CHAPTER SIX
RESEARCH METHOD

6.1 Introduction

In the light of the literature available about various approaches of language teaching and learning with and in particular the theories of teaching and learning writing skills in second and foreign language environment, it is evident that teaching writing to native language learners is not the same as teaching writing to ESL and EFL learners. In addition, there are several researches explicating various theories, methods and approaches of teaching writing to EFL learners but there isn’t much work available to specify a method or an approach that may guide the EFL teachers to choose an appropriate one for a certain level of EFL learner i.e. beginners, elementary, intermediate or advanced. Most of the time teachers are left to have their preference of teaching approach in writing without considering the fact that the approach adapted or preferred by the teacher may not be the best for that level of students. However, one teaching writing approach for all levels of the learners would be ‘one size fits all’ and it may not anyways enhance the proficiency of the learner.

This chapter of methodology aims to look into various research methodologies that can be chosen to do classroom research with its pros and cons. Moreover, the chapter presents the selected ‘Psychometric research approach’ method that was adapted to do this research. The proposed model of ‘Graded Approach’ to teach writing to adult EFL /ESL learners also has its root in the same psychometric approach of classroom based research while the ‘ethnography approach’ research approach was used for recording the class observations. Additionally, the ‘Direct method’ of assessment was the instrument that was used in analysing the data is also discussed in detail.

6.2 Traditions in Classroom Language Research

Research is “the organized, systematic search for answers to the questions we ask” (Hatch and Lazaraton,1991) or it could be explained as a systematic way that is developed to inquire and has three main elements. The first one is the ‘question, problem or the hypothesis. The second aspect in the inquiry is the data that is collected to study and the third is the analysis of this data and the interpretation to answer the question or the problem.(Nunan, 1992).

Since 1960s, there have been ongoing attempts in teaching and learning. Be it on the classroom instruction, teachers or student’s behaviour, all have been targeting to explore classroom instruction, student’s behaviour and the teacher’s behaviour that enhance learning outcomes. The fundamental goal has been to determine the best variable or the ore frequent variables that leads to academic achievements.

When teachers have an awareness of action-research methods then they are empowered to carry out their own research and also, they can verify the theories and approaches that exist. The range of applications of classroom based research in native language learning is very wide, and the number of factors and issues are also endless. However, second language classroom research has tended to lag behind and hence it has more dependence on the research methods adapted in L1 (native language) research.

In an outline of requirement of research on teaching effectiveness Cooley, Leinhardt, andGrail(1977) include measures of a) student outcomes, b) teaching behaviour, and c) other variables, as well as procedures for collecting and analysing data, and ‘a sample of classroom activities which is created to select, construct and to organize all these measure’ (p.120).

To conduct a classroom research there were several methodological approaches. They differ in the types of research questions, purpose and the range of theoretical perspectives in
conducting the research. These L2 research methods are the imitations of the one followed in L1 research classrooms but learner’s objectives in L1 differ from L2. Thus, the methods in the second language learning develop new concepts, tools and the procedures that could enable analysis of the interaction in a second language action research. Chaudron (1988) points out that researches in various disciplines like education, psychology, linguistics, applied linguistics etc. have been the foundation stone of second language learning and teaching. The procedures in second language research have been thus influenced by the research procedures of these disciplines. There are four traditions of research that have been prevalent in second language research which are; ‘Psychometric, interaction analysis, discourse analysis and ethnographic’ (p.13). However, it is important to note that one research may not have all of them.

Yet, there is Nunan (1992) who classifies L2 class research in two broad categories namely; psychometric and the naturalistic traditions. The former, which is also known as “quantitative research” has a distinct aim of studying correlation of different variable through varied experiments. In a classroom research for example a researcher may study the impact of a particular method, approach or some material on language acquisition of learners. There might be different research tools for analysis and evaluation. Typically it may be answering the question like “what is the impact of ‘A’ method on learners in comparison with method ‘B’?”. It is more of comparing results of two groups that are taught by two different methods or approaches. The results could be through the score of a same test given to two different groups (Nunan, 1992).

On the other hand the former naturalistic approach could be called as a qualitative approach. This approach is not there to compare which method is better or which course is better. That means that there is no division of groups that are controlled. In fact here the observation of the study carried out is in a normal, regular situation which is documented and analysed. This type of research is carried to see what goes in teaching and learning in a normal situation. It may be done to study behaviour and patterns adapted by learners in a writing class or a grammar class (Nunan, 1992).

Moreover, to the two above two approaches, the very popular approach in classroom research is the ‘ethnographic approach’. As Chaudron (1988) mention that ‘it is generally identified as a qualitative, process oriented approach. Usually the outcome of such research is detailed descriptions. However, this research does not aim to provide a complete ethnography of the classroom, but instead to provides certain details or analyse specific areas of interaction, which were observed and analysed following qualitative and interpretive procedures’ (p. 46). One of the interesting techniques of this approach is ‘Dairy entries.’

6.3 Purpose and Significance of the Classroom-Research

Action research or the classroom-based entails the procedures that have been discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. This has a focus on the classroom which is different from other research that may focus on the inputs and outcomes from the classroom. While the input could be in form of syllabus and the support teaching material the output could be the results of students in form of their scores. Nevertheless, this research approach does not undermine the significance of the above said approach. It some ways limits itself to the interactions between learners and teachers (All Wright, 1983).

