoken form, conversely; as a document, that same message acquires an independence and objectivity that is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve with a spoken utterance. (Olson, 2006, p. 92)

This "objectivity" helps to make writing a process, "a text in the making" according to Grésillon. The draft constitutes this object manifestation of the text, this return to the already said to see it differently in a process that has been pointed out many times: writing, reading, rewriting:
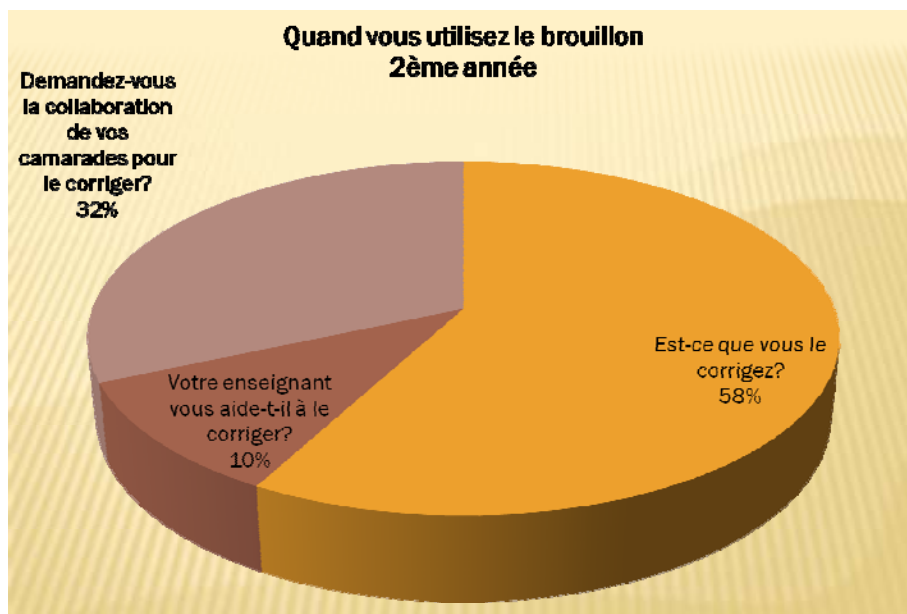
> The draft is the other name for the manuscript when it is caught in a careful process of textualization. Conceive, prepare, plan, prevent, anticipate, foresee ... how to designate this operation by which a text can be initiated, launched, projected before it reaches its final production, before it is autonomous and lives its life ... of text? (Fenoglio, 2007, p. 9)
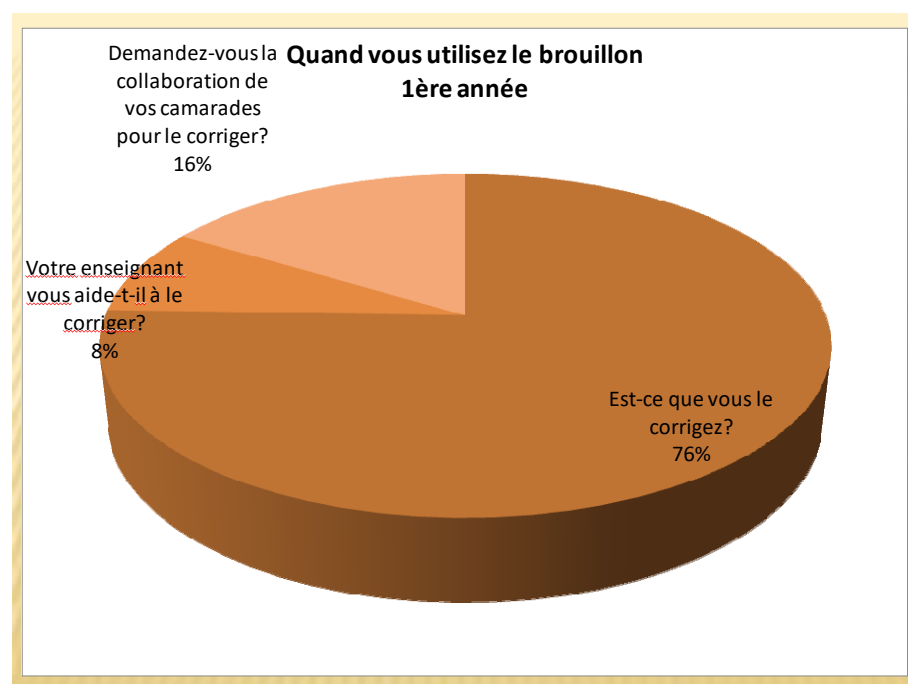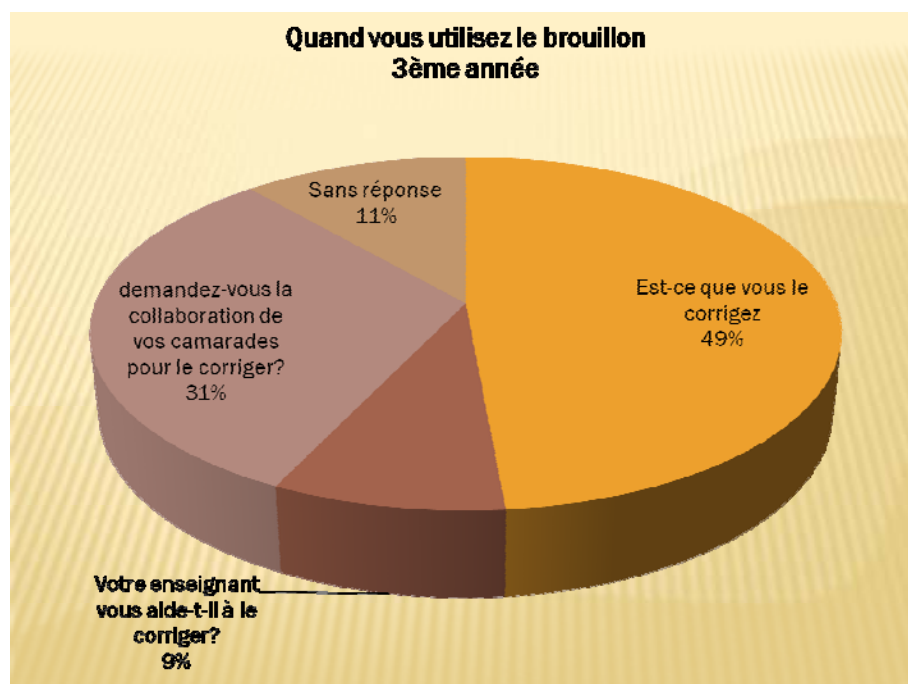
Is the draft frequently used in French class in Algeria? As for the draft as a scriptural dynamic, it also turns out that it is not in common use as shown in the following graphs:

