CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the current study was to examine the overarching approaches to second language (L2) writing instruction as reflected in the Yemeni English as Foreign Language (EFL) secondary curriculum and to determine how the secondary EFL writing curriculum in an EFL country prepares students for university-level EFL writing skills. This chapter presents a review of the approaches to second language acquisition (SLA) and L2 writing approaches. This chapter also provides background information on the Yemeni EFL secondary writing curriculum and the problems faced by EFL learners in Yemen and other Arab countries. In addition, it presents the principles of curriculum evaluation and analysis used as guidelines for the analytical processes in this study.

2.2 SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES AND RELATED SLA THEORIES

SLA instructional approaches are represented in three prominent SLA theories (Aslam, 2003);

- **Behaviourism/Structuralism Theory;** which focuses on acquiring a language as acquiring any behaviour in life based on stimulus-response relations or reinforcement-awards relations (Menezes, 2013; Demirezen, 1988). The structuralism theory might be reflected in L2 writing instructional approaches such as the Grammar Translation approach (GT) which involves using writing to explain grammar rules and to learn vocabulary.
- **Cognitive Theory;** explains the cognitive activities that contribute to the learners' intellectual development (Pugazhenthi & Phil, 2012) and translated into metacognitive activities conducted by the learners in response to the text being read. *cognitive theory* is based on practicing different mental activities in the readers mind apart from any grammatical rule inclusion or communicative activities such as processing various types of information; textual, linguistic, prior knowledge and experience (Pugazhenthi & Phil, 2012).
- **Socio Cognitive and Socio Cultural Theory**; which is the major reference in education; it is used as the basis for developing pedagogy and designing curriculum and instruction. Socio-cognitive theory has the view of mixing social and cognition. The social is related to what is going in the outside world while the cognition is related to what is going in the inside world. It represents a belief that language learning is affected by the interaction between the learners' cognition processes and the environment (Khatib & Shakouri, 2013; Atkinson, 2002).

Socio-cultural theory is developed on Vygotsky's notion (1978) of developing the human cognitive and higher mental function (Aimin, 2013; Matsuoka & Evans, 2004). This theory emphasizes the interaction between the environment (society, school, classroom), cognitive knowledge (learners' experiences), and culture (meaning in the environment). Learning a language exists through communication between these elements (Taber, 2011). As such, the individual's language is developed from social activities requiring both cognitive and communicative skills through the mediation of the language (Aimin 2013; Matsuoka & Evans, 2004). Within the sociocultural framework, the learners are seen as active constructors of their own learning environment (Mitchell & Myles, 1998).

Language learning in both socio-cognitive theory and socio-cultural theory functions relies on both communicative tool and psychological tool that develop the learners' cognitive processes (Anton, 1999; Lantofl, 1994). Socio cognitive and socio cultural are reflected in the communicative instructional approaches to L2 such as Content-Based and Task-Based instruction. Thus, SLA theory should be centred not so much on the process of acquiring new sounds and structures and then using them to communicate, but rather on the learner's participation collaboratively in social activities such as talking to classmates and teachers or having out-of-class conversations (Aimin, 2013).

The Yemeni Ministry of Education determined that the communicative-based curriculum is being utilised by the Yemeni EFL secondary curriculum (Al-Tamimi, 2006; Mohammed, 2012). The composers of the Yemeni EFL 12th grade curriculum clearly specify this (O'Neill, Snow, & Peacock, 1991, p.4). The objective of this theoretical curriculum is to prepare pupils for tertiary education (UNESCO, 2011).

According to the World Bank and the Republic of Yemen (2010), the principles of a communicative-based curriculum were used to develop the EFL instructor's guide book, workbook, and course book in Yemen at the primary and secondary levels of education.

As the curriculum was founded on the principles of the communicative approach, the writing curriculum utilised by the EFL should feature pupil-focussed instruction and the CLT approach to writing. In the following sections, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches and related theories will be reviewed. However, other approaches to L2 instruction and the related theories of SLA are also reviewed because these approaches may be reflected in the curriculum.

2.2.1 Audio-Lingual Method

The theories of second language education have evolved from grammar translation to the audio-lingual method (ALM). The ALM is based on the oral approach. However, it is very different from the direct method because, instead of learning language through exposure to situations, the ALM focuses on grammar patterns (Lightbown, Spada, Ranta, & Rand, 2006). The ALM is based on behaviourism theory (Castagnaro, 2006), that language learning is the acquisition of a set of accurate language habits. Structuralism states that habit-formation is a crucial aspect of language learning, i.e. pupils are made to repeat the structure of a language until they memorise it. Behaviourism theory postulates that people's behaviour can be conditioned in accordance with our objectives. When this theory is applied to the acquisition of a new language then we recite the relevant information until the

answer becomes automatic (Bellalem, 2014). Reinforcement-awards relations and stimulus-response relations are the foundation of behaviour acquisition, including language, according to the behaviour/structuralism theory (Demirezen, 1988). Thus, based on behaviourism/structuralism theory, the focus is on the description of the language forms and structure, and language learning and acquisition usually happen through repetition. ALM emphasises vocabulary acquisition through oral practices based on drilling grammatical sentences as learner repeats patterns to pronounce them correctly. The focus is on the description of the language forms and structure, and language learning and acquisition usually happens through repetition.

ALM as a form-focused instructional approach prepares the students to know about the language by focusing on accuracy and linguistic competence, so as to be able to use it automatically by forming new habits in the target language (Doggett, 1986). According to Cook (2013), ALM is based on ideas of habit formation and practice with view of language patterns and structures. The main characteristic of the ALM is the belief that the native and target language have separate systems and should be kept apart (Freeman, 2000). Bloomfield's behaviouristic theory is the foundation of the aural-oral, behaviouristic and structural methods that have become known as ALM (Anggraeni, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The teacher is the model of the target language who shows students how things are supposed to sound. All of the responsibility for learning is placed on the instructors and their pupils are often completely dependent upon them and this frequently forces them into the role of drillmaster (Lee & Patten, 2003). In addition, language learning is seen a matter of developing a set of habits through the drilling of grammar rules, and it is important to avoid errors as they can become habit forming. The emphasis is on the oral skills (Kuhlemeier, Melse, & Bergh, 1996; Cook, 2013; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson,

2013). The teacher gives students feedback to reinforce correct habits. The most important thing is to learn structural patterns, while the focus on vocabulary comes second. Language is learned as habits, and students can overcome the habits of their native language and acquire new habits for the foreign language. The new vocabulary and structure are learned through the imitation and repetition of dialogues. If the students imitate correctly they are positively reinforced.

ALM was criticised by many researchers (Ishler, 2010; Castagnaro, 2006). According to Sidek (2010), higher level pupils are not engaged in various cognitive tasks by ALM. ALM pupils st ruggle to accurately pronounce and structure sentences and they found it difficult to apply their classroom drills to everyday situations outside of the classroom. Moreover, this method focuses on the linguistic features of the language that learners do not need outside of the classroom. Hence, it was recognised that implicit grammar instruction is insufficient for many students. Teachers declared a real need to go back and resume teaching English grammar explicitly (Ishler, 2010).

In summary, ALM emphasises vocabulary acquisition through oral practices based on drilling grammatical sentences. It has three primary traits: a) using oral repetition to learn linguistic structures, b) the classroom is focused on the instructor, and c) the classroom utilises the target language (Anggraeni, 2007). Therefore, pupils who were instructed in this approach struggled to apply what they recited in the classroom to real life situations outside of it and their pronunciation and sentence structure was flawed. A summary of the characteristics of this approach is presented in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: Characteristics of Audio-lingual (Source: Freeman, 2000).

Aspect	Details
Goal	• Learning language by orally reciting phrases. • Forming new habits.
Roles	• Teacher centred. • Teacher giving models. • The teacher controls the students' behaviour and reinforces correct responses.

Teaching and learning processes	• Teacher: Teaching vocabulary through dialogue.
	• Learner
	  ○ Imitation, repeat patterns.
	  ○ Reading, writing based on oral work.

Interaction	• Teacher -to-student interaction.
Language aspects	• Language structures and vocabulary through dialogue. • Grammar patterns.
Language skills	• All four skills; listening, speaking, reading, writing. However, the emphasis is on listening and speaking.
Evaluation	• Discrete-point tests in which students distinguish between words or provide an appropriate verb for a sentence

2.2.2 Grammar-Translation Method

The focus of the grammar-translation method (GTM) is on the language literature whereby reading passages are presented to the learners followed by questions to answer. Other activities include translating passages from one language into the other, explaining the grammar rules, and learning vocabulary (Wang, 2009; Nakatsugawa, 2009). The focus of GTM is on reading and writing with particular attention paid to grammar and vocabulary (Chen, 2008). The behaviourism/structuralism theory is reflected in L2 instructional approaches of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), in which the focus is on the language structure and forms. The grammar translation method is a form-focused approach (Willis & Willis, 2007), as it focuses on grammar rules instruction, i.e. the memorisation of grammatical rules and vocabulary.

Grammar translation is a method of learning a language by examining the language's rules and sentence structure. This knowledge is then utilised to translate texts or sentences into the target language. Only minimal attention is given to the content of the text with the discussion of the completed translation exercise being on grammatical analysis and conducted in the native language. Cunningham (2000) among others found that GTM effectively teaches sentence, clause, and structure acquisition which helps develop the pupils' linguistic competence and ability to analyse texts at the word level.

In addition, class work activities are highly structured and all of the activities are typically controlled by the teacher (Freeman, 2000). A summary of the main characteristics of this approach is given in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2: Characteristics of Grammar Translation Methods (Source: Larsen-Freeman, 2000)

Aspect	Details
Goal	• Reading the literature. • Learning grammar. • Learning vocabulary (translation).
Roles	• Teacher centred. • Students controlled by the teacher.

Teaching and learning processes	• Teacher
	  ○ Explains the grammar.
	  ○ Gives examples.
	• Learner
	  ○ Memorise the grammar rules and try to apply them.

Interaction	• Teacher-to-student interaction.
Language aspects	• Vocabulary and grammar.
Language skills	• Primary reading and writing.
Evaluation	• Using grammar rules. • Translation from one language to another.

2.2.3 Direct Method

Direct method helps students to obtain meaning directly through the target language. Typically, visual aids are used to help students understand the meaning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). Students speak in the target language and communicate as in a real situation. In this method, the focus is on writing and reading skills and grammar is taught deductively. This conventional approach focuses on learning a language naturally (Fitriyanti, 2011). Advocates of this method hold that this method

does not require the use or translation of the pupils' native language as meaning can be expressed through actions and demonstrations (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). A summary of the characteristics of this approach is presented in Table 2-3

Table 2-3: Characteristics of Direct Method (Source: Freeman, 2000).

Aspect	Details
Goal	• Communicate using the target language.
Roles	• Teacher direct the class activities. • Students and teachers are partners in the learning process.

Teaching and learning processes	• Teacher
	  ○ Introduces words or phrases through the use of pictures, pantomime.
	• Learner
	  ○ Students speak in the target language.
	  ○ Grammar rules are learned inductively.
	  ○ Self-correction is encouraged.

Interaction	• Both teacher and students initiate interaction. • Interaction among students and between students and teachers is initiated as the teacher directs.
Language aspects	• Vocabulary emphasised over grammar; • Oral communication.
Language skills	• Speaking.
Evaluation	• Students tested through actual language use, such as in oral interviews and assigned written paragraphs.

DM has three main principles: a) the emphasis in on the pupils mastering the correct pronunciation and oral communication, b) the pupils' existing knowledge is used as the foundation for reading and writing tasks, and c) vocabulary and grammar rules are taught without the use of L1, new rules and challenging vocabulary are acquired deductively through pictures and explanations (Mehjabin, 2007).

Classrooms that utilise this method do not depend on the text of a workbook, instead they rely on the instructor's ability to teach, clarify, and demonstrate each concept. Therefore, the instructor must devote themselves to giving instruction in the target language. The instructor should provide useful learning aids that can assist in learning the content of the workbook (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). Freeman (2000) stated that the direct method has four primary techniques: a) reading aloud, b) question and answer exchanges, c) the pupils' self-correcting, and d) dictation. For example, under the instructor's direction, the pupil will read a text aloud and use various oral tools to simplify the content. The instructor will then test the pupil's comprehension of the text by presenting them with a series of questions that they must answer using whole sentences. The answers are repeated by the instructor to help the pupil identify and correct their own mistakes and then the text is dictated to the pupil so that they can correct any mistakes they make in the future (Freeman, 2000). McLaughlin (2013) asserted that in direct methods, the learning of second language through hearing and speaking rather than by translating or learning rules of grammar.