The model adapted for this classroom research was one of the standard concrete explanatory model that exists to inter relate all the possible variables involved in L2 classroom outlined by Dunkin and Biddle (1974, 38).
6.4 Research Components

Following the most traditional and accepted contemporary approach to study L2 classroom that involves comparison of effects of the proposed Graded Approach Model (GAM) on EFL/ESL students writing proficiency with the one who did not follow the GAM.
The undertaken study was based on the classroom observation that has its roots embedded in
the Psychometric research method mentioned under the heading (traditions of research). The
study follows Psychometric research procedures in teaching writing to L2 (EFL) classroom.
At the same time adapting the ‘Dairy Entry’ technique of ethnographic research approach the
study instructions in the other writing classroom that did not adapt GAM. The results of the
progress of the two groups were tested through standardized writing proficiency test using
quantitative measures the results were compared. The instructional group’s progress was
compared with the other group of students who were taught by the teachers who did not
follow the proposed GAM. To validate and authenticate the progress in by the end of ten
months and measurement is made through the outcome of proficiency test using ‘Direct
method assessment’. These context and presage- product study has been based on process-
product studies in this tradition.

6.4.1 Subjects
As discussed in the introductory chapter the state of teaching writing where the study
was conducted wasn’t in a state of art. With the due permission of the ELC of CBFS a group
of 25 students who enrolled in the foundation Programme in January 2011 were taken for the
study. The selection of these students was on the basis of their language placement result.
There wasn’t a possibility to increase the number of students in the study group because as a
centre’s policy, no more than 25 students should be enrolled in one classroom.
These 25 students who enrolled in the beginner’s level were the ones who scored 20%
or less than 20% in the general English Language placement test given by ELC at CBFS.
There were 16 female students and 9 male students who together composed one class of
beginner’s level. All these 25 were in the age group of 18 -21 and their native language was
Arabic.

6.4.2 Time
The time taken for the complete study was approximately 14 months. As mentioned in
the introductory chapter that the department allocates 20 hours per week for General English
classes in the first level of the foundation programme, i.e. Beginner. However, the General
English Classes drop to 16 hours a week because Information Technology (IT) and English
for Specific purpose (ESP) are added to the course. The General English classes included
grammar- vocabulary, reading writing listening and speaking. Time allocation for each skill at
the first three levels was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: Beginners (Beginners and Elementary )</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar-Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
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</table>
### Level 2: Elementary (Pre-intermediate and Intermediate Level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar-Vocabulary</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level 3: Intermediate (Upper Intermediate and Advance level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar-Vocabulary</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Time allocation in the GFP

As evident in the above table that in the first three levels of the course only four hours per week were allocated to writing classes that means about 32 hours of writing classes were given to students at each level (2 months).

6.5 Proposed model: Graded Approach Model

This study has explored the history of English language and lingua franca, various traditional and contemporary teaching methods and approaches, the challenges and solution to a language extent. And has come to a conclusion, that for the purpose of gradual progress in second language learning, it is crucial to have a graded approach in every skill acquisition. Beside keeping all the social-political factor, socio-cultural, -economic and other personal factors involve in second language learning and acquisition, proficiency level is vital. Any task given in all the best of scenarios would set to fail if it does not match the proficiency level of learners.

Proficiency level in the target language is also a crucial factor in making decision about the approach, method and activities to teach in a second language learning classroom. The understanding of differences in language levels had been in existence perhaps ever since the evolution of language but the giving names to its categories in relatively new. The broad categories that were put forward to group based on language proficiency levels were; Beginners, Intermediate and Advance with their sub divisions.

For the purpose having and insight to the model that is to be tested in this research, a review of level is needed. The following section would review the salient features of all the three major levels of proficiency in ESL with the suggestions made to teach them effectively and then based on it, the Graded Approach Model (GAM) of teaching writing would be illustrated.

6.5.1 Beginner’s Level Teaching

Teaching a beginner’s level can be the most challenge and the most rewarding experience at the same time. Beginners is the level when the learners of a target language have either very low or no knowledge of the target language. Learners are entirely dependent on the teachers and the teaching aids that are brought to the classroom. The success and the failure of the
teaching approach and the teaching aids can be well determined within a few weeks through the progress that the learners make.

Initially the learners have very little or almost not language to their disposal. At this point, teachers may go by the popular belief that a second language cannot be taught directly and one has to know the first language of the learners to initiate some conversation, but this is not true because learners can start from scratch and make a remarkable progress with in a short time, provided they are presented the material in right ways and of right amount. There are main ten factors that Brown (2001) recommends teachers at the beginner’s level to consider. He believes that if second language teachers follow these advices and design the class activities accordingly, they would be able to help students achieve success in second language learning with ease.

The first few day ore say the first few weeks of a second language learning are stressful and challenging for both the second language teachers and learners. It is very imperative for teachers to have a ‘focal controlled mode’ teaching. In other words, lessons should have a specific focal attention. It could be focussed on a language form, a message, describing personal appearance etc. Teachers should make conscious efforts to engage learners in plenty of repetition of focus words, phrases or the basic sentences. It may sometime look monotonous but learners need this time to have maximum exposure to the target language of the focus language. Students can also be engaged in some peripheral processing. Peripheral processing refers to things that are given notice only incidentally. This will help learners use the target language with a purpose. For instance; students are given some interview question to ask their peers. Like; ‘where do you live?’, how do you come to school?. By giving such opportunity to learners in first few days and week of language learning, learners can practice language in a controlled mode but at the same time the communication is real and meaningful because in the process of language practice they genuinely get to know share some information which is authentic use of language.