Quand est-ce que vous utilisez le brouillon? (2ème année)

En dehors de la classe
28%

En classe
24%

Uniquemement dans les examens
48%

Quand est-ce que vous utilisez le brouillon? 3ème année

en dehors de la classe (autres activités)
39%

Uniquement dans les examens
35%

En classe
26%

So it turns out that the use of the draft in class is very limited. 30% use it. This non-use of the draft in the majority manner manifests an underestimation of the pre-text scriptural process which is very important in all learning scriptural competence. On the other hand, the majority think they do not use it outside the classroom, 70% or so, which indicates a representation that underestimates, the hard work of any rough or perhaps also that the learners do not rarely write outside the classroom. Even on exam, the draft is mostly not used, about 30%. All of this reveals that there is not really a valuing attitude of the rough in the scriptural process. But is this usage correct? Can there be peer or teacher scaffolding processes? The answer is negative from the following graph.

**Quand vous utilisez le brouillon
3ème année**

Sans réponse
11%

demandez-vous la
collaboration de
vos camarades
pour le corriger?
31%

Est-ce que vous le
corrigez
49%

Votre enseignant
vous aide-t-il à le
corriger?
9%

Demandez-vous la
collaboration de
vos camarades
pour le corriger?
16%

**Quand vous utilisez le brouillon
1ère année**

Votre enseignant
vous aide-t-il à le
corriger?
8%

Est-ce que vous le
corrigez?
76%

Contrary to our expectations, the correction of the draft is not done in a systematic way by all students. Yet it seems that there is no collective work in correcting drafts. But what is striking about the answer to this question is that the majority of the answers state that the teacher's contribution to the correction is very negligible. Teacher support is almost nonexistent.