The instructional approaches and theories used for L2 have experienced considerable moves within language teaching to embrace the communicative approach over recent decades. For many decades the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) was the favoured method of instruction in foreign languages (Abdullah, 2013; Chang, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). GTM relies heavily on the teaching of grammar and practicing translation as the main teaching and learning activities (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992).

However, the limitations of this approach hindered the pupil's abilities to attain fluency in their second language and new teaching methods were developed, including the Audio-Lingual Methods (ALM) (Griffiths & Helens, 2004) and other communicative approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The oral, behaviouristic, and structural methods are known as the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM). ALM is used primarily to develop oral fluency (Saville, 1973; Anggraeni, 2007). It is a teacher-centred method in which the teacher is the model of the target language. In addition, language learning is seen a matter of developing a set of habits through the drilling of grammar rules. This is "justified according to behaviourist theories that language is a system of habits which can be taught and learnt on the stimulus, response and reinforcement basis" (Griffiths & Helens, 2004).

While the Audio-Lingual method was developed to compensate for the deficiencies of the grammar-translation method (Griffiths & Helens, 2004), it is still an educational approach that is focussed on form which limits the role of learner in learning process as the teachers frequently bare the full responsibility for instruction and utilise rote memorisation (Lee & Patten, 2003).

The contribution of individual pupils to the learning process was not recognised because of the Audio-Lingual Theory's dependence on the automatic patterning of behaviour (Griffiths & Helens, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013), particularly in writing where the shift of emphasis on foreign language teaching to the acquisition of oral skills has resulted in writing and reading being neglected or even ignored (Saville, 1973). It is commonly accepted that none of the existing methods will fulfil the objectives and educational

needs of every course and pupil, as such, recent years have seen the emergence of a range of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodologies that include a variety of teaching approaches (Brandl, 2008).

In conclusion, the negligible chance for pupils to engage in significant language use as part of this method limited their abilities creatively use and produce language. These and other deficiencies of the Audio-Lingual method resulted in its deconstruction and the development of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods and a variety of other approaches including Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Content-Based Instruction (CBI), and Collaborative Language Learning (CLL).

2.2.4 Communicative Language Teaching Approaches

Communicative language teaching (CLT) refers to the language teaching methodology, which focuses on developing the learners' communicative competence in the target language (Murcia et al., 1997; Dörnyei, 1997; Richards, 2006). CLT based language teaching on the function that students should focus on the meaning they want to express, leading to teaching practices that make students communicate with each other in various ways (Cook, 2013). Recently, CLT has been accepted and recognised as the most popular theoretical approach in English language teaching (Ozsevik, 2010). CLT covers a variety of methods that focus on helping learners to communicate meaningfully in the target language (David Nunan, 1999; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013).

Communicative language teaching focuses on the process rather than the product of language learning, and its focus is primarily on the communication aspects of the language. Developing the learners' communicative competence is the primary goal of CLT (Canale & Swain, 1980). This approach grew out of the work of anthropological linguists, which regards language as a system of communication (Murcia & McIntosh, 1991; Richards & Rodgers, 2014) that is acquired through communication (Howatt & Widdowson, 1984; Cook, 2013; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). CLT simultaneously relies on language knowledge and use and necessitates the pupils' active participation in the study of a second language (Hymes, 1972; Richards, 2006; Griffiths & Parr, 2001). CLT endeavours to enhance the pupils' communicative competence and demands that the new language be the primary means of communication in the classroom where possible. Therefore, Williams (1995) and Richards (2006) anticipate that CLT features will characterise CLT classrooms.

One of the most important aspects of the communication approach is working in pairs and group work. Learners should work in pairs or groups and attempt to solve a problematic task with their available language knowledge. CLT classrooms use formal and informal settings and authentic props to facilitate meaningful exchanges among pupils or between pupils and their instructor through exercises and tasks (Richards, 2005).

This approach is similar to the general learning perspectives usually referred to as 'learning by doing' or 'the experiential approach' (Richards & Renandya, 2002). In CLT, the classroom communication is planned and presented in ways that stimulate real life situations (Mareva and Nyota, 2012). The teachers' function in

CLT classrooms is to act as a co-communication and actively engage the pupils in communication while assessing, facilitating, and observing the commination process (Freeman, 2000; Mareva & Nyota, 2012). The instructor must be a group process manager, counsellor, and analyst (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Mareva & Nyota, 2012).

Generally, CLT focuses on communication and contextual factors in language use and it is learner-centred and experience-based. The communicative approach puts English teaching and learning in real-life situations (Xu, 2010). It has many supporters but there are numerous opponents who criticise this approach and the relatively varied ways in which it is interpreted and applied. Nevertheless, it is a theory of language teaching that began from a communicative model of language and language use, and was incorporated into the design of an instructional system, classroom activities, and techniques.

A central aspect of CLT is communicative competence. Hymes (1972) and Richards & Schmidt (2014) defined competence as what a speaker needs to know to be communicatively competent in a speech community. This includes both knowledge and ability for the language user. Richards and Renandya (2002) and Richards and Schmidt (2014) identified four dimensions of communicative competence; grammatical competence, socio-linguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

According to Hall (2007), these competencies are associated with the Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT), which defines language as a dominant means of developing the thinking process and the cultural means of mediating language acquisition. In this respect, the CLT is based on socio-cognitive and socio-cultural theory. In CLT,

language is acquired through meaningful communication (Howatt & Widdowson, 1984; David Nunan, 1999). In this approach, the focus is on developing the learners' communicative competence (Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1997; David Nunan, 1999) rather than on the language structure and forms.

According to Matsuoka et al. (2004), socio-cognitive theory extends beyond the psycholinguistic perspective that the acquisition and instruction of a language are solely based upon a set of features. It combines cognition and the social activities through which the learning happens into an interactive network of cognition, social interaction and the environment (Atkinson, 2002). It claims that the pupil's environment and cognition processes interact and this interaction influences their language acquisition (Matsuoka et al., 2004; Khatib & Shakouri, 2013; Atkinson, 2002). Vygotsky's idea of developing higher mental functions and human cognition became the basis of socio-cultural theory (Aimin, 2013; Matsuoka et al., 2004).

In addition, Richards and Renandya (2004) showed that there were still some elements that could be defined as communication, task, and meaningfulness principles. The first element includes activities that involve real communication to support learning. The second element refers to the meaningful tasks the language activities must describe. The third element refers to the principles that support the learning process. CLT aims to develop the capacity of learners to use the language in real communication.

Over the past several decades, CLT has evolved in response to the changing views on the nature of communicative language use and the abilities that underlie it. Unlike the conventional approaches, the CLT approaches treat the pupils as active participants in the learning process who must engage in negation, expression, and

interpretation in the classroom while the instructor acts as a facilitator. Therefore, CLT is a pupil oriented approach (Jacobs & Yong, 2004).

The difference is that CLT drew on very different models of language (Ellis, 2003). Widdowson (1996) and Mareva and Nyota (2012) stated that the difference between the structural and communicative approaches is that the structural approaches focus on usage such as the ability to use the language correctly, while CLT is directed at use such as the ability to use the language meaningfully and appropriately in the construction of discourse.

Nevertheless, from the beginnings of CLT to the present, it has been possible to distinguish a 'weak' version of it from a 'strong' one. The weak and strong versions of CLT share the same objectives but reflect different assumptions about how second languages are learned (Howatt & Widdowson, 1984; Littlewood, 2014). They are means of enabling learners to learn a language by experiencing how it is used in communication (Ellis, 2003). According to Martin (2013), the "weak" version stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes. It implies that there is a set of classroom practices that describe and exemplify the relationships between form and meaning (Wesche & Skehan, 2002). In contrast, the strong version of CLT rests on the assumption that communicative language ability is mainly acquired through communication (Howat, 1984; Rao, 2002; Martin, 2013). The strong version of CLT is helpful in activating the already existed knowledge of language learners as well as in fostering the growth and development of language itself from the language learners' perspective (Howat, 1984; Martin, 2013; Liu, 2015). A summary of the characteristics of the communicative approach is presented in Table 2-4

Table 2-4: Characteristics of communicative approach (Source: Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Aspect	Details
Goal	• Learning language communicative competence • Uses real-life situations to facilitate learning (Xu, 2010) • Learning by doing (Richards & Renandya, 2002)
Roles	• Student to student centred • Pair or group work • Teacher as a facilitator
Teaching and learning processes	• Activities are communicative. Students present an information gap that needs to be filled; speakers have a choice of what to say and how to say it. • Get feedback from listeners. • Students usually work in small groups.
Interaction	• Student -to-student interaction
Language aspects	• Function is emphasised over form
Language skills	• Integration of different skills
Evaluation	• Informal evaluation takes place when the teacher advises or communicates. • Formal evaluation is by means of an integrative test with a real communicative function.

Many Asian school systems including Thailand, Japan, Korea, and China use the principles of CLT as the foundation of their national curricula (Nunan, 2004).

Many Asia-Pacific nations have recently begun adopting a communicative approach to teaching foreign languages (Chang & Goswami, 2011). However, researchers have identified some mismatches between the theory and practice of CLT.

The majority of instructors teaching in the target language stated that they use CLT methodology to instruct their target class. However, when they were asked to explain this concept they offered a range of different explanations, many of which assumed that the application of CLT principles in the classroom meant utilising the conventional teaching approach whilst focussing on grammar (e.g., Chang & Goswami, 2011; Ozsevik, 2010; Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, & Son, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2013).

An investigation of the incorporation of CLT into Australian L2 courses by instructors and educational authorities was conducted by Mangubhai et al. (2004). They recorded the instructors' lessons and conducted assisted recall and semi-structured interviews to gather their data. They found that the instructor's classroom instruction included many elements of CLT approaches and conventional instruction. Mangubhai et al. (2004) concluded that there is a contradiction between the instructors' application of CLT in the classroom and their understanding of it; many instructors used conventional teaching methods while claiming to use CLT approaches. Ozsevik (2010) studied 61 Turkish English instructors at the primary and secondary level to determine the effect of utilising CLT. The literature analysis revealed that there are four main challenges facing the implementation of CLT in EFL classrooms. These are, first and foremost, the instructor, closely followed by the pupils. The other challenges are the education system itself and the actual principles and requirements of CLT. As such, the review reveals that there is a distinct

discrepancy between the instructor's application of CLT principles within the classroom setting and the actual methods of instruction used by the instructors.

Yemen claims that its English language curriculum is standardised and emphasises real communication between the instructors and their pupils (Al-Tamimi, 2006; Mohammed, 2012). The old course emphasised grammar rules and vocabulary while the new one utilises modern communicative instructional approaches (Al-Tamimi, 2006). Al-Sohbani (2013) investigated the English teachers' classroom teaching practices in Yemeni secondary school. The results of the study indicated that the participants do not have a clear idea regarding the principles and concepts of CLT and its application in the EFL classroom.

To improve teaching and learning practices, the communicative features should be reflected in the EFL classrooms. The focus should be on fluency, the appropriateness of the response, and language use rather than structural correctness and language knowledge and minimal attention should be devoted to explicit tuition in thee language forms and correcting errors. However, the local context could have an impact on the implementation of the communicative approach. In Taiwan, the influence of introducing the communicative approach to the instruction of Taiwanese students in English at various colleges was studied by Chang and Goswami (2011). They found that the introduction of CLT in the local context was influenced by CLT practices, the education system, the pupils, and the instructors. Therefore, observing classroom practices that demonstrate the roles of the pupil and the instructor will provide insights to the alignment of writing classroom introduction and a communicative curriculum.

The features of CLT can also be found in other communicative approaches to L2 instruction such as task-based language teaching, content-based instruction (CBI) and cooperative language learning (CLL), each of which is explained briefly to demonstrate their features in addition to the ones mentioned in the general description of CLT (Sidek, 2010).

2.2.4.1 **Task-Based Language Teaching**

In the 1970s, linguists recommended that language instruction should include grammar and meaning and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBL) was developed and introduced. Skehan (1998) and Alavi (2012) found that over the last 30 years interest in the TBL method in language courses has been increasing. According to Branden (2006), it is drawing the attention of teacher trainers, language instructors, educationalists, curriculum designers, and SLA researchers.

Communicative language teaching is the origin of task-based language teaching (Skehan, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2008). TBL has many features in common with CLT as CLT forms its foundation (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Bygate, Swain, & Skehan, 2013). During the 1970s, there were considerable moves within the language teaching sector to embrace the communicative approach. At the time, the assumption seemed to be that it was insufficient in language teaching to focus only on language structure, and that it needed to be accompanied by a focus on developing the capacity to express meanings (Widdowson, 1996; Littlewood, 2014; Cook, 2013). The implications of these pedagogic developments were widespread and they influenced the design of the syllabus, the methodology, and evaluation of language

teaching, and formed the basis of an early and influential proposal for the use of task-based approaches (Skehan, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007).