At the beginner level learners at very dependent on teachers. One reason is that they see teacher as the main source of information and secondly, they feel that they do not have enough language to get started. At this stage, the class approach could be teacher centred for some part of the lesson. No matter how low the langue learners have, they should be encouraged to participate and take initiatives. The teacher’s role is to keep the ball rolling. However, it is to be taken care that teacher-centred approach does not remain for a longer time. Learners must be some way or the other be engaged to work in pairs or groups to develop an interactive environment for the beginning.

Initially in a second language learning classroom where all the instructions are to be carried out in the target language, it is very likely that the class remains teacher-centred for a longer time. Yet it is the responsibility of the teachers to come up with activities where learners can engage in groups. If the class has students who speak the same first language then there could be some liberty among peers to negotiate meaning in their first language, but this should be very short. As the weeks progress, students should be encouraged to express in target language even if they do mistakes. They should also be told time and again that they are understood. This would boost the confidence of students as get some assurance of being understood.

Input of teachers in a beginner’s class is pivotal as all the students in the class have the teacher their focus. So, it is important that the language used by the teacher is very articulate and clear. It is important that language used is simple and comprehensible to the learners but it should not be so slow that it losses its naturalness. The vocabulary and the sentence structure should be simple and clear. Krashen and Terrell (1983) call it the input hypothesis which asserts that second language learners progress from one level to another higher level only when they come across some previously known structure with an additional
part which could be called as ‘i+1’. Here ‘i’ is the information or the structure that learners are already aware of, whereas the 1 is the additional input. For example; if a ESL beginners level learner is already aware of the words like ‘there are many people is the room. Then the sentence ‘there are many oranges in the basket can be easily acquired by them. A good teacher may either take help of realia or pictures to give the addition input of ‘basket’ and ‘oranges’. It means when learners know most of the words and structures in a reading or listening then then can acquire some new input that they were not aware of. This can be also explained as, when we talk to someone in a language that we have not acquired yet, then the person would ‘cast a net’ of sentences in a level which is understandable to us which is our ‘I’ this net may include “1” which we may acquire in the course.

If the learners are very low beginners with almost no target language exposure and if the learners have the same first language then occasional use of the first language of learners can be beneficial but it should be limited. In case of multilingual classroom having a new vocabulary can be a challenge but then visual aid could be a good option. Use of student’s native language at the beginner’s level may be used at occasion like:

- Managing and negotiating issue of discipline and management for clearer understanding
- Describing some instruction to carry out a task
- Brief explanation of some grammar rule
- For defining or explaining the meaning of a words once students have attempted to understand the meaning themselves

As advocated by the communicative language teaching approach, students should learn a second language for communicative purpose. The activities that are chosen for the class should be a mirror to real life conversations. Learners see the relevance of the language that they are learning. Learners see if the second language that they are learning can be used here and now. For example, if learners are learning Spanish language then there has to be authenticity to it. It is also necessary to have language in context. For instance; in real-conversation. Additionally, language has to be learnt as whole.

However, one thing to ponder on is that, utterances are kept short and simple at the beginner’s level. This may look unreal at times but it should be reinforced with repetition and doing so will give learners more confidence in using those words, phrases or sentences.

Brown (2001) advises to pay more attention to fluency in language initially. It is not very crucial at this stage to have fluency in very long sentences but proper fluency should be encouraged within limited structure length that are uttered. In other words, flow of language is important to maintain in short segments. Also, emphasis should be on certain grammar structure, phonological or the discourse structure.

Another thing to keep in mind regarding fluency at this stage is, while students speak, teachers should avoid correcting every little mistake that make because this can hurt their confidence. However, occasionally corrections should be made, so that students do not get an impression that all they said was correct. If this is the case, learners will continue to repeat their errors. Errors related to pronunciation should be important which would include, intonation and stress on words and sentences. Neglecting this aspect can later negatively impact fluency.

Language is all about being able to communicate ideas in real situation. This means that learners need to be encouraged to create their own structures which should be supported more by teachers at this level. Initially student’s creative can be encouraged with the controlled repertoire of language which can go on more flexible as learners gain confidence.
and have more control over the language. It would be creating in a rehearsed situation to creating in unrehearsed situation.

Some sort of Choral repetitions and activities that including drilling could be some of the recommended techniques in beginners’ classrooms. But these activities should be short and simple. Teachers may have activities that include more teacher-initiated question which can gradually move to more student-initiated questions. Understanding the fact that at this stage students have very limited control on language and it can be difficult to engage in this target language with peers, the pair activities or the small group work, should be very structures. For the same given reason, the activity should be clearly defined with clear objectives. Failing to do so may leave students confused and unable to negotiate meaning and clarification because of their limited control on the target language.

It is very crucial in the initial stages of learning a second language that the communication is real, authentic and meaningful. But at the same time the communication should include simple grammar and vocabulary. The utterances herd or spoken should also be kept simple and short (Brown, 2001). A similar opinion was of Krashen and Terrell’s (1983) input hypothesis. They believe that when a person encounters and input which is little higher than his or her own current competence, then they acquire a language. According to this hypothesis speaking fluency is a skill that cannot be taught, rather it gradually emerges through comprehensible input.