Note, if we give credibility to this survey, which is the case in this article, we could say that if it is not excluded to find brilliant essays on the process of writing, the Algerian didactic praxis seems blind or not sufficiently informed to be interested in this process or perhaps also this is due to other factors such as for

example the absence of additional time which makes it possible to see and review the student's draft. The interest of the foreword is largely emphasized from the contributions of Jack Gody and the model by Pétillon, (2010). Is this also an anachronistic representation that considers the French students, already competent, which the reality on the ground belies?

> It is important to emphasize a major property of writing, namely the possibility that it offers to communicate not with other people but with oneself. A lasting recording allows you to re-read as well as to record your thoughts and notes. In this way we can review and reorganize our own work, reclassify what we have already classified, correct the order of words, sentences and paragraphs […] The way we reorganize information by copying it gives us an invaluable insight on the functioning of the thought of Homo legens (Gody, 1986, p. 91). (Reuter, 2006, p. 141)

Report to the Representation of the Draft

If the draft remains a sporadic activity and little used by our learners in relation to the underestimation of the scriptural process in general, it appears that the design of this scriptural sub-activity testifies to the significance of the normative and the spirit of pedagogical sanction, as shown by the answers to the following question: "For you, what is the use of the draft in a writing job?"
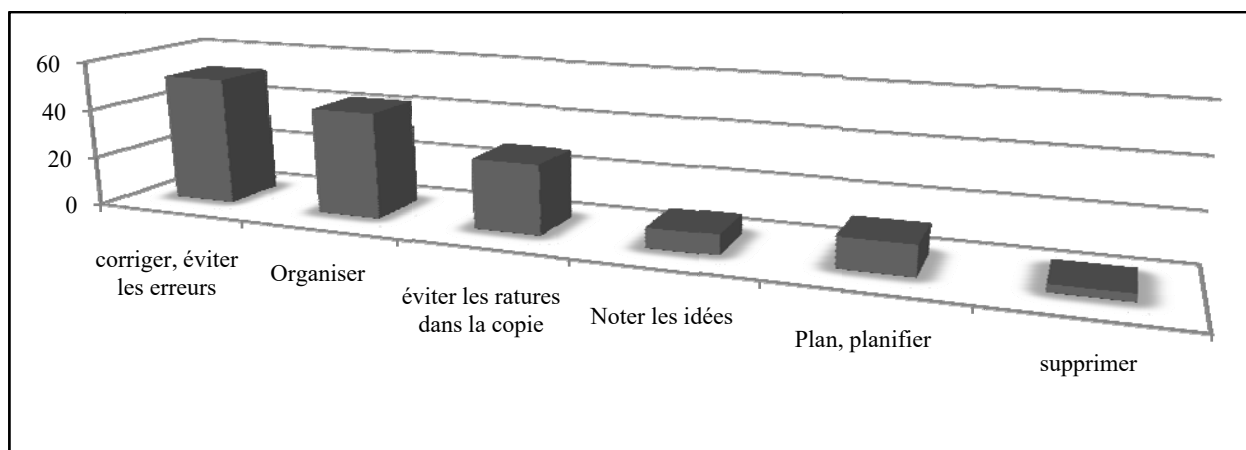
Correcting and avoiding errors are the phrases that are statistically the most redundant, indicating, in addition to working on the draft, a clear mind that anticipates the assessment to come. Some drafting procedures such as "a text in the making" are present in the students' answers, such as "Organize" or "plan" although not present in all the answers.

But, it is obvious that other more textualizing processes are very rare in the students' responses and that the graph does not take into consideration such as delete (3 times), improve (2 times), change, add, improve, reflect, reread (1 time). The school form here impregnates the representations of the pupils, the expressions correcting and avoiding errors with at least 52 occurrences.

The students have in the majority of cases a positive image of the draft, even if some (two occurrences) consider it a waste of time. But there remains the hiatus between positive representation and unsatisfactory practice.