However, communicative language teaching is being increasingly replaced in some contexts by methods comparable in principle but different in degree or in contextualisation. Task-based language teaching could be considered simply a more thoroughgoing version of CLT. It may be that versions of task-based teaching with a clear focus on form will show that continued progress is possible in promoting accuracy, complexity, and fluency (Wesche & Skehan, 2002; Skehan & Foster, 2012). Tasks or activities are seen as central to meaningful language learning (Nunan, 2004; Wesche & Skehan, 2002; Willis & Willis, 2007; Tomlinson, 2011). The field of SLA has made extensive use of tasks and task based language learning and instruction since the 1980s to improve the pupils' language skills, design communicative tasks, and create process focussed syllabi (Crookes & Chaudron, 2001).

A task has been defined in a range of ways by various research papers with different perspectives since the 1980s. Long's (1985) definition claimed that tasks were connected to real world activities but others emphasised the pedagogical role (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Richards, Platt & Weber, 1986; Willis and Willis, 2007). The most recent definition claim that tasks are based on the use of communicative language wherein the pupils' primary focus is on meaning not the form.

The primary goal of TBLT is to prepare learners with language based on the learners' needs (Long & Crookes, 1993). In addition, there is a recognition that the learners' needs are affected by context and familiarity (Ellis, 2003). According to Samuda and Bygate (2008), the task-based approach is very adaptable and it

concentrates on generating a situation where tasks are the main method of instruction; they determine the assessment method, syllabus, and curriculum and motive in class activities. Moreover, TBL activities typically involve the learners as problem-solvers where the learners need to fulfil a specific real-world task that is related to the desired outcomes (Prabhu, 1987). According to Tomlinson (2011), TBL "refers to materials or courses which are designed around a series of authentic tasks which give the learners experience of using the language in ways in which it is used in the 'real world' outside the classroom". The pupils engaging in a significant interaction and communication with one another while completing tasks is the foundation of the TBL approach. In the process of communicating the learners develop an implicit comprehension of grammar (Winnefeld, 2013; Savignon, 2002). Richards and Rodgers (2001) suggested that these tasks include exchanging opinions, making decisions, solving problems and filling information gaps (Pica, Kanagy & Falodun, 2009).

Pupils are assigned tasks that can only be completed through interaction with their peers (Hyde, 2013). Tasks come in many forms. Their defining trait is that they emphasis generating an authentic and meaningful exchange (Yasuda, 2011). The pupils gain awareness of various types of tasks and language content through TBI as they complete the task. This awareness enables them to select the appropriate skills when presented with a new task. TBI has four important features: 1) pupil oriented focus on communication rather than accuracy; 2) tasks that require the pupils to move beyond their comfort zone while mimicking real life situations are the foundation of lessons; 3) pupils are able to develop authentic language skills, 4) instructors are able to use the flexible framework to create an environment that enables the acquisition of a second language (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). It is evident

that TBL encourages pupils to cooperate and interact with their instructors and peers and this methodology facilitates their internalisation of the language skills. Therefore, it is essential that the pupils have a supportive environment that helps than achieve a higher cognitive level and complete the tasks. The socio-cultural and socio-cognitive theories reflect these features (Hyde, 2013).

Fotos and Ellis (1991) conducted a study on the impact of TBLT on the acquisition of grammar rules. The results showed that communication around the tasks increased the students' knowledge of even difficult grammar rules in L2. In an experimental study on the effect of task-based instruction on L2 vocabulary development, Newton (1995) found that language interaction around the tasks assisted in improving vocabulary acquisition. The results of another TBLT study conducted by Storch (1998) using text reconstruction as the communication task among adult ESL learners, indicated that the text reconstruction task of combining text ideas into coherent sentences helped the learners analyse the meaning beyond the sentence level. Another recent study by Tang, Chiou, and Jarsaillon (2015) investigated how task-based learning (TBL) developed the verbal competence of Chinese learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). The findings revealed that TBL was effective in fluency, lexical and syntactic complexity, and ineffective in accuracy. However, in other L2 studies, the researchers (e.g., Widdowson, 2003; Skehan, Xiaoyue, Qian, & Wang, 2012), argued that the focus on tasks in writing classes may have a negative impact on the learners' ability to develop the linguistic competence which is needed for academic purposes. This is because the focus of TBLT is primarily on the fluency of communication and task completion rather than on language accuracy.

2.2.4.2 **Content-Based Instruction**

Over recent years, this approach has been receiving increased interest due to its effectiveness for teaching and learning the English language. The focus of CBI is on the content rather than the task or the form (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003; Coombe, O'Sullivan, & Stoynoff, 2012). According to Pessoa, Hendry, Donato, Tucker, and Lee (2007), content-based instruction is intended to foster the integration of language and content. CBI is based on cognitive theory of SLA (Sidek, 2010). Processing existing knowledge, and textual and linguistic data is the focus of cognitive theory (Koda, 2005). According to Storch (1998), cognitive theory is related to transforming text ideas into coherent sentences to help the learners analyse the meaning beyond the sentence level. Pugazhenthi and Phil (2012) claim that a pupil's intellectual development is fuelled by cognitive activities. These activities focus on conducting various mental activities separately from the structure of grammatical rules or communicative objective including analysing a selection of previous experience and knowledge, and linguistic and textual information.

According to Davies (2003), the basis of CBI is that instruction is more effective when it is centred on learning about something instead of learning the language itself. Coombe, O'Sullivan, and Stoynoff (2012) reported that recently educators have turned to CBI to support student engagement with language and content learning. The value of CBI has been tested and established in EFL classrooms throughout the world because the teachers believe that the language education in those contexts should be more like ESL situations (Davies, 2003). In addition, the instructors observed that pupils are excited about learning English

through this method and prefer CBI (Davies, 2003) as it helps leaners strengthen oral and writing confidence (Coombe, O'Sullivan, & Stoynoff, 2012).

Content-Based Instruction generally refers to incorporating both language and content under one classroom instructional approach (Davies, 2003; Coombe, O'Sullivan, & Stoynoff, 2012; Crandall, 2012). Specifically, the word 'content' in CBI refers to, "material that is cognitively engaging and demanding for the learner and extends beyond the target language or target culture" (Met, 1991). The implementation of CBI takes different forms that are related to the educational and contextual settings in which it takes place (Cenoz, & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2015). According to Crandall and Tucker (1989), it is a method of language instruction that incorporates the tasks and topics of other classes into the instruction of a foreign language. Davies (2003) stated that CBI emphasises the utilisation and integration of skills, language meaning, and content data in one text. Furthermore, Burns and Richards (2012) asserted that CBI focuses on meaningful and relevant content. Therefore, CBI in language teaching focuses on how information and meaning from the content are deployed in discourse or texts, rather than in single sentences. The necessity of developing a new instructional method was recognised by educators who feel that combining meaningful content and the target language will enhance the effectiveness of classroom teaching and facilitate reaching the desired level of ESL/EFL education and learning and this is CBI's main feature (Little, 2005).

CBI has many benefits. It concretes on unconsciously and simultaneously developing language skills and learning course content due to its combination of academic subjects and second language skills (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989). As students research the topic, they develop a variety of higher level learning strategies.

These varieties include analytical skills, such as questioning, categorising, comparing the information, recognising patterns, and identifying new ideas (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004). All of these skills are important for language on a higher level to be fully proficient. Ho (2009) showed that CBI is an effective approach when it is related to teaching English as a second language. In the CBI approach, students can improve their language skills and gain access to new concepts through meaningful content. This is also emphasised by Stoller and Grabe (1997), who stated that students acquired language much better when they had the opportunity to engage in a meaningful learning environment. In this respect, CBI is also based on the basis of socio-cognitive and socio-cultural theories. According to Sidek (2010), "socio-cognitive theory posits that one's language acquisition is primarily learned through their context of social interaction as well as through interaction with their environment".

In addition, exposing pupils to this content increases their motivation and interest in learning the language and increases their appreciation of its value (Brewster, 1999). According to Cenoz and Ruiz de Zarobe (2015), research on the results of CBI in many contexts show that students can improve their second or additional language skills while they are learning content and developing their first language. Stoller (2008) emphasised that CBI make a dual, though not necessarily equal, commitment to language and content learning objectives. In this respect, pupils learn the target language better when they feel that they are obtaining useful and interesting information that will help them achieve their objectives (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

This approach is pupil-centred that considers the pupils' knowledge of the subject area, interests, and language competence needs (Dupuy, 2000). According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the role of learner in content-based approach is an active processor of language. This creates a powerful motivation for the pupils (Brinton et al., 1989; Cenoz, & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2015) and creates a learning environment that is rich in language and facilitates the effective and simultaneous teaching of the target language (Dupuy, 2000; Mart, 2014). According to Dupuy (2000), content-based instruction creates a natural and anxiety-free learning environment in which students can learn the target language with ease.

The role of teachers is also important in CBI. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the teachers' roles can be summarised into main four roles 1) Simplifications: using clear, concise sentences and clauses, 2) Explicitness: precisely enunciating vocabulary, 3) Redundancy: using multiple linguistic mechanisms simultaneously to focus on crucial material, and 4) Regularization: employing a familiar sentence structure. Pessoa et al. (2007) stated that for effective teaching practices using CBI, teachers need be more familiar with the academic subject, content-based instruction pedagogy, and with ways of engaging students in academic discussions. Mart (2014) showed that integrating language and content is significance to promote language proficiency. The content can be modified to fulfil the pupils' needs when utilising this method in an EFL classroom (Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Freiermuth, 2001). The materials used in native language instruction and CBI material do not need to be similar and can be obtained from any relevant source of mass media including newspaper articles that were not designed for the teaching of a language (Brinton et al., 1989).

Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasised that CBI courses are necessarily subject matter focused. Dupuy (2000) stated that CBI approach takes into account the language competence of the students, their needs and interests, and subject area knowledge. According to Davies (2003), an EFL teacher and content specialist can teach together using the CBI approach; the content is not as limited or specific as in an ESL classroom. Instead of the content that is generally used in ESL, the instructor can design a syllabus that includes broad and varied topics which the students will be interested in, and offer additional supplements from the Internet, newspapers, and other reading sources organised by topic.

The pupils in CBI classrooms should frequently participate in activities that simulate the real world by combining multiple skills. They may be required to simultaneously hold an oral discussion, take notes, summarise a topic, comprehend, and read a text (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In terms of evaluation, this model is designed to teach both the content and language skills. Thus, CBI EFL teachers should care about assessments as much as their ESL counterparts. Continuous assessment is needed in CBI and "daily quizzes, journals, and direct oral feedback" can be used (Davies, 2003). Their teaching philosophy is that the learners' motivations may be highly activated by interesting topics and content and that the learners need to enjoy learning. Therefore, CBI is promoted as the best teaching approach for combining language and content learning (Davies, 2003; Pessoa et al., 2007).

2.2.4.3 **Cooperative Language Learning**

Cooperative language learning (CLL) is a student-centred approach and instructor-facilitated instructional strategy in which a small group of students is responsible for their own learning and the learning of every group member. Students interact with each other in pairs or groups to acquire and practice the elements of the subject matter to solve a problem, complete a task, or achieve a goal. Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that CLL is can be considered an alternative to teacher-centred approaches due to its reliance on the systematic use of group-based procedures in teaching.

CLL enables students to collaborate to help make a lesson positive learning experience (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Stenlev (2003) and Richards and Rodgers (2012) stated that CLL is a learning process that occurs in small groups of learners where carefully devised principles are used to structure interaction. According to Zhang (2010), cooperative learning is a systematic method of instruction where the pupils work as a team to complete learning objectives. Zhang further states that pupils taught in individual and competitive learning environments do not achieve as highly as those engaged in cooperative learning tasks.

The socio-cultural view is the foundation of the CLL method. It steers social exchanges in a language classroom towards the development of the pupils' critical thinking and language skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In the area of language learning, CLL is now recognised as an important theory of educational practices (Liang, Mohan, & Early, 1998; Zhang, 2010) and greater attention has been devoted to its pedagogical benefits in L2 language classes (Johnson & Johnson, 1991; Liang et al., 1998; McGroarty, 1989; Slavin, 1996; Zhang, 2010). The primary strength of

this method is its pupil centred traits as it encourages them to learn from one another and regulate their own education (Troncale, 2002). Consequently, the pupils have more chances to naturally and effectively practice their language skills with their peers and instructors and this helps strengthen their interpersonal relations and social skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Wei & Chen, 1993). Jia (2003) (as cited in Zhang, 2010) stated that "effective language learning depends on structuring social interaction to maximise the needs of communication in the target language". Research has confirmed that working together towards achieving the listed goals produces higher achievement and greater productivity than working alone, therefore, it was assumed that tasks that need cooperative learning to be achieved require a higher-level of thinking strategies (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Felder, & Brent, 2007).