Input hypothesis asserts that second language learners progress from one level to another higher level only when they come across some previously known structure with an additional part which could be called as ‘i+1’. Here ‘i’ is the information or the structure that learners are already aware of, whereas the 1 is the additional input. For example; it a ESL beginners level learner is already aware of the words like ‘there are many people is the room. Then the sentence ‘there are many oranges in the basket can be easily acquired by them. A good teacher may either take help of realia or pictures to give the addition input of ‘basket’ and ‘oranges’. It means when learners know most of the words and structures in a reading or listening then they can acquire some new input that they were not aware of. This can be also explained as, when we talk to someone in a language that we have not acquired yet, then the person would ‘cast a net’ of sentences in a level which is understandable to us which is our ‘I’ this net may include “1” which we may acquire in the course.

A similar pattern occurs when a foreigner talks with someone who does not understand his or her language much. They simplify the language as to be understood which is similar to the one that caretakers do. The speaker slows down, repeats sentences, rephrases and often tries to modify questions to ‘yes’-‘no’ to make answering easier for the other person. This input is similar to the roughly tunes input.

In a second language or a foreign language learning classroom teacher talk is like a foreign talk. It is the language that teacher uses to explain things and also mane classroom activities. This talk is also a good example of roughly tunes input because the motive of teacher here is to be understood like in the case of caretaker speech.

Like listening and speaking, reading and writing tasks should also be kept simple and short. The reading and writing topics should be limited to real-life and familiar ones. Some of the real-life reading may involve, reading advertisement, forms, recipes of meals some simple emails or letters. The writing should also include some similar items. However, important aspect to bear in mind is the reading material used and the writing expected should be simple and short to liaise with the language ability of learners.

Irespective of the curriculum or the textbooks that the teachers use, be it functional, structural-notion, or communicative-focus, sequencing of grammar points to be taught is a concern. Brown (2001) advises to start with simple verb forms, then move to personal pronouns, articles including both definite and indefinite, nouns (singular and plural) and
finally simple sentences. In other words, grammar should be sequenced from easier to difficult. However, what is easy for a second language learners and what is difficult has had different opinions because Krashen and Terrell (1983) have a different sequence in their Natural Approach Order Hypothesis.

The natural order Hypothesis of Krashen and Terrell (1983) claims that grammar structure is mainly acquired and not learnt in a specific order. This there may be a slight variation in the time that learner takes in acquiring those grammar form, but the pattern is similar. There order may also vary marginally yet very close. They explain this through an example of children who have English as their first language. Children usually learn function words relatively earlier. They usually learn to say ‘ing’ form (I am going) or the plural forms like; flowers relatively earlier that the possessive forms like ‘it is my father’s hat’. They may continue for say ‘this is my father hat’ for quite some time. This means that some grammar morphemes are acquired relatively earlier than others.

Some children may acquire plural forms with ‘s’ before ‘ing’ forms or vice versa but it is unlikely that they acquire possessive forms like ‘mother’s’ before the plural and gerunds. Interestingly, the same pattern was studied on other children, who were Spanish and Chinese speaker, in other parts of the United States. The study verified similarity between children who had English as their first language and the ones who ad English as their second language.

More interestingly, this pattern of learning some grammar morphemes easier and earlier than others were studied on adults by Bailey, Maiden and Krashen in 1974, and was shockingly the results were very similar to the results of children. This means that irrespective of age there are certain grammar morphemes that can be acquired much easier and quicker than others. However, this pattern may change when the adults are taught grammar explicitly and are given grammar test but if adults learn language through communication then the patter resembles to the one of children.

In the light of both Brown and Krashen and Terrell on thing is for sure that, there should be attempted to limit grammar explanation at the beginner’s level. If at all any grammar explicit grammar explanation is made then it has to be very simple points like; verb forms, ‘ing’ etc.

### 6.5.2 Intermediate Level Teaching

The stage when a second language learner has acquired some amount of language but has not reached a level in which the individual can communicate some social and work-related requirements in routine in some acceptable way is the intermediate level. Brown (2001) defines this stage as the one where an individual has made a progression from novice and is able to carry out basic communication tasks with some fluency and accuracy which is not rehearsed and there is also a monitors in which individual makes some self-correction. As learners reach this stage, the role of teachers and learners in the classroom become considerable distinct from the one in beginner’s level. There are again ten points that are highlighted by Brown at this stage.

In this stage of language proficiency level there is some automatic progression in language. Learners have already practices some phrases, sentences and other grammar rules which helps their minds to articulate language with some flexibility in an unrehearsed manner. It is like having memory and information in the ‘hard-drive’ of a computer. Now at this stage it is the task for teachers to provide opportunities in which learners can use this existing information and structures more spontaneously and naturally. Teachers should move
away from a teacher-centred classroom at this stage. Teachers should also avoid initiating all
the questions and encourage students to ask question, negotiate meaning and give their
comments where ever appropriate. Teachers should come-up with more pair work, group-
work and whole class activities.

It is also advisable to have activities planned for longer period where learners can
have substantial time to engage in activities and in turns get engaged with the target language. However, it is important to note that not all students may show the same progress or
engagement which could be due to many other factors that are discussed in the previous
sections. The variation in responses to be empathised with by the teachers. Teacher talking
time at this stage should reduce because by now learners can sustain the oral production for a
longer period. There should be minimum use of native language of students to explain things
if any is done so.