The draft is certainly a pre-text but also a pretext for the student to give a positive image of his own written performance to the assessor. It has this more reassuring aspect that oral performance does not allow; it is reflexive since it allows feedback on the saying to improve it but with a reflexivity which is sheltered from the gaze of the other what does not allow oral performance, according to the words of the questioned to correct,

organize, avoid errors to give "a clean copy to the evaluator".

In this case, we should qualify our comments on peer and teacher support. The draft is an intimate relationship with a text which is made and which is undone. The manuscripts all portray an embodiment of the writing in progress—which gives the geneticist this strange feeling of intimacy with the author […] (Pétillon, 2010, p. 297). Won't peer and learner assessment be another moment to lose face as it manifests in oral? Can we work on the draft in the anonymity of its producer? Will the collaborative work of learners in groups mitigate this confrontation? The problem arises here perhaps because of a didactization of a process that manifests itself in its authentic context in an intimate way. Linguistic security for the learner is a pedagogical objective even beyond learners' avoidance strategies which are not only didactic but also psycho-pedagogical.

Relationship to Types of Texts

In addition, it is also to be noted the domination of the typological, with the argumentative in particular but also with other types such as the narrative and the descriptive as shown in the following graph.
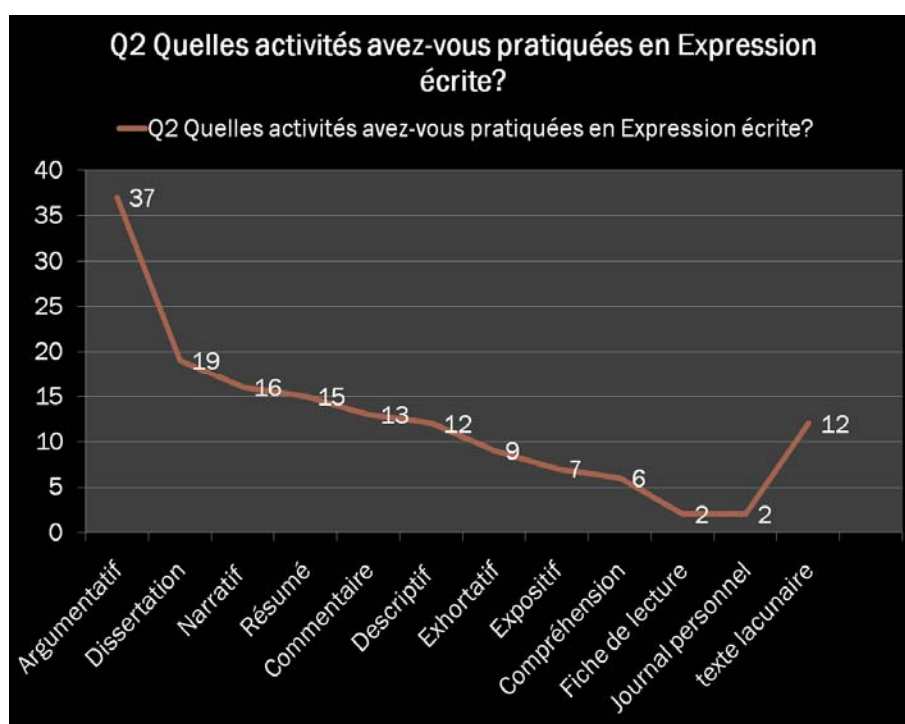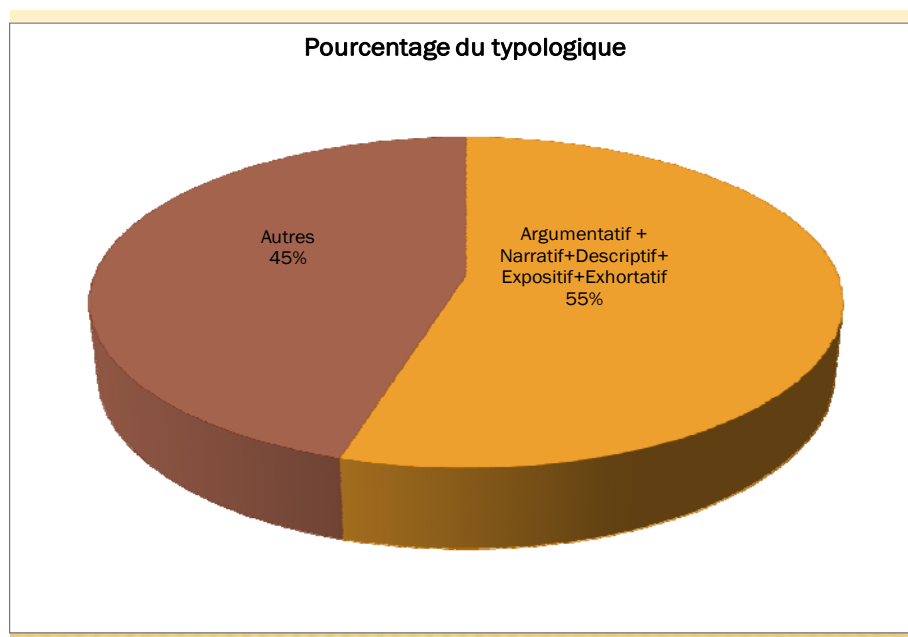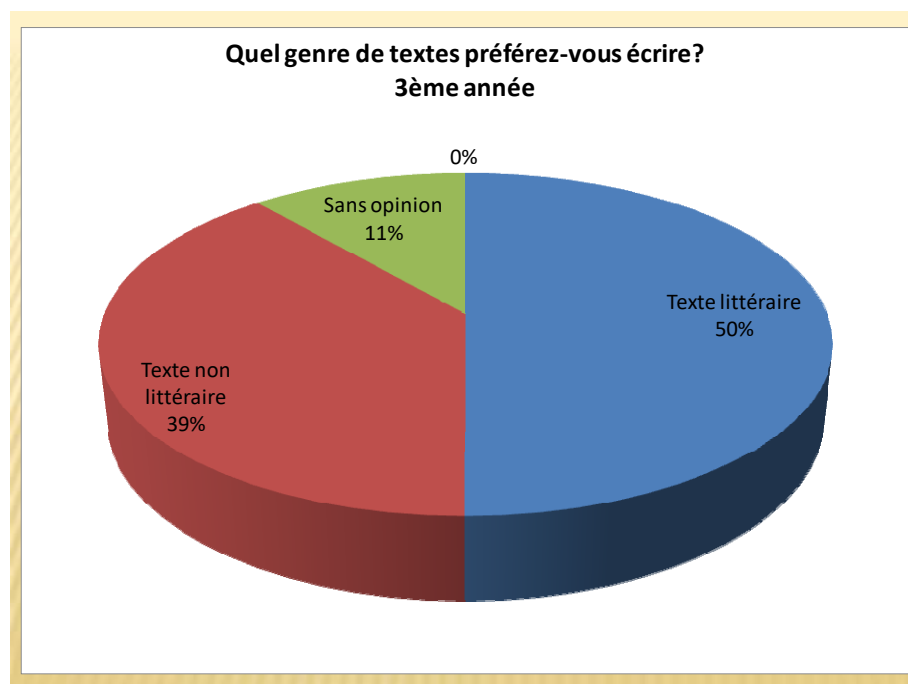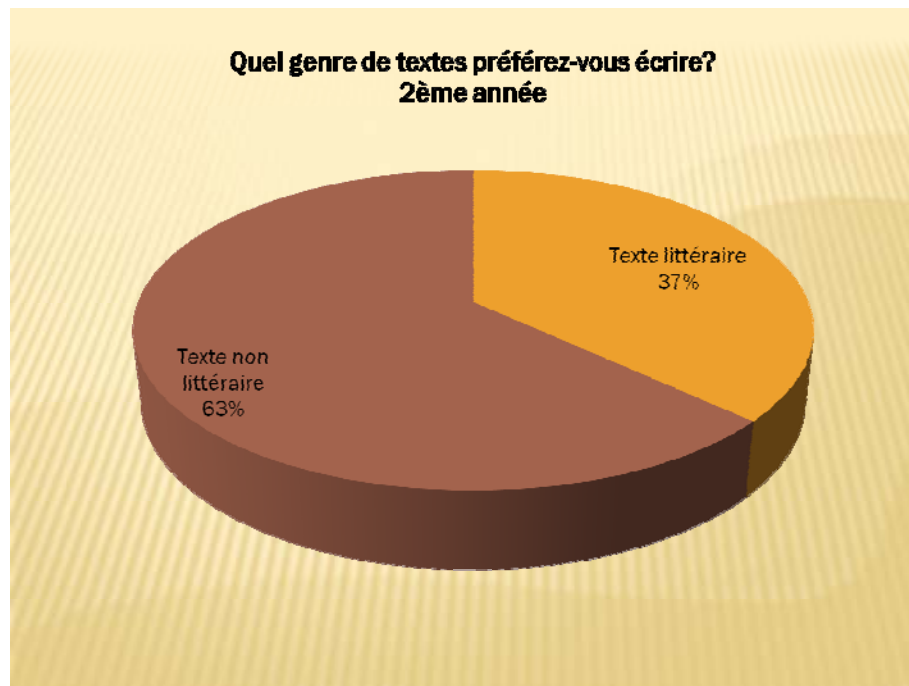
It can be seen from the graph above the dominance of the argument over the other types. This is explained by the fact that the Algerian school is widely considered as a place of knowledge and abstraction; the argument therefore plays a primordial role. Reading the two graphs clearly shows us the dominance of the typological approach in written expression. This runs counter to a theory of texts which currently advocate textual heterogeneity.