Richards and Rodgers (2001) summarise the main advantages of CLL as:

- Creating an environment for natural L2 acquisition,
- Enabling instructors to achieve their goals through the appropriate method,
- Using interaction to focus pupils on communicative functions, specific lexical items and language structures,
- Providing pupils with more opportunities to learn successfully and build communicative strategies,
- Creating a classroom environment that is motivating and interesting.

A number of studies have been conducted across a wide range of subject areas including age groups, ability levels, and cultural backgrounds (Slavin, 1996). Many of the studies place great importance on cooperative language learning to improve English teaching and learning and to solve multiple problems (Wang, 2007).

Slavin (1996) argued that a critical element of cooperative language learning is teamwork and team goals. Cooperative language learning enables students to maximise their own and each other's learning (Johnson and Johnson, 1994; Zhang, 2010; Felder, & Brent, 2007) stated that. Humphreys, Johnson, & Johnson (1982) analysed the effect of the pupils' learning strategies, competitiveness and cooperation on their level of achievement in science classes. Compared to the other two methods that were analysed CLL had a major influences on the pupils' achievement and comprehension.

CLL creates a communicative and interactive environment in which the pupils receive comprehensive input and output and must listen to and consider each other's questions as they clarify and debate problems (Guanjie, 2003; Storch, 2005; Zhang, 2010). Furthermore, CLL maximises student learning and satisfaction Felder, & Brent, 2007). The results suggest that cooperative language learning helps students to develop high-order thinking skills, enhances their motivation, and improves their interpersonal and peer relations (Slavin, 1996; Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000; Qin, Johnson, & Johnson, 1995; Felder, & Brent, 2007; Arnadottir, 2014). Students can be learning-independent, and they can learn how to learn on their own in groups. Furthermore, cooperative language learning helps address the problem of individual differences and increase students' cognitive, psychological and social performance.

In CLL, students are active participants where each student has a role, thus becoming more engaged and active in constructing their own knowledge of the target language (Arnadottir, 2014). According to Slavin (1996), the CLL approach is flexible enough to be used at all levels of education, including university and preschool, and in most subjects. According to Tsai (2005), cooperative learning has

become a widely used instructional approach across different grade levels and subject areas. Pica and Doughty (1985) analysed the language used by L2 pupils and compared the learning of ESL pupils in pupil-centred and instructor-centred discussion in classrooms at the low intermediate level. They found that instructor-centred classrooms pupils engage in less direct interaction in groups, use less long sentences and samples in L2, receive less direct feedback from team members, and had less chances to use and practice the language then in pupil-focused settings.

In relation to CLL in secondary school levels, studies have found that these methods are useful for improving student academic achievement at a variety of grades and in many subjects. For example, in a recent study conducted by Arnadottir (2014) in a secondary school context, results revealed that more than 80% of participants agreed with the statement that participating in group work is a good method to enhance language skills. In addition, Slavin (1996) and Ju (2013) reported that cooperative language learning is congruent with the developmental needs of the students. Furthermore, the collaborative approach gives students a good level of independence within the groups, and it creates a situation in which the progress of each member in the group contributes to the overall success of the other members in the group (Arnadottir, 2014; Felder, & Brent, 2007). Slavin (1996) suggested that this approach should be considered by every schoolteacher. Consequently, when teaching English as a second language, the role of peer support in collaborative learning is seen as a key motivator for students to interact and collaborate in course-related activities.

For the effective application of CLL in English teaching and learning, the authors reported set of recommendations. For example, Kagan and High (2002)

asserted that the pupils should actively participate in group work in order to achieve the learning objective. Stenlev (2003) stated that to optimise the benefits of CLL, every member of the group should have an equal chance to participate and the groups should have no more than four members so that face-to-face exchanges can be conducted. Furthermore, Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1990) suggested that four elements must be used by the teacher to maximise effective communication and interaction among groups in collaborative learning: (a) Positive interdependence: Every member of the team must understand that the entire team will reflect their successes and failures, (b) Face-to-face communication: every pupil in the team should interact with their team members and the members of other teams, (c) Individual responsibility and consciousness: each member of the team is responsible for learning and they should learn from and teach one another through meaningful exchanges, and (d) Social skills and group processing: when the pupils communicate and work together these skills are enhanced. Zhang (2010) emphasised that for effective cooperative language learning, the teacher plays the role as guider, facilitator, and negotiator.

In CLL, the teachers' role is related to assigning and explaining the task for the students and acting as guiders, facilitators, and negotiators who build the students' independence in classroom activities (Zhang, 2010; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Instructors typically begin with a brief introduction of the material to be covered and then observe the pupils as they engage in collaborative team work. The pupils' role is not limited to responding to questions and listening to instructions, they work as a team to build upon their understanding of a concept and share their knowledge (Wang, 2007).

2.3 APPROACHES TO L2 WRITING INSTRUCTION

There have been a number of different approaches to the teaching of writing in the history of language teaching. During the past 20 years, product and process approaches were the most dominant methods of teaching writing in the EFL classroom. In the last decade, genre approaches have gained adherents (Badger & White, 2000; Atkinson, 2003; Cheng, 2008; Hyland, 2007; Paltridge, 2007; Swami, 2008). There are several EFL writing approaches of which the most common are the product-based approach, process-based approach, genre approach, and interactive approaches. The following section will discuss these approaches further.

2.3.1 Product – Based Approach

A product-based writing approach is a traditional approach in which the students are encouraged to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analysed at an early stage (Gabrielatos, 2002). Teaching product-based writing involves aspects such as guidance, a model to follow, an outline to expand, incomplete piece of writing to compelete, or incorrect text to correct (Pincas, 2001; Brown, 2010). In a typical product approach-oriented classroom, the students are supplied with a standard sample of text and they are expected to follow the standard to construct a new piece of writing. Researchers identified four stages to the product writing approach, namely familiarisation, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing (Pincas, 1982; Steele, 1992; Badger & White, 2000). According to Badger and White (2000), the product-based writing approach is comprised of four stages as follows:

- Stage one: familiarisation. In this stage, students study the model texts and the features are then highlighted. For example, if a formal letter is being studied,

students need to focus on the importance of: paragraphing, sentences, and the language used to make formal requests. Another example is that when students read a story they need to focus on the writing techniques and determine how and where these techniques are being used to make a story interesting.

- Stage 2: controlled writing. This stage consists of controlled practice of the highlighted features, usually in isolation. If the students are studying a formal letter, then they may be asked to practice the language used to make formal requests; for example, practicing the 'I would be grateful if you …' structure.
- Stage three: guided writing. This is the most important stage, where the ideas are organised. Those who favour this approach believe that the organisation of ideas and the control of language are among the most important things.
- Stage four: free writing. This is the final stage of the learning process, in which the students choose from a selection of comparable writing tasks so as to show that they can: be fluent users of the language, and individually use the skills, structures, and vocabulary they were taught to produce the product.

The Product-Based Approach is the most common traditional approach used by EFL teachers. Robertson (2008) stated that teacher-centeredness is often amplified if the instructors organise their curriculum by means of a 'product approach' whereby the instructors teach to evaluate from a sample ideal text. According to Nunan (1999) and Tangpermpoon (2008), product-based approach is mainly concern with the knowledge of language structure. Moreover, Brown (2002) asserted that in the product approach, successful learning is measured by how well-structured and grammatically correct a composition is. It is also important to note that in the product-based approach, students rarely acquire the skills required to create and

shape their work because of the over emphasis on linguistic forms (Robertson, 2008). As the use of language involves the manipulation of fixed patterns, a learner is not allowed to create in the target language.

This approach is heavily drawn from the theory of behaviourism/structuralism in which the focus in on the linguistic forms and structure (Brown, 2002) and the text is manipulated through imitated fixed patterns (Pincas, 1982). These patterns are learned by imitation. In terms of learning tasks in the behaviourism/structuralism theory, dialogue, drills, and pattern practice are the common language activities (Oebel, 2001). Broughton et al. (2002) provides explicit descriptions of product approaches stating that the writing is mainly about linguistic knowledge and the appropriate use of vocabulary and syntax. Furthermore, this approach is, as Nunan (1999) and Tangpermpoon (2008) pointed out, consistent with sentence-level structuralising of linguistics.

Although the product-based approach focuses on the activities that raise the students' awareness in second language writing from the lower level, proponents of the product approach argue that it enhances students' writing proficiency. For example, Tangpermpoon (2008) reported that the pattern-product writing approach is widely accepted among writing teachers because they have found several advantages in it for the writing classroom. First, students learn how to write English compositions systematically by using the pattern-product techniques, namely, the logic of English rhetorical patterns such as narration, description, and persuasion. They also learn how to use vocabulary and sentence structures for each type of rhetorical pattern in the appropriate manner. Finally, product-based writing helps instructors raise the learners' L2 writing awareness, especially in grammatical

structures. Furthermore, Badger and White (2000) stated that writing involves linguistic knowledge of texts that learners can learn through imitation. However, Tangpermpoon (2008) stated that there are also disadvantages associated with the use of the product-based writing approach. Writing with the product-based approach gives little attention to the prospective audience and the writing purpose as learners and instructors tend to focus on grammar and syntax. In this case, students will lack the motivation to perform the writing tasks perfectly because the instructors focus on the structure and the accuracy of the language used. According to Badger and White (2000), "the weaknesses of product approaches are that process skills, such as planning a text, are given a relatively small role, and that the knowledge and skills that learners bring to the classroom are undervalued" (P.31).

Tangpermpoon (2008) concluded that teachers should retain the strengths of the product-based writing approach for use as part of an integrated approach for two main reasons. First, the rhetorical patterns in this approach will help learners who have a certain amount of L2 background knowledge in writing to compose the organisational conventions appropriately. Second, the learning pattern-product will help shape the students' writing competence and allow them to create their written product in academic settings effectively in terms of language use. Writing instructors should include a sense of audience, the concept of the writing purpose, and the idea generation techniques in the writing class to ensure the success of learners in L2 writing techniques.

It can be concluded that the main concern of this approach is the correctness and written form of the final product, and hence it fails to support writing for an audience and purpose. Writing in product-based approaches has served to reinforce L2 writing

in terms of focusing on grammatical and syntactical structures and imitating models. Since the product of writing will improve with the discovery involved in composition, the writing exercises applied in this approach typically deal with sentence-level writing and paragraph-level organisation. Students are often given a structure and rhetorical pattern then asked to organise their ideas based on this structure or framework. Both the content and form that the students deal with are controlled by the teacher.

2.3.2 Process Based Approach

A process-based approach to the teaching of English writing has been encouraged in contrast with the traditional product-oriented method. It has been generally accepted and applied by English teachers in their classroom teaching of English writing (Sun & Feng, 2009). Process-based writing is viewed as the way in which writers work on their writing tasks from the beginning to the end of the written product (Tangpermpoon, 2008). The concept of the process-based approach has been defined by O'Brien et al. (1995) as an activity in which the teachers encourage students to see the writing not in terms of grammatical exercises, but in terms of meaning and discovering ideas. Nordin and Mohammad (2006) asserted that process approaches focus on how a text is written instead of the outcome. According to Tribble (1991), process writing can be considered as an approach to the teaching of writing which stresses the creativity of the individual writer and pays attention to the development of good writing practices, rather than merely imitating a model. The cognitive theory is reflected in the process-based writing approach. O'Brien, Stewart, and Moje (1995) defined the process-based approach as the practice of encouraging pupils to

focus on the meaning and ideas of writing instead of approaching it as a grammatical challenge. In addition, Silva and Matsuda (2012) stated that a process-based approach emphasises the teaching of writing as a process of helping students to discover their own voice. Through the writing process, it is difficult to follow the static sequence of writing stages. In order to come up with better ideas for writing, writers need to move back and forth among different writing steps. Thus, in the process approach, writing can be seen as a dynamic process (Tribble, 1991; Xiaoxiao & Yan, 2010; Ghahremani, Azarizad, Ghahremani, & Azarizad, 2013; Al-Mahrooqi, 2014).