At this stage, usually when learner get some reasonable control on language, they get
very curious about the grammar rule involved, especially when it is adult learners because
they want to be accurate in the target language and they are also in a stage where they try to
make connection between the target language and their own native language. However, this
can take them away them afield from real authentic use of language, which is communicative.
Teachers should ensure that learners do not dwell excessively on accuracy and keep the
language use communicative.

At the intermediate level of second language teaching the contrast between fluency
and accuracy is a prime issue because they seem to be sitting on the extreme edges of the
same string. Depending of various other factors some learners tend to be more inclined to
their accuracy in the target language while the others go for fluency. The former may break
their fluency as they have a constant self-monitor effective and they tend to speak
consciously and keep making self-corrections. The ones compromising on accuracy for
fluency can sometime become difficult to understand.

These two types of situations are usual and teachers should be prepared to offer
assistance to both the learner types. It is very crucial at this stage that teachers make students
speak or write with a flow for short period of time without making any self-corrections. This
would take away the fear of making mistakes and also have a spontaneous flow of language
in a natural way. Learns must be able to experience a constant production of language
uninterrupted either by themselves, or others.

As there is some control over the target language, often learners try to be creative with
it and come up with some faulty sentences. But teachers should see it as a positive indication
because this is the sign of development and procession of the new language in the long-term
memory of brain. This permanence of language in brains would be able to help learners apply
the target language with flow and unrehearsed. In a EFL set-up this situation may be delayed
but teachers can use various aids to bring is situation that are real, like media, newspapers or
magazines.

There can be more complex activities now brought to class because students have the
language ability to engage in. Some longer activities like creating chain stories, doing some
survey and reporting them, having some problem-solving activities are some to name. These
activities on one hand would enhance learner’s creativity, critical thinking and logical
thinking and on the other hand would give learner to use language in unrehearsed and real
situations.

Learners at intermediate level develop linguistic complexity to an extent which can
help them engage in more creative utterances. Teachers should come up with longer
conversation and discussion activities. Learners can also listen to talks and give their opinions
on it. Learners should be encouraged to read longer texts and stories at this point. This is also
the right stage to introduce skimming and scanning skills. Reading text used could be
informative or with an intention to provide good input for writing. Writing can go on to take a process-oriented approach. Writing can be more learner-centred which would give opportunity to have pair and group writing work. There can be writing now done for a purpose in real life situation. for example; writing letters, memos, reports or other narrative writings.

At this point students could be given some grammar explanation and be introduced some complex grammar points like the perfect forms, relative clauses or modal auxiliaries. At this stage, it is very likely that learners get obsessed with learning grammar rules, especially the adult learners, but teachers should refrain from having a lot of time devoted to explicit grammar teaching because they could run a risk of creating English grammarians rather than good users of English.

6.5.3 Advance Level Teaching

Upper intermediate level and the advance level of proficiency in a second language learning stage is when learner are fluent and articulate in the second language to meet all the social and professional level requirements of the language. They are able to use a good range of structures and vocabulary which is close to native language speakers. The ACTFL proficiency chart terms this level as the ‘superior level’. Similar to the teaching suggestions for the Beginner’s and Intermediate Level, Brown (2001) suggests ten points for teaching Advance level learners. At the Upper-Intermediate Level and the Advance level learner’s language competence is superior and they are in the capacity to engage in complex task which require automatic articulation of language. Students at this level are confident and are able to critically analyse metalinguistic feature of the target language, express their feeling and ideas in more articulate manner and use the target language with flexibility.

It might appear, that it is very easy to teach this level of students because they have a good command on the language but the fact in contrary. Teachers at this stage have a great responsibility to channelize the curiosity of learners and challenge them for much deeper learning of the target language. The role of teacher at this stage is should be limited to a facilitator and directive role in which the class should be learner-centred. Teachers should also ensure that language is tweaked for more formality and perfections with rationale else there would be not learning or further progression in the target language.

Teachers must ensure that they use langue with normal fluency at this stage. They should also ensure that they are much sophisticated in their choice of vocabulary, phrases, structures, idioms and other native language feature. However, this language should be used in context for example, while giving instruction, explaining a point or a concept so that the language remains authentic and real. Doing so would challenge learners to acquire native-like language. Teacher must also ensure that there is no use of other language in the class other than the target language. Learners must be introduced to language ‘out there’ more, instead of ‘here and now’. Disciplines and more complex function of the language should be carried out in the target language. All this should be done is minimum Teacher Taking Time (TTT). At this stage, various academic prose and other literature of the target language becomes authentic here. Students should be introduced to various debates, talks, literature. In other words, all the real use of language should be introduced at this.

As students at this stage have already gone through the breakthrough stage, and they no longer are in the self-correction stage so they are able to maintain their fluency with some level of accuracy. Yet there are chances that they come up with some wrong structures and for which needs corrections for accuracy. Peers at this stage should be encouraged to check each other accuracy too.

This stage is the best time to experience creativity of students in the target language. Students should be allowed to choose activities decide the process of it and execute it. There
should be more autonomy promoted in a classroom. However, it is important to see that students are focused and there is some language learning taking place.