In addition, alongside the dominance of the typological, we note the presence of traditional literary activities such as dissertation and to a lesser degree commentary.

On the other hand, personal and/or creative writing plays a minimal role with 1% of the activities offered.
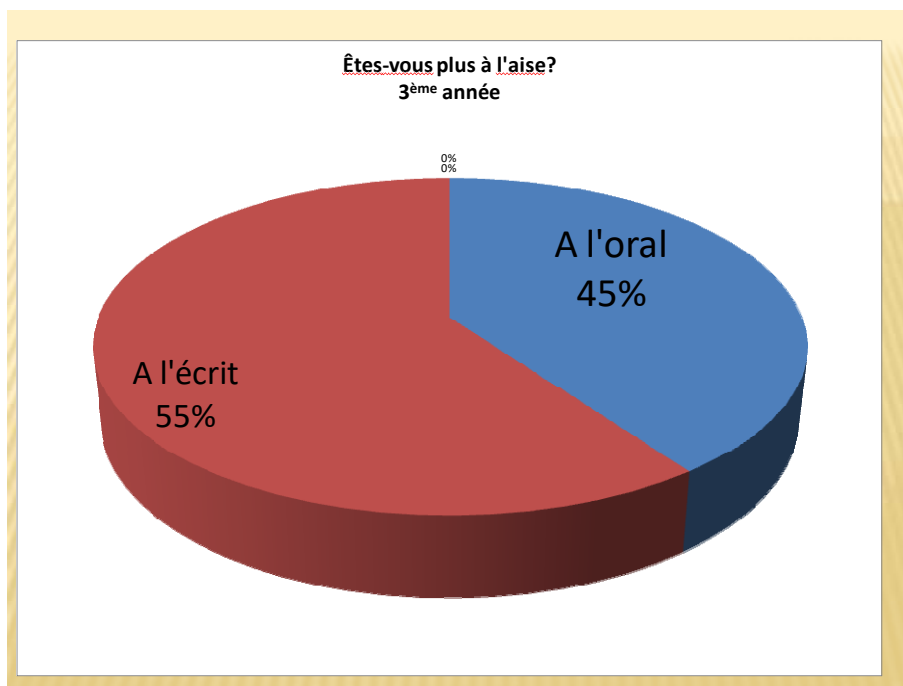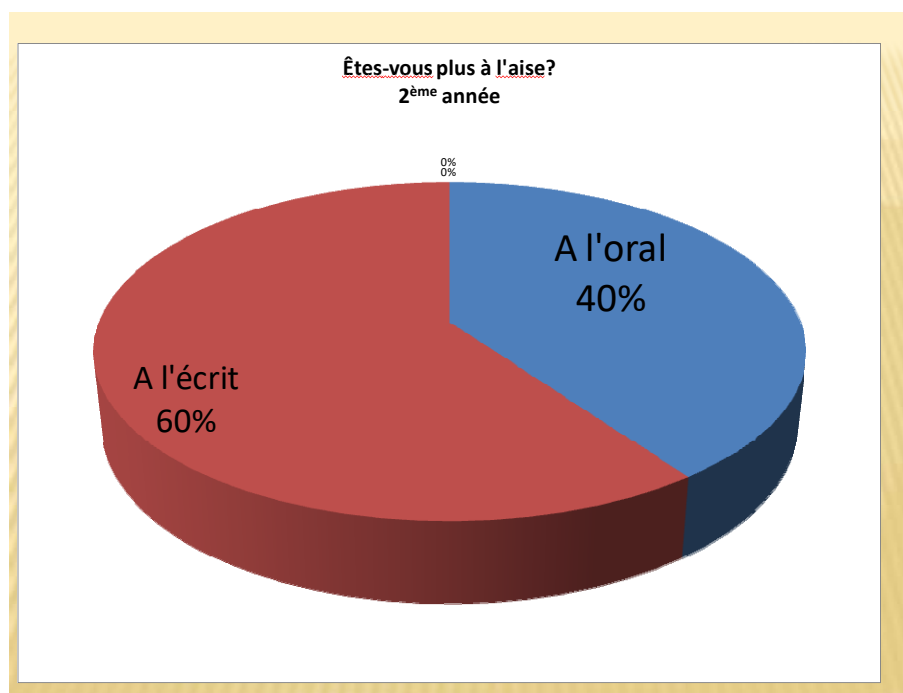
It should therefore be noted that there is a total absence of a generic approach: writing literary, journalistic, advertising texts...