Hyland (2003) stated that the process-based approach highlights the individuals' cognitive processes that happen during the activity of writing. The process approach mainly focuses on the stages of writing: planning, drafting, revisiting or redrafting and editing (Harmer, 2007). The Process Approach Model is comprised of eight stages (Steele, 1992; Hasan & Akhand, 2010). The first stage, brainstorming, involves the students generating ideas by brainstorming and discussion. The second stage consists of planning and structuring exchange ideas into note form and judging the quality and usefulness of the ideas. The third stage is mind mapping, where the students organise their ideas into diagrams or linear forms. This can help the students structure their ideas and texts. The fourth stage is the writing of the first draft, where the students write the first draft in pairs or groups inside the classroom. In the fifth stage, peer feedback, drafts are exchanged and the students correct each other's work. The sixth stage is editing, where the drafts are returned to students and improvements are made based on peer feedback. In the seventh stage, final draft, the final draft is written. The eighth stage, evaluation, sees the teachers providing feedback on the students' writing efforts.

According to Tangpermpoon (2008) and Scott (1996), there are five writing steps in the process approach which teachers can use to enable learners to explore their thoughts and develop their own writing. The first is pre-writing. Teachers provide learners with a writing task and help them to generate vocabulary and ideas by applying some strategies in class - including brainstorming, clustering, and discussion - without concern for the correctness of the language structure and forms in the first stage of writing. The second step sees the first draft being composed: in this stage, learners will use the vocabulary and ideas they organised in the previous stage to express what they want to convey in their writing. The third step is feedback. In this writing stage, the learners will receive comments from real audiences, which can be a teacher or peers, and move on to new ideas in another draft. The fourth step is second draft writing. In this stage, the learners will modify their previous draft by revising, adding, and rearranging ideas based on the comments of their teachers and peers. The fifth step is proofreading. In the final stage, the students will focus on discovering new ideas and language forms by which to express their ideas in writing and focus on the appropriate use of vocabulary, layout, grammar, and mechanics.

With the process approach, writers are encouraged to spend significant time performing tasks within each step and to revisit the previous steps as necessary. The process approach is not linear but cyclical and fluid and multiple revisions and feedback sessions with teachers and peers take place before submitting the final product (Al-Mahrooqi, 2014; Bashiri & Shahrokhi, 2016). The learners are required to complete their products, however the focus is on the process by which they produce their written products rather than on the products themselves (Nordin & Mohammad, 2006; Hyland, 2003). By focusing on the writing process, the learners

come to understand themselves more and discover how to work through the writing process (Hyland, 2003).

According to Applebee (1986) (as cited in Kroll, 1990), the process approach provides a way to think about writing in terms of what the writer does (planning, revising, and the like) instead of in terms of what the final product looks like (patterns of organisation, spelling, and grammar). According to many researchers, process writing instruction has a better 'fit' than traditional methods in meeting the needs of the modern information society (Peng & Yuwen, 2003). The learning methods in the process-based approach play pivotal roles and the learning can be regarded as non-linear and discursive (Seifoori, Mozaheb, & Beigi, 2012). Tribble (1991) reported that the process approaches state that, "writing activities move learners from the generation of ideas and a collection of data through to the 'publication' of the finished text" (p.37). Learning to write through a process approach involves concentrating on linguistic skills, such as planning and drafting, with less emphasis on the knowledge of grammar and text structure. In the process-based approach, learners can improve their writing gradually since the instructors will guide them through the whole process of their writing tasks by giving them feedback and enough time and opportunities through peer and teacher reviews to develop a sense of audience (Boughey, 1997). According to Li (2012), the process-based approach increases the interaction between the students and the teacher and promotes cooperation among students throughout the writing process. This allows them to reflect upon their previous writing, and to consider the possible existence of other viewpoints.

When comparing the process-based approach to the product-based approach, it is evident that the advantages of the process approach are that it has been accepted and applied to EFL and ESL writing classes because of its effectiveness in a variety of ways. First, in the product-based approach, the focus is on the result of the learning process, and the learner is expected to perform as a fluent and competent user of the language. The process approach, in contrast, stresses the process that writers go through when composing texts. According to Nunan (1991), Pincas (2001), Gabrielatos (2002), Brown (2002), and Tangpermpoon (2008), in the product-oriented approach, a great deal of attention was placed on model compositions that the students would emulate. It focused on how well a student's final product measured up against a list of criteria that included: content, organisation, vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation. However, in the process approach, the students manage their own writing by being given a chance to think when they write (Brown, 2002). That is, the students convey their messages to the readers in written form through a complex writing process, specifically: pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. The second point is that the process approach is useful to students in language learning because the students are the creators of language; they need to focus on the content and message respectively. Moreover, Tribble (1991) states that the process approach emerged with a different focus to the product approach. The process approach is, "an approach to the teaching of writing which stresses the creativity of the individual writer, and which pays attention to the development of good writing practices rather than the imitation of models" (p. 473).

The process approach is unlike traditional writing approaches that present a writing model and suggest repetition. In the process approach, teaching occurs during

the writing process, not just before and after, as in the traditional approaches. Language skills are best learned when learners have their own intrinsic motives. Raimes (1983) and Onozawa (2010) indicated that, in the process approach, students do not write on a given topic in a restricted time and then submit the composition. Rather, they explore a topic through the writing stages. In the prewriting stage, ideas are generated and the topic and target reader are determined (Karatay, 2011). During the drafting stage, specified ideas are put together (Bayat, 2014), and the organisation are addressed again in the revision stage (Simpson, 2013). In addition, the approach is beneficial to students because it focuses the various classroom activities (Onozawa, 2010). When a variety of group activities is applied in writing classes, the learners exchange comments or responses, or work together to write a paragraph or an essay. Nunan (1991), Boughey (1997), and Li (2012) affirmed that the process approach encourages collaborative group work between learners as a way of enhancing motivation and developing positive attitudes towards writing. In the process approach, the learners become motivated to use their resources and focus on fluency rather than accuracy. In contrast, as discussed before, teachers in the product approach focus on accuracy and linguistics patterns. However, it is fair to conclude that both accuracy and fluency are required if the students are to improve their language skills and become good communicators in English.

In spite of the wider use of and adoption of process-based writing in ESL/EFL composition, it still has some limitations and a great deal of criticism has been made. The students have to devote a considerable amount of time to completing a particular part of writing in the classroom (Tangpermpoon, 2008; Curry & Hewings, 2003). Curry and Hewings (2003) reported two main disadvantages of the process-based writing approach. First, peer and group working throughout the

prewriting and organising stages of writing is time-consuming especially if peer review occurs during lectures. Second, relying on lecturer feedback can bring certain disadvantages for students' intellectual development. In addition, it has been asserted that the process-based approach is unrealistic because it places too much emphasis on multiple drafts which may cause ESL students to fail the academic exams with their single draft restrictions (Horowitz, 1986; Leki, 1992). Furthermore, Badger and White (2000) pointed out that learners have no clear understanding about the characteristics of writing and are provided with insufficient linguistic input to enable them to successfully write in L2 in a certain text type. Criticisms like this need to be taken into consideration to improve the weaknesses in the process approach. The typical process writing model should be modified and teachers should use the process approach as one-teaching technique, not as the main teaching technique.

2.3.3 Genre-Based Approach

Genre-based approaches to the teaching of writing have recently started to emerge. The idea started in Australia and is now prominent in English teaching in Australia, New Zealand, and other countries (Ahlsén & Lundh, 2008). Byram (2004) defined the genre approach as, "a framework for language instruction", while Swales (1993) identified a genre as, "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (p. 33). This approach-model is a functionalistic approach and emphasises the social constructiveness of language (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

In this approach, text is seen as a social process and writing as a collaborative act that is influenced by complex and interrelated social factors (Knapp & Watkins,

2005). Hyland (2004) reported that genre adherents argue that people write to achieve certain purposes. People not only write to practice grammar or learning structures, but to focus on context and audience. Furthermore, Hyland claims that the concept of genre encourages the teachers to look beyond the content, composing processes, and textual forms to see writing as a means to communicate with readers. In addition, Knapp and Watkins (2005) stated that the aim of this approach is to encourage students to use codes of writing effectively and efficiently. Moreover, these codes belong to different genres, such as describing and arguing. The proponents of this theory claim that genre writing is the most efficient and modern way of teaching the skill of writing, since it focuses on both culture and ways of writing. In addition, the structure of a text is linked to the respective culture (Hyland, 2004).

Based on this, the principles of genre-based approach is associated with the basis of socio-cultural theory. According to Taber (2011), analysis of socio-cultural theory language acquisition occurs when three elements are combined: culture (the context of the situation), cognitive knowledge (the pupils' experience) and the environment (classroom, institution, and society). Therefore, social activities that utilise communicative and cognitive skills which are transmitted through the language develop the pupils' language skills (Aimin, 2013; Matsuoka & Evans, 2004). According to Myles (2002) and Mitchell, Myles, and Marsden (2013), pupils actively contribute to the construction of their own learning environment in a socio-cultural learning environment. The pupil's cognitive processes and communicative aspects both play a crucial role in language acquisition in socio-cultural and socio-cognitive theory (Anton, 1999; Lantofl, 1994).

In related to the CLT, it can be concluded that genre-based approach is heavily drawn from CLT approach. Socio-cultural theory revolve around the interaction of culture, cognitive knowledge, and the environment. In CLT, language is acquired through meaningful communication (Howatt & Widdowson, 1984; David Nunan, 1999) as it puts English teaching and learning in a real-life situation (Xu, 2010).

According to Hall (2007), CLT competencies are associated with the Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT). Therefore CLT should focus on the pupils actively participating in social activities, including conversing with their fellow pupils and instructors or practicing their skills outside the classroom, instead of comprehending the structure of the language and using it as the foundation of communication (Aimin, 2013). As Hammond and Derewianka (2001) (1996) reported, genre-based writing approach considering the text and context, which found to be helpful for students to, "become effective participants in the academic and professional environment and in their broader communities" (p. 186). According to this approach, if students wish to communicate successfully in a particular discourse community, then they need to consider the text context to produce a piece of writing that can fulfil the expectations of readers concerning grammar, organisation, and content. The genre-based gives emphasis to the fact that writing is a social activity. This concept was based on the constructivist theory (Vygotskiĭ, 1978), which focuses on the importance of social interaction in learning. According to this theory, knowledge is constructed when learners collaborate, support one another to create, and construct and reflect on new knowledge. In this respect, interaction with peers and teachers, and group work can play an important role in developing and constructing knowledge. In writing classes, teachers need to encourage students to participate and

exchange ideas and knowledge with teachers and with each other. Based on this, Moffett (1992) proposed his own theory of discourse genre based on Vygotsky's and Piaget's work, which "focuses on the act of writing from the perspective of both the writer and reader in the relationship to experience; measuring the rhetorical distance at which an author describes, reports, generalises and/or theorizes about a given situation or event" (Robertson, 2008, p. 55).

Hyland (2004) summarised the three main advantages of the genre approach as systematic, empowering, and consciousness-raising. The genre approach systematically incorporates discourse and contextual aspects of the language and it creates awareness of audience, textual variation, and the structuring of writing. The teaching is, therefore, not just a matter of training students to produce a certain form, it also helps the students recognise how texts can be created to relate to a specific purpose, audience and message (Derewianka, 2003; Hyland, 2004).

This approach is empowering since it provides EFL learners with, knowledge and understanding of the typical patterns and the powerful genres of culture. Consciousness-raising is described as an approach which supports learners to analyse the ways in which knowledge and information are structured and constructed in written English texts. In addition, Hyon (1996) reported that the genre-based approach emphasises the importance of the social and cultural contexts of language use. Second, this approach considers the reader's needs and the linguistic conventions that need to be followed when writing.

Based on the above discussion, context is important in a genre approach where great emphasis is placed on the importance of the relationship between text-genres and their respective contexts (Atkinson, 2003; Cheng, 2008; Hyland, 2007;

Paltridge, 2007; Swami, 2008). Considering the emphasis on the genre approach, it can be concluded that the knowledge of language is intimately attached to both a social purpose and social interaction. In more practical terms, the genre approach to writing is mostly viewed as the students' reproduction of text based on the genre offered by the teacher. Consequently, learning tasks take place through the imitation and exploration of different kinds of models. Accordingly, learners should be exposed to many examples of the same genre to develop their ability to write in a particular genre. Through exposure to similar texts, students can detect the specialised configurations of that particular genre, and they can activate their memories of prior reading or writing experiences whenever they encounter the task of creating a new piece in a familiar genre (Badger & White, 2000). Texts are the units of discourse that occur in different genres such as narratives, descriptions, and explanations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Ahn (2012) revealed that students' confidence level increased and the approach encouraged a positive attitude towards writing. Furthermore, Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998) argued that the genre approach is more effective for learners to advance their writing skills in a second language than the process approach, since the model helps free students from their worries over writing. More importantly, Widdowson (2003) did an experimental study in academic classes. Participants in this research were divided into a group which used the genre-based instructions and a group which did not employ the genre approach in the same writing task. After three weeks, the participants undertook a test. The group that utilised the genre approach performed better than the non-genre group, and the data showed that knowledge of the typical structure of the content made it to the other group. The genre was useful

for learners to be able to arrange their ideas in terms of achieving their communicative goals and producing better-organised writing.