Teachers can use a full range of techniques of language teaching. Some of the good activities at this point could be debates, arguments, role-plays, listening to talks and having rational opinions on it, tutorial discussion etc. This level is also good to have target language learnt for specific purpose. Like business, medical etc. Sociolinguistic nuances of language could be the focus in advance level classrooms. Learners must be given opportunities to fine-tune their production in terms of style, register and other linguistic features.

This stage students should explore reading and writing similar to the native users of the target language. They should have different genres of reading and writing to interpret and critically analyse them. Writing various forms of essays, lab reports, other research reports etc could be some to name in writing tasks.

Grammar at this stage should be focussed for more functional, sociolinguistics and pragmatic purpose. All the complex forms of the grammar should be understood and applied for refining language. There could be a deductive approach to focus on grammar points at this level. However, this does not mean that class should become a class of grammarians. Grammar should be not explained as and when needed with in the application stage. Hence, there are a range of suggestions that insist on various variables that must be considered in designing a course for a second language learners. Beside all the factors involved in teaching and learning, the two crucial factors are the age of the learners and the proficiency level that the learners have. Brown (2001) principles of teaching and learning, Krashen and Terrell (1983) natural approach to teaching a second language, Sterns (1980) and Silva (1990) have given a detailed insight to design this model of teaching writing to ESL adult learners. In the light of all the suggestion made by different researchers in keeping the learners variable in mind and the various methods and approaches that can be effective in teaching composition to ESL and EFL learners are kept in mind in designing this model.

The design has taken up three different levels for convenience. The first level in termed Beginner’s but this level included high beginners and elementary level. The second level is termed Elementary, this level included pre-intermediate and intermediate level students. The top level is termed intermediate; this level includes upper-intermediate level students mainly. There has been special consideration of the socio-cultural aspect kept in mind while choosing the task for each level. The initial levels are focusing on ‘here and now’ with basic grammar points. There activities suggested at the Beginner’s level are of familiar content and the approach recommended is product which is more on accuracy. The Elementary level (Pre-intermediate and Intermediate ) level when the learners have a reasonable control on English are encouraged to taught using a process approach. Finally, students are recommended to be taught various genres of English composition at this stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT APPROACH</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK TYPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive writing</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Figure 13: GAM of ESL writing

This model was thought to be appropriate because it sees the various variable that are instrumental in a classroom as a ‘Process’ to get a desired learning outcome as a ‘Product’. In this study, the variable (process) that is considered significant in the EFL adult writing classroom is the ‘Teacher’s Approach’ and the product is the Writing proficiency of the learners. To present it in a simpler form:

Process (Teaching Approach)  Product (Writing proficiency)

The aim of the study is to investigate the features and the factors that contribute to the effective learning of the given instructional content, so that empirically supported ESL/EFL teacher training and programme development can be implemented.

The researcher here does not approach the objective with any rigid notions about the characteristics and considers the other variables responsible for learning such as; teaching material, syllabus or the students or the time. In addition, there has been conscientious effort to base the study on the well-reasoned theory and synthesis of previous knowledge.

The subjects were taught grammar vocabulary, reading and listening by same teachers allocated to them by the department. However, selected 14 students for the study that
included 9 females and 5 males were taken out separately for their writing class. This group of students was taught by the researchers for the four hours per week according to the graded approach model for the first three level, i.e. Beginner (1), elementary (2), Intermediate (3).

Promotions:
At each level, there was a mid-term exam after one month and then a end of the level exam on the completion of second month of the level. Both the mid and the end level exams test grammar- vocabulary, reading, listening, writing and speaking. Then the average of both the exams was taken to decide on the promotion of the students to the next level. To avoid any imbalance due to the piloted of 14 students taught by the researcher and to compare the progress in the writing proficiency of the students taught with graded approach, and the rest with general approach, all the students were exempted of the writing exam and the promotions were based on the other skills. However, all the writings done by these 25 students were filed in the portfolios maintained for the research purpose. These 25 students were put together in common writing classes at level 4 : Intermediate level. In addition, all these 25 students were given the general writing test designed by the department and then the proficiency in writing of these students was compared.

6.6 Research Design
This experimental research design aims to study causes (independent variable) and effect (dependent variable) relationships between two or more variables where the casual variable that is the teaching approach in this study, can be manipulated. In a classic example of a true experiment in education, two randomly selected groups of students are similar in key characteristics: One group, Group A (experimental is taught for a period of 6 months using a Graded Approach Model); and the second group B (control group) is taught using a traditional technique. At the conclusion of the experiment, the two groups are tested to determine if there is a difference in their achievement. The teaching technique represents the casual or independent variable and student achievement is the effect of dependent variable. The casual variable in this study has been manipulated by assigning students to two groups in which different teaching methods are used. In analysing the test results, if student achievement is greater in the experimental group, then it can be claimed that the new GAM is effective.

This is a basic type of experimental research model which has been conducted many times. Although this technique appears to be relatively simple, most researchers encounter a number of issues that might make it difficult for them to conduct the experiment. Some of the stumbling blocks that might be possible in this research as identified by Cook (2002) are as follows:

1. ‘The practicality is that it is rare possibility to have an experiments mounted in a school. If at all it is it is manged to get started then there are several compromises that have to be made in its execution which may impact results.
2. There is often a trade-off which experiments have to do in order to have internal validity. This is often at the cost of external validation. There is also a risk of casual conclusions.
3. There are also arguments that the action research or the experiments done at schools are not used by the schools because schools run according to the federal and state
policy directives. Often the experiment go on to recreation of decision making models but unfortunately schools make decision differently.