In terms of psychological investment, it seems first of all that our students show to an equal degree their preferences for writing whether it is literary or non-literary text, as confirmed by the following graph:

Quel genre de textes préférez-vous écrire?
2ème année

Texte littéraire
37%

Texte non
littéraire
63%

Quel genre de textes préférez-vous écrire?
3ème année

0%

Sans opinion
11%

Texte littéraire
50%

Texte non
littéraire
39%

Our students prefer to write both literary text and non-literary text. So, both kinds of writing should be introduced, although literary writing is problematic for some.

From the figures below, it turns out that our students express themselves more easily in writing than orally. Presumably, they are not afraid of the blank sheet. The writing activity constitutes a space of freedom and an opportunity for a mastery of the language which the oral, apparently, offers little, especially since the learner is not confronted with an immediate evaluation. The draft allows you to reflect on your text and edit it in the absence of control that can be inhibiting.

Êtes-vous plus à l'aise?
2ème année

A l'oral
40%

A l'écrit
60%

0%
0%

Êtes-vous plus à l'aise?
3ème année

A l'oral
45%

A l'écrit
55%

0%
0%

Conclusion

At the end of this article, we consider that the hypotheses we have made have been corroborated by the questionnaire submitted to the students, namely that:

- Learners have little contact with writing outside of the written expression module.
- They are often faced with short-term write-offs.

- The preferred writing method is the one based on the typology of texts—writing is not thought of as a process where several steps occur, especially the foreword

- Writing activities must be thought of as transversal activities which can concern several modules at a time and not only the written expression module.

To overcome these shortcomings, and as a starting point for solutions, perhaps long-term writing activities should be considered. From another point of view, it would be desirable to offer activities not only with textual typologies but also with genres of discourse. It would therefore be necessary to think of a certain didactization of speech situations in which the learners will assume the postures of authentic writers: literary writer, journalistic writer, popularizer writer, summary writer, historian writer, etc. These are therefore global simulations or serious role-playing games which allow learners to confront the diversity of writing in situations. This will hopefully avoid the defenselessness of scriptural activities which are based solely on the systemic (language) or typological (narrative, descriptive, dialogal ... etc.). However, our remedial attempts do not tend to replace these practices but to enrich and expand them with a view to a perfectible appropriation of the language not only in its system but also in its discursive variations.

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