To elaborate, the focus of writing in this approach aims to integrate the knowledge of a particular genre and its communicative purpose. This could help the students produce a text to communicate with others in the same discourse community successfully. In order to successfully implement the genre-based approach, English teachers should introduce many well-written sample-reading texts that contain the features of the specific text-types into the classroom (Ahlsén & Lundh, 2008). According to Badger and White (2000), writing in the genre-based approach can be regarded as an extension of the product approach. It gives learners an opportunity to study a variety of writing patterns. Consequently, this approach could help the students realise their purposes, the language features, and the structure. They could then use this knowledge to write effectively (Tuan, 2011). Thus, learning specific genre constructions can be regarded as a way to help learners come up with appropriate writing in their real life outside the classroom. Through the composition process (Miller, 1997; Candlin & Hyland, 2014), genre-based writing reflects a particular purpose of a social situation and allows students to acquire writing skills consciously through the imitation and analysis of each writing genre (Badger & White, 2000).

Several advantages and disadvantages are associated with the genre approach. Generally, genre provides students with an understanding of the text, and the communication style through a reflection of the social context and the purpose. Prior knowledge of a given model or example is required and it can make it easier for students to write in an acceptable writing structure.

Despite the benefits of the genre approach in helping students produce good written work, there are two concerns related to it. First, it underestimates the skills required to produce content; second, it neglects the learners' self-sufficiency (Byram, 2004). Tangpermpoon and Thanatkun (2008) reported that the negative aspect of the genre-based approach is that learners may not have sufficient knowledge of the appropriate language or vocabulary to express what they intend to communicate to a specific audience. Another weakness, as Badger and White (2000) point out, is that the genre approach undervalues the writing skills which learners need to produce a written product. It also ignores the writing abilities learners may have in other areas.

In order to overcome the weaknesses of the genre approach and to apply it effectively in writing in the classroom, Tangpermpoon (2008) made some helpful suggestions. He proposed that at the beginning of the writing class, the instructors should describe and explain the genres clearly to the students to allow them to formulate ideas about the language use for each genre. In addition, the instructors should help the students go through the writing products step by step, considering the importance of sentences, vocabulary, and the language forms. For example, teachers may use a brainstorming technique to help the students generate their ideas and come up with the appropriate language use or specific vocabulary they want to communicate to a particular audience in a particular discourse community. Finally, the teachers should pay attention to the skills that will help learners develop their writing competence through the writing process.

2.3.4 Integrated Approach in Writing

As discussed at the beginning of this study, one of the difficulties faced by EFL learners when they develop writing skills is that they lack the knowledge of the text-type in terms of language features and text features. Therefore, they may not know how to translate their ideas into meaningful text. Based on the above discussions on three EFL writing approaches, it can be concluded that each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses; therefore, a combination of these approaches could contribute to an effective academic writing practice in an EFL writing classroom. For such an integration among the product, process, and genre approaches, Ahlsén & Lundh (2008) suggested that writing teachers need to start teaching writing skills with one approach and then adapt it by incorporating the strengths of other approaches.

Brookes et al. (1990) stated that the problems associated with writing performance results from teaching the writing approaches separately. Tangpermpoon (2008) emphasised that using integrated approach of EFL writing will assist language instructors to improve learners' writing competence and produce good writing. Therefore, the integrated approach has the advantage of enabling learners to transfer the skills they have gained from each approach and thus improve their writing skills and produce meaningful and purposeful written work (Brookes et al., 1990; Tangpermpoon, 2008; Arslana, 2013). For example, in the writing classroom teachers start teaching English using the product approach by means of patterns and forms to teach the students how to write according to the language structure and conventions. The teacher can then integrate the advantages of a process-based

writing approach, such as exploring meaning through collaboration and interaction with groups and peers.

According to Tangpermpoon (2008), in order to teach the genre approach effectively, students should have linguistic knowledge and writing competence. In this case, teachers should integrate the principles of the product approach. These are focussing on the appropriate use of language, and the linguistic skills of the process-based approach. This will help learners to, "come up with appropriate language use and writing purpose for a specific audience through interaction in the class while they are learning to produce their own work." Although different approaches including varying kinds of knowledge and different sets of writing skills are required to teach writing, a combination of these approaches is nevertheless required.

As an example of such integration between approaches, Badger and White (2000) proposed that, in the first instance, the teachers need to present a clear model to enable students to identify the purpose of the social context. Next, the teachers need to use methods designed to generate ideas, such as brainstorming and free writing to focus the students' attention on the appropriate language forms and vocabulary of a specific genre. After that, the teachers need to encourage students to work collaboratively in pairs or in groups to promote the development of writing skills.

By using an integrated approach in the teaching of writing, the students will have less difficulty in carrying out L2 writing as the strengths of each approach will complement each other and allow the learners to develop writing skills and to produce appropriate, meaningful, and purposeful writing work.

2.4 ACADEMIC WRITING IN THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

It is essential for students who are studying at higher educational levels to master the skills of academic writing, and thus this should be prioritised by the education system. Universities do offer both language courses and courses designed to improve writing abilities before admission, nevertheless it is indisputable that levels of accomplishment are still unsatisfactory.

Since writing is the main form of academic communication at university level, it is considered critical for student success and retention (Boyd & Fukazawa, 2008). During classes, students need to write to learn, take notes, study, think and process their ideas to integrate new ones. Moreover, Renandya and Richards (2002) assert that the importance of academic writing is much more crucial in university settings because students are increasingly required to conduct their studies in the English language. As such, they must be able to produce specific writing genres in the form of assignments, essays, summaries, critical reviews and research papers.

Previous studies, carried out at the university level, revealed that writing continues to pose a challenge for EFL learners. Jabur, Maloyan and Smith (2013) assert that there is a trend amongst students to focus purely on mastering English grammar, rather than developing the ability to create meaningful prose. A study conducted by Lee (2011a), focused on 66 university students, who decided to sign up for a one-year course on academic writing. In order to evaluate their progress, the study employed relative frequency analysis, and discovered that there was a correlation between the level of student understanding and how much textual revision they undertook. The students were asked to highlight one or more of four

categories –grammar, word choice, content and organisation – to illustrate how they revised texts. The results confirmed the conclusions of Gunge and Taylor's study (1989) ,which noted that students with stronger understanding undertook more revision of grammar and word choice; in contrast, students with weaker understanding focussed on organisation and content.

In another study in Taiwan context, Lee (2001b) focused on 297 students in Northern Taiwan, who came from three different universities and a number of academic fields. The study found that 75-90 per cent of the subjects considered instruction in English writing as a crucial element to their learning, which underscored the importance of instruction rather than independent learning to Taiwanese students. Perhaps as a result of this approach, the respondents did not try to improve their writing skills by regularly setting themselves voluntary writing tasks, or write independently.

A study, carried out by Ginosyan and Al Abdali (2013) focused on the difficulties faced by Omani student at university level with regards to writing English as a foreign language. These authors found that many student considered writing English as a considerable challenge.

One possible reason of the lack of English writing proficiency at university level is that writing essays at secondary schools is not required (Wingate, 2006, p. 458). The results of an empirical quantitative study conducted in Omani EFL context by Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014), randomly sampled 1114 school students and 317 university students. The study revealed that school and university students have problems in writing in English with mean scores of 3.78 and 3.85, respectively; however, university students' perceptions of the kind of problems they encounter at a

university setting are more assertive. In addition, the study results showed that the biggest problem for university students was perceived to be "not having enough idea" be, compared to school students. Seyabi and Tuzlukova's (2014) study revealed that it was important to align school and university writing curricula with regards to the development of ideas, knowledge content, and critical and creative thinking.

In the Saudi EFL context, a study carried out by Javid et al. (2013) investigated the major areas of difficulty in academic writing, and the factors causing these difficulties. The study employed a survey administered to 194 Saudi EFL learners (108 male & 86 female). The results revealed that problems in the academic writing of EFL learners are related to lexical items, organisation of ideas and grammar. The other weak areas included the wrong use of prepositions, irregular verbs, articles, punctuation, suffixes and prefixes, and spelling mistakes.

Many studies on EFL writing indicated that writing challenges are associated with both secondary and university levels. Chokwe (2011) reported that academics often make complaints about students who are unable to write properly, blaming the very low literacy standards in schools and higher education institutions.

Another reason is related to the instruction as Oliver (1982, p.164), noted that students who follow textbook instructions which promote traditional notions of how to write – or are taught by teachers – often end up complaining of writers' block. EFL/ESL lecturers should ensure that they illustrate and explain how writers develop and discover ideas and significance, as well as the thought processes they follow to get to this point. In addition, students need to understand how to compose an

effective piece of writing, and be drawn in and involved in the learning activities which will facilitate this achievement.

Furthermore, to help university students master the academic wiring, teachers have to focus on the writing activities that encourage students' thinking. Krashen (1993) asserted that the act of writing hones thought processes and is of great help when we are attempting to resolve problems, particularly if we are wrestling with a difficult problem (Langer and Applebe, 1987). Smith (1988) summarised by stating that the act of writing elucidates and intensifies our thought processes, while Elbow (1973) believed that the very act of writing allows us to disentangle and structure unclear and muddled thoughts, and render them coherent and solid. Finally, lecturers must aim to help students build their confidence in their own writing abilities, so that they eventually come to find pleasure in the act of writing.

2.5 CURRICULUM EVALUATION IN EFL STUDIES

In recent times, the English language curriculum has been continuously evolving. As Richards (2011) pointed out, remodelling a curriculum is an active procedure which takes into account a number of factors, such as needs analysis, setting goals and implementing and evaluating changes.

It is clear that assessing the curriculum is a valuable practise and, as noted by Jackson (2005), its main objective is to check that it effectively meets the needs of the learners. Cowling (2007) agrees, underscoring the importance of dovetailing student needs and what they are being taught, and the EFL curriculum is no exception, since it needs to be structured in a way which will benefit students in the

future. Textbooks are frequently central to language learning and teaching; indeed, O'Neill (2008) sees them as fundamental to what students learn in the classroom. Richards (2011) adds that, in certain settings, textbooks are key to determining what ground the lessons will cover and what kind of exercises and activities students will be offered.

In other settings, the textbook will be more of an aid to the teacher in giving a lesson. However, as stated by Cowling (2007), learners' contact with the language they are learning is often limited to teachers' input and the textbooks they are given in class. The latter can also be exploited by teachers, who can use textbooks to give them ideas on lesson content and curriculum organisation. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) asserted that the textbook is particularly key during periods of transition. Textbooks can be intermediaries or instruments for change during periods when educational practices are being revised and altered for a number of reasons:

- Textbooks can be used to train both learners and teachers.
- Textbooks give an indication of what the pending changes might resemble.
- Teachers will feel more anchored and psychologically supported by having textbooks available.

EFL textbooks have been subjected to critical analysis and evaluation all over the globe. For example, in 2009, Kirkgöz examined three English textbooks being used to teach grade four students in Turkish primary schools run by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Kirkgöz created a questionnaire which took into account the curriculum objectives and strategies suggested by other researchers. The results were positive. The children found these textbooks attractive, well illustrated and full of appealing characters; they liked the drawings and thought the books were pitched at the right level for them. They added that the textbooks made them keen to learn

English, and they enjoyed their lessons. Teachers found the textbooks helpful in stimulating independent learning, and useful for engaging the learners in a range of activities which involved them in their own learning.

Mehrdad (2012) investigated the General English course at Azad University of Hamedan, in Iran. Mehrdad designed a questionnaire which evaluated how students viewed good practise in learning English, and related their general views to their personal needs and areas of inadequacy. The result highlighted ways in which the course syllabus needed to be improved, since the majority of the respondents expressed a wish to expand their vocabulary and build up a solid grasp of grammar.

Zarei and Khalessi (2011) conducted a review of English Language internationally distributed textbooks (IDTs), such as Interchange, in a bid to evaluate cultural density. The authors concluded that textbooks are rooted in strong cultural beliefs, and thus mirror cultural prejudices.