4. The final arguments that cook makes is on the basic of the need of experiments because there are better feasible option available. Some to mention are; the case-studies done by evaluator, quasi-experimental studies that are done by researchers, the casual modelling studies done by researchers.’ (Cook, 2002, p. 117)

As a result of these concerns, researchers have developed a variety of techniques that preserve elements of the experimental approach while allowing for less rigorous methodologies.

6.7 Method

The whole study was done in various stages for the period of about one year. To collect data the Quantitative and Qualitative methods were used. The approach of research was a combination of Psychometric and ethnographic. The research went through several stages.

6.7.1 Stage one: This stage was the initial stage that included the selection of the study group.

In September 2011 placement test of CBFS, the students who achieved less than 20% were identified for the study. These were the ones who were in the age group of 18-21 and had completed their secondary school in the same year. This was done with an aim of having a homogeneous group for the research.

There were around 68 students who scored less than 20% in the placement test. All these students were called for a meeting and were informed about the research that was being planned and how would it benefit the education. The researcher did this by taking help of an Arabic speaking staff member who explained the aims and objective of the study clearly to the students. The consent of the students was taken to ensure their voluntary participation in the study. About 29 students willingly agreed but only 28 were considered because the maximum capacity permitted for one classroom was not exceeding 28.

However, as all these students had to get a 50% aggregated to go to the next level (from Beginners to elementary). The end of level examination included all the skills except writing for the six months of the experimental study. Hence the promotion of the students form one level to the next level included Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading, and listening.

The examination given to these 28 was the one that was prepared by the examination unit of the college for all the students of the GFP. However unfortunately not all the 28 of the study group could continue to be participants of the study group for the whole six month. One of the 28 students failed in level- 1 (beginner level) examination so had to discontinue being part of the study group. Two more students failed at level- 3 (pre-intermediate) exam so could not continue with the study group. Hence these three students were left behind and all the data that was recorded for the study by the end was only of 25 students.

6.7.2 Stage two:

This stage was ethical research practice stage that included formal consents of the participants, both students and the teachers involved. A questionnaire was distributed to all these 28 students to get the background these participants. The information elicited information such as family and educational background. These 28 students were divided randomly into two groups namely; Group A and Group B. Group A was decided to be the experimental group while Group B was the controlled group.
In addition to this the background information collected about the students of both the groups through a written questionnaire (Appendix 1) followed by an informal interview. This was done to ensure that the similarity in student's background which could otherwise impact the study results. This was done with the purpose of reducing the impact of other variable on the academic performance of the students.

At the same stage another questionnaire (Appendix 2) was given to the teacher who was allocated to the controlled group (B) to teach writing skill. This questionnaire elicited personal and professional information about the teacher. This was also done to see that if at all the experience or the academic qualification of the teacher was anyways influencing the choice of the teaching approach. The questionnaire elicited the information about the age, qualifications, total teaching experience and the years that they have taught ESL/EFL adult learners, preference of skill taught and preferred teaching approach in teaching writing etc.

6.7.3 Stage three

At this point of time the proposed model of Graded approach was experimented with two group design. The experimental group (A) of 14 students was taught by the researcher using the Graded approach for a period of six month. While the other 11 students (Group B, controlled group) was taught by another teacher allocated by the department.

Observation (Dairy/lesson plan): As it was not possible to for the researcher to teach the study group of 14 students and observe the teaching approach of the teacher teaching the remaining 11 students in the class at the same time. So, the 11 students attending the writing class with the other teacher were requested to maintain a diary. These students were given a template that was to be filled by all the 11 students of Group B at the end of each writing class.

In addition to this, a copy of the lesson plan of the writing teacher for each lesson was filed and compared with the dairies of Group B students at the end of each month to analyse the method adapted and by the teacher to teach writing skills in each class. The topics taught in the writing class were also taken into considerations as they were different from the ones being taught to the experimental Group A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Design</th>
<th>Standard research notion</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Group (A,B) Random Pre-post test (classic design)</td>
<td>Group A R O X1 O Group B R O X2 O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R= random assignment
6.7.4 Stage four

After six months of having only writing classes separately, Group A and B was put together in Level 4 i.e. Intermediate level in April-June 2012. And both the groups were taught all the skills together including the writing skills by the teacher allocated to them by the department. At the end of the level in June all the students sat the final examination.

At this point of time, the copies of the writing tasks done in the exam by the Group A and B was marked by 3 different examiners and then the mean score of each student was taken. Once again, the experimental group’s result was compared with the control group result to see if the experimental group results that were taught adapting GAM, anyways showed better results than the control group.

6.7.5 Stage five

The whole study group A and B were together in level 5 and 6 too. At level 5 they taught the English for Academic Purpose which focused academic and study skills such as; paraphrasing, referencing reporting etc. At level 6 all these students were equally trained with the examination strategies of taking IELTS exam. At these levels, they were taught by the teachers allocated to them by the department. At the end of the Foundation Course in level 6, the same researched group of students appeared in the external IELTS exam of Cambridge.

6.8 Measuring Instrument (Direct Method)

6.8.1 Background

To measure, evaluate or to predict the writing proficiency the assessors have used mainly two methods for several decades; ‘direct methods’ and ‘indirect method’. Cooper (1984) and Breland (1983) mention in their writing assessment reports that Direct method or assessment are the ones in which the examinees or the students perform a writing task in a given period of time and then the task is assessed by one or more examiners. In contrast ‘indirect method ‘assesses writing commonly by the means of multiple choice questions. Hence direct method is often referred to as a "production" measure while indirect assessment as a "recognition" measure.

Both the assessments entail their own pros and con the battle of line between the proponents of the two approaches has been mainly on the issue of reliability and validity. The direct method that adheres to testing writing skills through essays has always been a subject of debate as the writing can be scored differently by different teachers. It is very subjective; one teacher may find handwriting and ideas presented more important than the organizations and the mechanics of the writing task or vice versa. Hence one writing task judged by different assessors may show different results. Palmer (1966, cited in cooper 1984, p.2) "Sixty years of [College] Board English testing have amply proved that essay tests are neither reliable nor valid, and that, whatever their faults, objective tests do constitute a reliable and valid method of ascertaining student compositional ability. Such a conclusion was very painfully and reluctantly arrived at..." (p. 286). While in the same year in support of direct-method Godshalk, Swineford, and Coffman (1966, cited in Cooper, 1984, p.2) argue that in special cases score of short essay could be relied upon and could be considered as a basic
indicator or the potential that a person might hold in writing skill. For instance; short essays given in placement test can often be an indicator on current writing skills ability of a person.

Indirect method was supported on the grounds of being more on the rationale that it is more reliable because of the statistical feature of it and secondly it is easy to administer it which was way more economical. In these types of assessment there are reading items where examinees should evaluate critically and choose the correct response form the multiple options given. This proves to be a good option because examinee in this test is not reduced to an editor or an error spotter, rather he or she get an opportunity to demonstrate both their critical reading and writing skills.

However, Cooper (1984) mentions that its critics argue that such assessments do not assess the ability of a learners which are crucial to writing. There is no way that learners can be creative and original in it because there is no provision that they may demonstrate their ability and awareness of rhetorical strategies, writers tone, main ideas, supporting ideas, cohesiveness etc. which are crucial to being and developing as a good effective writer.

To conclude in spite of many advantages of indirect method of testing writing, direct method has gained more acceptances among the ESL and ESL teachers worldwide. Diederich (1974, cited in Breland, 1983, p. 1) supports the direct method by saying that “As a test of writing ability, no test is as convincing to teachers of English, to teachers in other departments, to prospective employers, and to the public as actual samples of each student's writing, especially if the writing is done under test conditions in which one can be sure that each sample is the student's own unaided work.” Practitioners who believe that essays are the only ways to test the writing proficiency, perhaps are the ones who make people jump into a swimming pool to test the swimming ability. (Diederich , 1974). Coffman (197l,cited in Breland, 1983, p. 1) also favour of the direct method in academic context and asserts that students should be given a question or a problem to solve to test the ability that has been mastered in the given field. sole way to test. Essay is the only direct testing tool for students to test their educational achievement, in the same way speaking and writing is the tool to test scholars. (Coffman ,197l, p. 273)

6.8.2 Rationale of Direct method

Since the direct method has been more prevalent in assessing writing proficiency of the ESL and EFL learners around the world and it is the only method used to assess writing skill of students where the research was conducted hence this method was thought to be the best for assessing the writing ability of the students in the task performed during the examination and to analyse the results. Second rationale to use the direct method to assess writing skills of the student was that the entrance examination and the exit examination i.e. International English language system (IELTS) also has the same method of measuring the writing skills.

6.8.3 Validity

Reliability and validity of direct method has always been in the arena of debates so to minimize the errors one writing sample was assessed by three different assessors and the mean was taken for the final score. In addition to this the writing results of the study group(25 Students) in the external international (IELTS) conducted by Cambridge university were also compared.

6.8.4 Data analysis method

The Pre-test (placement results) , the post-test( level 4) after teaching the experimental group and the second post- test of Group A ( experimental ) and Group B ( Control ) was filed on Microsoft EXCEL and all the data was converted into an electronic
form. It was considered to be appropriate for simple descriptive analyses such as frequency distributions and mean. However, for more sophisticated analysis more powerful tool that was used was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This provides all the facilities for doing more complex statistical routines such as t test, analysis of variance and correlation. In addition to it, SPSS is a package that has been designed for the statistical research. This tool helped in providing excellent documentation on using the routines as well as guides interpreting results.

**6.9 Conclusion**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that after having a due permission of the institution to carry out the research work at the English Language Centre at CBFS, in Muscat Oman, the study was planned, conducted and recorded at five different stages that lasted for almost a year. Based on various theories and approaches of teaching writing to EFL/ESL learners, a Graded Approach Model (GAM) was planned and then its efficacy was tested on an experimental and a control group (comparative study). The study went through 5 stages that involved 25 students and 5 teachers in all. The teachers who taught the experimental group A and the Controlled Group B over the period of 1 year were 5 including the researcher herself (See Appendix 3). The written samples of the students were marked by different teachers. The data that was collected at each was recorded, filed and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results of it were presented through statistical tables or charts. Each of it was interpreted too. The representation of all the data at each stage will be presented in the following chapter.