On a similar theme, Thein (2006) analysed whether the textbooks which were being used to teach English to religious studies students in Myanmar's Institute of Technology were appropriate and useful. Teachers and learners were both involved, and all the respondents were observed in the classroom setting and asked to fill in questionnaires and take part in interviews. The aim of the study was two-fold: to determine the expectations of both learners and teachers and, secondly, to see whether these were met by the program - which was intended to improve students' capacity for critical thinking and their communication abilities. The results of the research concluded that the textbooks were not fit for purpose, since they did not meet teachers' or students' needs and aims. In addition, the textbooks did not improve students' abilities to undertake critical thinking, nor did they increase their competence in communicating in ordinary daily situations. Thein suggested that

textbooks should be tailored to meet the needs of the local teachers and learners who will be using them. He also stressed that young people should be offered activities which encourage and help them to actively participate in their own learning, and given the opportunity to think critically through interacting with others in a natural fashion. The criteria for evaluating ESL textbooks were investigated by Hong Xu, who drew up the categorized the criteria into, Content, Activities, Language, Culture, Format, Reliability, Supplementary components, Literacy, Marketability, and Legal issues.

Alamri (2008) looked at textbooks used in the Arabic context by evaluating General English courses, specifically the English Language textbooks used in a Saudi sixth grade boys' school, which were introduced in 2004 by the Ministry of Education into elementary schools. The study focussed on a pivotal textbook used in Saudi Arabia's English Language instruction, and was conducted by handing out a questionnaire to 93 English language teachers and 11 supervisors based in Riyadh Educational Zone. Overall, the respondents reported back positively on the textbook, while suggesting revisions to the teaching methods and a number of minor items. Students' needs were catered for, in terms of the design, illustrations and appearance of the textbook, the topics were considered suitable for purpose, and skill expansion and flexibility were judged positively – although there was room for some improvements across the board. A similar study was carried out by Khafaji (2004), which examined the materials used in Saudi secondary schools to teach English. Khafaji considered both Saudi Arabia's overall educational policy, and its approach to teaching English in particular. The conclusion he reached was that students' aims and objectives were inadequately supported and furthered by the materials they had at their disposal, which were judged to be lacking in engagement and not

academically purposeful in terms of content. Secondly, the research results indicated that the Audio-Lingual method which underpins teaching the materials is a hurdle to empowering students to reach their aims and objectives, rather than an aid.

Sung Kyun Kwan University in Suwon, South Korea, uses English Firsthand 2 (EF2) as its core textbook, and Litz (2006) designed a study which evaluated its suitability and usefulness. Litz concluded that the textbook was well planned and included a broad range of helpful secondary materials. All the tasks and activities offered in the textbook promoted communication skills and there was a balance in the activities which were included. On the negative side of the ledger, however, many of the activities were frequently duplicated and thus dull, they did not promote genuinely meaningful practise and practical communication. The author noted that students would have benefitted from a range of activities which stressed the importance of knowing how to structure and write verse, and being introduced to and taught the key role intonation plays in communicating with others.

Taking into account the studies we have noted, above, it becomes clear that researchers in different EFL contexts emphasised the need for evaluation for the EFL curriculum to meet students' language requirements and overall predetermined aims and needs.

2.6 BLOOM'S TAXONOMY AND CURRICULUM EVALUATION IN EFL STUDIES

Bloom's Taxonomy originates from the ongoing development of learners' thinking (Zareian et al., 2015). It was proposed by Benjamin Bloom, an educational

psychologist at the University of Chicago. Table 2-5 shows the six cognitive levels identified by Bloom (1956). These levels move from simple recall and fact recognition at level 1 (the lowest level) to evaluation at level 6 (the highest level). In between, Bloom (1956) described four other sequentially more complex and abstract mental levels.

Table 2-5: Bloom's Taxonomy cognitive levels and key words (Bloom, 2013)

Levels	Skill	Definition	Keywords
Level 1	Knowledge	Recall information	Identify, describe, name, label, recognize, reproduce, follow
Level 2	Comprehension	Understand the meaning, paraphrase a concept	Summarise, convert, defend, paraphrase, interpret, give examples
Level 3	Application	Use the information or concept in a new situation	Build, make, construct, model, predict, prepare
Level 4	Analysis	Break information or concepts into parts to understand it more fully	Compare/contrast, break down, distinguish, select, separate
Level 5	Synthesis	Put ideas together to form something new	Categorize, generalise, reconstruct
Level 6	Evaluation	Make judgments about value	Appraise, critique, judge, justify, argue, support

The cognitive domain includes knowledge toward improving the intellect (Bloom, 1956). There are six main categories of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive thinking, starting from the lower level of thinking up to the most complex. There are six categories in the original taxonomy, namely; 'Knowledge', 'Comprehension', 'Application', Analysis', 'Synthesis', and 'Evaluation'. The cognitive levels and key words of Bloom's Taxonomy are shown in Table 2-5. The Revised Taxonomy published by Lorin Anderson and his collaborators has had the widest acceptance (Anderson et al., 2001). The authors describe their work as an elongation of the original blueprint, rather than an alternative. The new taxonomy was revised and founded on the preconcert of new learning and as an innovative means of implementing instructive education (Bloom, 2013).

The Revised Taxonomy's cognitive levels and key words are shown in Table 2-6. The writing exercises and tasks of the curriculum have to be aligned and codified based on Bloom's definitions at different levels of the cognitive domain, as shown in Table 2-6. These taxonomies describe the cognitive skills that students are required to possess at various levels of cognitive demand. One of the foremost aims of the EFL secondary curriculum is to prepare students for higher education. Therefore, learners are required to be aware of lower cognitive requirements such as remembering facts and arguments, but also higher-level skills such as the means to assess and employ new information learned.

Table 2-6: Revised Taxonomy cognitive levels and key words adapted from (Anderson et al., 2001)

Levels	**Skill**	**Definition**	**Keywords**
Level 1	Remembering	Retrieving relevant knowledge from memory	Define, describe, find, identify, label, list, match, name, outline, recall, recognise
Level 2	Understanding	Determining the meaning of instructional messages, including oral, written, and graphic communication	Summarise, translates interpret, paraphrase, rewrite, explain, classify, infer, compare, explain, give examples
Level 3	Applying	Carrying out or using a procedure in a given situation.	Execute, use, apply, implement, illustrate, prepare, demonstrate
Level 4	Analysing	Breaking material into its constituent parts and detecting how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose	Analyse, breaks down differentiate, contrast, organise, deconstruct, edit, distinguish, review
Level 5	Evaluating	Making judgments based on criteria and standards.	Assess, check, criticise, evaluate, justify, prioritize, interpret
Level 6	Creating	Putting elements together to form a novel, coherent whole or make an original product	Generate, create, plan, produce, compose, refine, revise, synthesize, develop, reconstructs

In a review of curriculum evaluation studies, Razmjoo and Raissi (2010) found that Bloom's Taxonomy is widely used by researchers aiming to evaluate

textbooks. There is now a revised version of Bloom's taxonomy that is being used by researchers in EFL context in order to evaluate the curriculum content. For example, Kazempourfard (2011) evaluated the Interchange series in terms of learning objectives in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) to see which levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy were more emphasized. Kazempourfard (2011) used Bloom's Revised Taxonomy to develop a coding scheme which he applied to the contents of Interchange textbooks. From this, the author analysed the frequency and occurrence percentages of key learning objectives and found that the three lowest levels of Bloom's cognitive processes were the most prevalent within the textbooks.

A similar study, carried out by Zareian et al. (2015) also utilized a coding scheme based on Bloom's taxonomy to assess the cognitive level of questions posed in two English for a Specific Purpose textbooks (one science and one engineering). The authors coded a total of 218 questions and, upon analyzing the results, found that the majority of these questions were at the lower end of Bloom's taxonomy and focused only on remembering, understanding and applying. The authors reported that there were very few questions encouraging the higher cognitive processes, such as creating, analyzing and evaluating. Interestingly, the authors reported that statistical analysis of the results using a chi square test, showed that there was no significant difference between the two textbooks with regards to the cognitive level of the questions posed. As a consequence, the authors concluded that these textbooks were failing to encourage high cognitive functioning in the students.

2.7 APPROACHES TO EFL SECONDARY WRITING CURRICULUM IN YEMEN

2.7.1 English Language Instruction in Yemen

The English language was first introduced by the British in the southern part of Yemen in the early decades of the 19th century. Yemen is one of several countries that teach English as a foreign language at schools. It is a compulsory subject in the general curriculum of the Yemeni preparatory and secondary schools. At the university level, English is set as a required subject in the first year in all departments, except in the Departments of English in the Faculties of Education, Arts and Languages where it is the major field of study. In specific scientific departments, such as Medicine and Engineering, English is the main medium of instruction (Azzan, 2001). The nature of English usage varies from one faculty to another. In the fields of science, medicine, and engineering, and for students in technical education and vocational training, English is taught for specific purposes (Alaliee, 2006). Outside of the formal education system (secondary and university studies), many private English language institutes have been established throughout over the country to provide various English courses for students and teachers.

Because of the increasing importance of the English language, there is a growing focus on teaching it throughout the world. In Yemen, an effort is being made to continually develop different programs and curricula for teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The Ministry of Education, for example, places great importance on English teaching and learning. Teaching English starts at the preparatory level (grade seven) and, at the time of the present study, there is a plan to start teaching it from grade four. In addition, many professional training

programs for the accreditation of English language teachers have been developed to ensure that teachers have the required skills to teach English as a foreign language. In a sign of the continual improvement of the curriculum, the Ministry of Education has updated the textbooks four times since 1981 (Hasan & Akhand, 2010).

2.7.2 Secondary School English Curriculum in Yemen

The Yemeni education system provides 12 years of basic education, composed of nine years of primary education and three years of secondary education. Students are required to pass an English paper as part of the Yemeni certificate examinations in grade nine or the Yemeni secondary school certificate in grade 12, before they are awarded a certificate (see Table 2-5).

Table 2-7: Yemeni national examinations at secondary school level

Level	**Grades**	**National Exams**
Primary School	Grade 1 – 8	-
	Grade 9	English exam
Secondary school	Grade 10 – 11	-
	Grade 12	English exam

Various textbooks are used for teaching English in the school system. “English for Use” was the first textbook to be used in the teaching of English as a foreign language in primary and secondary schools in 1962. In the 1968/1969 academic year, “English for Use” was replaced by a new course book called “Living English for the

Arab World." In 1982/1983, English was taught through two different courses: the first course was called "Crescent;" and the second course was called "The English Course for Yemen," which was prepared by a British Council team (Mountford in Al-Mushriquee (Al-Mushriquee, 2003).

"The English Course for Yemen" continued to be taught until 1992. After the unification of Yemeni in 1990, the Ministry of Education developed a new curriculum called the "Crescent English Course for Yemen," which was published in cooperation with the Oxford Press and is still taught today (Al-alkali, 2007; Hassen, 2009).

The Crescent English Course was published after conducting research, and hosting conferences and seminar discussions over a number of years (Teacher's Guide, Book 6). The course presents a combined syllabus and methodology drawn from a variety of sources. It adopts an integrated skills approach which aims to promote learning through meaningful individual and interactive tasks. As the course develops and learners become more familiar with the mechanics of the language, they are expected to do more for themselves by memorising vocabulary and spelling at home for example (Teacher's Guide, Books 3 and 6).

The Crescent English Course pioneered the communicative approach to language learning and teaching (Teacher's Guide, Book 6). It contains communicative activities that help the learner to develop his/her communicative ability through participation, and reflecting on real-life situations in the classroom for the purpose of using the language competently (Hasan & Akhand, 2010). In addition, the course provides a functional/structural syllabus that needs to be taught by the teacher communicatively.

2.7.3 Approaches to Writing in Secondary Schools in Yemen

In Yemen, pedagogical and instructional materials for English typically focus on the four language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The number of students in an English language classroom in a primary or secondary school is typically 40-60, and the duration of the class session is approximately 45 minutes. English is taught for three to four hours per week. The textbook currently assigned for the secondary school level, particularly grade 12, is Crescent English Course (Book 6). The topics are organised into six units, with each unit containing texts of different lengths that deal with various topics. Every chapter includes tasks related to reading, listening, grammar, and writing. The textbook and workbook are presented in two separate books. In the writing part, the students are taught how to write descriptions, instructions, reports, articles, and simple speeches. The present research conducted a comprehensive investigation of Book 6 to analyse the content and assess the extent to which the EFL writing approaches and strategies are reflected in this curriculum.

The Crescent English Course (Book 6) is based on communicative language teaching (CLT) which, according to Galloway in Al-Mushriquee (2003), regards the learner as the centre of the learning process. In the CLT approach, students are engaged in activities that give them the opportunity to think critically and use the target language in meaningful contexts and new ways. The students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must, therefore, equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts. Brown (2002), Larsen-Freeman (2000), and Belchamber (2007) described

the teacher as a communicator who participates with the students to build their confidence. Galloway in Al-Mushriquee (2003) described the communicative language teacher as a facilitator or counsellor who facilitates the communication process between the students in the classroom and between those students and the different activities or texts (Ghassan, 2009).

Although communicative language teaching is well suited for learning and teaching English, the linguistic performance of students in Yemen is still unsatisfactory as the main attention paid to grammar items (Al-Ahdal, 2010; Thabit, 2002). According to Al Aqeeli (2007), the attainment of Yemeni students in learning English is quite poor and this is shown when they face real-life situations in which they have to communicate and interact.

A number of researchers such as Al-Mushriquee (2003) and Al-Ahdal (2010), have reported that students do not have enough knowledge of how to communicate by using appropriate social language. That is why they are not able to communicate in the target language as well as expected. While they are supposed to use the language communicatively, Yemeni students show poor proficiency in the English language. Between 60-70% of Yemeni students leave secondary school (after studying English for six years) without achieving an optimal proficiency level in English (Al-Mansoori, 2008a). They tend to study English with the aim of simply passing the final examinations rather than to make use of it in their future lives. This may be because the methods used in Yemeni schools are characterised by the absence of a systematic approach, leading to a gap between the curriculum that the learners study and the techniques used in teaching the communicative approach.

These assumptions are evaluated in the present research to identify the relevant factors that are causing these problems.

2.7.4 English Academic Writing in Higher Education in Yemen

From 1990 to 2000, higher education in Yemen witnessed tremendous changes. During that time, more than 15 public and private universities, many two-year colleges, and a number of post-secondary institutes were established in the country. As explained above, the English language is a compulsory subject in any major at colleges of higher education, either public or private, and students need to pass this subject before being awarded their certificate. In courses like medicine and engineering, all of the texts are written in English and the instruction is delivered in English. Therefore, students have to achieve competence in the English language for their overall academic achievement and success. The Yemeni University English Placement Test (EPT) was introduced to bridge the gap in English language proficiency between the final year of secondary school and university level study. The EPT has recently become a compulsory requirement for admission into public universities in Yemen. Students who want to undertake undergraduate studies at a public university have to sit the EPT during the university registration process. The EPT is comprised of four sections: listening, speaking, reading comprehension, and writing. The maximum scores for each section are 15 for listening, 10 for speaking, 35 for writing, and 40 for reading. The test results are grouped into six bands, from Band 1 being the lowest to Band 6 being the highest. The EPT results determine whether a student is accepted into the university or not. In some faculties, the EPT

results determine the number of English language preparatory courses which the student is required to attend at the university.

In Yemeni universities, two approaches are used to improve academic literacy and the learners' proficiency in English skills including academic writing. In some universities, the students are required to study English language preparatory courses as part of their academic program. The number of courses which the students are required to attend is based on their EPT results. The preparatory courses have different names across the different universities; however, they have the similar objective of equipping learners with the necessary skills and knowledge required at the university level and to build up their academic literacy. Some universities integrate English modules in the study plan, which students have to take in the first year in parallel with their other courses. Whether the courses are preparatory or integrated, the aim is to prepare students with the language skills that they need in the academic environment. In relation to writing skills, these courses cover writing for specific purposes and technical writing.

2.7.5. PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH WRITING INSTRUCTION IN YEMEN

Despite the importance of the English language at the secondary school and university level in Yemen, many problems, challenges and obstacles continue to face both teachers and students at all stages of the Yemeni educational system (Thabit, 2002; Al Aqeeli, 2007; Al-Ahdal, 2010; Al-Mushriquee, 2003; Al-Mansoori, 2008). In the Arabic context, the challenges are enormous for learners of English writing, as many researchers have clearly demonstrated (Ahmed, 2010; Rabab'ah, 2005; Wahba,

1998; Abbad, 1988). Writing in English is a skill often neglected in Arabic secondary schools (Rabab'ah, 2005; Ahmed, 2010). In relation to academic performance, a number of studies set in the Arab world have highlighted the students' coherence problems in English writing. For example, a study of Arab students' written texts revealed that repetition, parallelism, sentence length, lack of variation, and misuse of certain cohesive devices were major sources of incoherence and textual deviation (Qaddumi, 1995). Other studies have asserted that Yemini and Moroccan students have some weaknesses regarding coherence and cohesion which manifested in the students' written texts (Ahmed, 2010).

Arab learners, particularly Yemeni, have many problems writing in English such as not knowing how to organise their ideas because it is a new experience. More specifically, in the context of the present study in Yemen, although writing plays a vital role in the four basic language skills, it has long been ignored in Yemeni secondary schools (Abbad, 1998; Abdullah & Patil, 2012; Weshah & Tomok, 2011). Unlike the other three skills, writing is considered too complicated to teach (Richards & Renandya, 2002) and some teachers do not feel confident about their own English skills and steer away from designing writing tasks or getting students to write more than just grammatical exercises (Nofal, 2011; Al-Ahdal, 2010). The teachers sometimes lack the ideas to help their students (Al-Sohbani, 2013). In reality, most teachers follow the tasks required in the textbook and sometimes let the students simply copy the models from the book. It is noticeable that writing occupies a lower position in Yemeni secondary English classrooms.

Furthermore, it has long been the tradition that teachers are responsible for correcting their students' writing. Thus, students write for the teacher not for

themselves, and, consequently, teachers are the only audience for whom students gain experience writing. One result of this is that writing teachers are often overloaded with the task of giving feedback to and correcting the students' writing. This has led to a situation in which teacher-controlled feedback remains dominant in Yemeni English writing classrooms.

It is clear that the English language teaching process faces many problems and challenges. The way that English is taught in Yemini schools today is responsible, to a great extent, for the low levels of English language proficiency in the country (Nofal, 2011; Al-Ahdal, 2010; Al-Sohbani, 2013; Abdullah & Patil, 2012; Thabet, 2011). The problem of declining English proficiency levels is due to the failure to take the aims of English language skills into consideration and apply them in a way that corresponds to the learners' cultural, social and cognitive needs. Many aspects of language teaching, such as curriculum design (Alsofi, 2009), teacher qualifications (Alsofi, 2009; Al-Sohbani, 2013; Abdullah & Patil, 2012; Farea, 2012), student preparation and the nature of the syllabus adopted at all stages of education (Al-Ahdal, 2010; Al-Sohbani, 2013; Abdullah & Patil, 2012; Na'ama, 2011), need to be evaluated and improved. Therefore, investigation and evaluation processes are needed at every level of the educational system: primary, secondary, and higher education.

The main focus of the present study is the curriculum content and language teaching at the secondary school level, which is the most important stage for students to move to higher education and has a direct impact on their performance at the university level.

The problem of English teaching in secondary schools in Yemen constitutes a large portion of the research reported in the literature. Haitham (2004) revealed that there were real problems faced by teachers and students in teaching and learning English at the secondary school level in Yemen. The greatest problem was the irrelevance of the content to students' real-life situations (Al-Ahdal, 2010). It was also noted that the students commonly believed English was too difficult to learn, and there is a lack of qualified teachers. Awadh (2000) revealed that English teaching faced a number of problems, including the students' general weakness in English and the failure to recognise the role of teachers in designing the curriculum. In relation to the factors that might affect English language teaching at the secondary school level, Al-Mansoori (2008a) found that the teaching load, lack of time, and overcrowded classes were the most important factors.

Many factors have a negative influence on teaching English in Yemeni secondary schools according to the instructors, including the heavy workload on instructors (Alsofi, 2009; Al-Khowlani, 2004; Thapaliya, 2010), lack of time (Thapaliya, 2010), and the large class size (Al-Khowlani, 2004; Thapaliya, 2010). The low level of English achievement by pupils graduating secondary school clearly shows the effect of these factors which, in turn, has a detrimental effect on the pupils' university performance.

The many difficulties and challenges that affect English language teaching in secondary schools in Yemen, in turn, negatively impact the teaching and learning of the English language at the university level. Abbad (1988) found a low level of English proficiency among Yemeni learners at university level in the English language faculties and departments. Nofal (2011) noted that the students' English

language proficiency at the university level was not satisfactory, nor were the teachers' qualifications and competencies.

At the university level, the literature reports many difficulties and challenges. In general, it has been found that writing in English is one of the biggest challenges to learning at university (Kim et al., 2010). Students appear to have many problems organising their ideas, creating coherent and well-reasoned writing content, developing extended arguments, and providing supportive evidence for their arguments (Campbell et al., 1998; Nunan, 1999; Rababah, 2002; Al-Khasawneh & Maher, 2010; Kim et al., 2010; Nazim & Ahmad, 2012). In the Yemeni and Arabic context, English is being taught as a foreign language at schools and universities (Al-Husseini, 2009).

The problem becomes even more complicated in this context. Many studies conducted in the Yemeni context have reported that Yemeni learners face problems in acquiring the requisite English skills at university level. For example, Al-Mehwari (2005) determined that the greatest problems that both students and teachers faced in teaching English at the university level were the course teaching methods, the course content, and the course assessment methods. Al-Refa'ai (2001) found that the teaching methods, the courses adopted, teaching materials, and the assessment used by teachers were the main factors that influenced the students' achievement in the English language. This was emphasised by Al-Mansoori (2008a) which revealed that the teaching materials are regarded as crucial factors for the lack of students' achievement in English (Al-Ahdal, 2010). Further, one of the most significant problems faced by Yemeni universities is the lack of competent teachers.

Most EFL writing problems are associated with the secondary school level, from which many students graduate only to face difficulties in adapting to the academic writing requirements at the university level (Jakobs et al., 1999; Rabab'ah, 2005; Ahmad, 2010; Weshah & Tomok, 2011; Al-Mansoori, 2008; Nofal, 2011). According to Weshah and Tomok (2011), the vast majority of students at university graduate from secondary schools with low levels of communicative ability in English, particularly in written communication skills. The previous studies revealed that EFL students at university level in many EFL countries appear to have many difficulties despite the long period of preparation at secondary school. For example, in Korea, students receive EFL preparation for 10 years (Ahn, 2003) at elementary and secondary school levels; however, most of them are unable to speak or read English at the university level (Dickey, 2004).

In a study in Yemen, Shamsan (2003) reported that many students at university level were poor speakers and writers despite the six years of preparation in primary and secondary schools. It was reported that the students' problems were due to the inappropriate methods of language teaching and a learning environment which may be unsuitable for learning a foreign language (Haitham, 2004; Nofal, 2011; Al-Ahdal, 2010; Abbad, 1988; Al-Shamiry, 2000; Thabet, 2002).

In summary, many researchers have reported that EFL learners at university level face a range of difficulties and problems in acquiring the English skills required for academic achievement and success. Some studies have suggested that the lack of proficiency among students in higher education can be linked to the secondary school level. To date, there is a need for further investigation of the problematic aspects of EFL teaching at the secondary school level and an analysis of the extent to

which the preparation at this level might affect the students' writing academic proficiency at the higher education level.

Many studies in the Yemeni context highlighted that the problem of students' weaknesses in writing skill was due to the inappropriate methods of EFL writing teaching and learning environment (e.g., Al-Shamiry, 2000; Thabet, 2002; Haitham, 2004; Al-Ahdal, 2010; Nofal, 2011). However, none of the previous studies examined or investigated the EFL writing problem at the secondary schools in line with the witting curriculum. The 12th grade EFL writing curriculum was labelled a CLT curriculum meaning that the principles of the communicative theories and approaches should be reflected in the curriculum, and the EFL writing classroom instruction should be communicative learner-centred classrooms.

Moreover, based on the Yemeni educational system, the secondary curriculum was designed with the aim to prepare students for higher level of education. In line with this, previous studies in EFL writing in Yemeni higher education context found that the vast majority of university students have difficulties adapting to the academic writing requirements (e.g., Shamsan, 2003; Al-Mansoori, 2008a; Nofal; 2011). However, these studies did not analyse the existing writing problems at the university level by examining writing curriculum and instruction at the school level. Therefore, the present study examines the alignment of the secondary curriculum to the CLT instructional approaches and evaluates how the students are being prepared at the secondary school level, particularly in relation to their English writing skills.

The present study investigates the curriculum content and language teaching at the secondary school level with a particular focus on the final grade in secondary school (grade 12) which can be regarded the bridge between the secondary and university level.

Particular attention is paid to the "Crescent English Course for Yemen" textbook (Book 6) for two reasons. First, the textbook is the most important component of the material package (Fredriksson & Olsson, 2006); and second, as mentioned earlier, the content of the curriculum has been identified as one of the main problems associated with EFL in Yemen. The details of the analysis and evaluation methods are discussed in Chapter 3.