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**PONTIFICIA
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ESCUELA DE LENGUAS Y LINGÜÍSTICA

Tema:

**DEVELOPING WRITING COMMUNICATIVE FLUENCY THROUGH
PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNING AT THE FIRST LEVEL AT THE
LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS SCHOOL AT PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD
CATÓLICA DEL ECUADOR SEDE AMBATO**

**Disertación de grado previa a la obtención del título de Licenciado en
Lingüística Aplicada con mención Enseñanza de Lenguas.**

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**Ambato - Ecuador
Octubre 2009**

15 OCT 2009

**PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DEL ECUADOR
SEDE AMBATO**

ESCUELA DE LENGUAS Y LINGÜÍSTICA

HOJA DE APROBACIÓN

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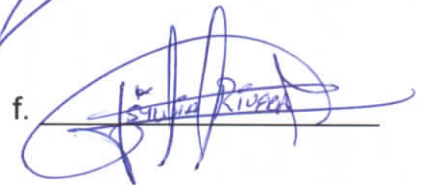
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AGRADECIMIENTO

Agradezco al Dios de mi ser por haberme dado el regalo de ser parte de la infinita aventura de la vida y a todas las cosas, lugares, personas y sucesos que generaron este entendimiento permitiéndome hoy escribir una oración mas en el gran libro de la existencia. Agradezco a mi madre, quien a pesar de enfrentar grandes y difíciles circunstancias que hacen parte de la vida supo brindarnos todo aquello que ella podía dar y innumerables veces muchísimo más. Agradezco a todos mis profesores en sus varias manifestaciones personales, ya que sin su conocimiento y manera de actuar hubiera sido imposible aprender varias lecciones importantes que vienen con la vida profesional. Agradezco a todas aquellas personas con quienes tuve la oportunidad de compartir las aulas, pero en especial a aquella gran compañera quien supo ser una hermana y con quien tuve el honor de recorrer este sendero hasta el final. Quiero también agradecer a todas aquellas personas, que contribuyeron en cualquier forma a la realización y culminación de este objetivo. Todas las palabras, todas las pequeñas y grandes acciones que realizaron, toda su energía es frecuencia específica con esto, gracias a todos por ser parte de mi vida. Al final, todos somos uno.

DEDICATORIA

Dedico este trabajo a todas aquellas personas que de una u otra manera logran vencer sus limitaciones en cualquier aspecto y logran hacer aquello que piensan es difícil lograr. A todos esos guerreros de luz, cuyo objetivo es conquistarse a sí mismos, nos espera un gran maravillosamente caótico destino por crear y recorrer. La actitud y el enfoque lo son todo. Ahora sí, sigamos caminando el sendero.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present work is to provide concise insight on the development of writing communicative fluency through the use of portfolio-based learning at the first level at the Languages and Linguistics school at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Ambato. The method applied for the purpose was quasi-experimental meaning that from a pre-established environment we chose a control group and an experimental group in order to compare their results based on tests prior and subsequent to the development of portfolio-based learning. By means of the t-test, we could determine that even though the results obtained were 75% trustworthy, we could still consider them as reliable considering that the experimental group started at lower level of skill compared to the control group. Based on the outcomes, we can say that dedicating time for the development of a writing portfolio is advisable, since students may need this ability for future academic purposes. Writing ability is a skill that students need all the way through their educational instruction in English. Consequently, we could assert that portfolio-based learning is indeed a valuable instrument for developing writing in the classroom, but more importantly regardless of the technique, method or approach used for developing this skill, focusing on the main purpose of the language which is communication, will most certainly contribute with results that will not only bring academic recompenses, but also motivational ones.

RESUMEN

El propósito del presente trabajo es proporcionar entendimiento conciso sobre el desarrollo de la fluidez comunicativa de la habilidad de escribir, a través del aprendizaje basado en portafolio en el primer nivel en la Escuela de Lenguas y Lingüística de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Ambato. El método aplicado para la investigación es cuasiexperimental. Esto significa que de un ambiente pre-establecido hemos escogido un grupo de control y un grupo experimental para comparar sus resultados basados en pruebas previas y subsecuentes al desarrollo del aprendizaje. A través de la prueba t de student fuimos capaces de determinar que aunque los resultados obtenidos son confiables en un 75%, podríamos considerarlos como fiables tomando en cuenta que el grupo experimental empezó con un nivel más bajo que el del grupo de control. Basados en los resultados, podríamos decir que dedicar tiempo para el desarrollo de un portafolio basado en la habilidad de escribir es aconsejable, dado que los estudiantes podrían necesitar esta habilidad para futuros propósitos académicos. La habilidad de escribir es algo que los estudiantes necesitan a lo largo de su instrucción académica en idioma Inglés. Por consiguiente, podríamos afirmar que el aprendizaje a través de portafolios es sin duda un valioso instrumento al desarrollar la habilidad de escribir. Pero aun más importante es mencionar que sin importar la técnica, método, o enfoque para desarrollar esta habilidad, concentrarse en el principal propósito del lenguaje, siendo este la comunicación, casi seguramente proporcionará resultados que traerán no solo recompensas académicas sino que también motivacionales.

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INTRODUCTION

How important is writing in our lives? Can we imagine our lives without it? Would we be able to even pose these questions in this form without having a writing system? Obviously, the answer is no. It is probably true that writing is not as important as to challenge our subsistence if it would not exist. However, we have made it so important in our lives that our organized, globalized and literate society would indeed come to its end if writing ceased to prevail.

Every written work, be it a simple note, a piece of literature or a research paper, comes from the mind of a person who at some point in his life learnt and developed the ability of writing. If we live in a society where this is a fundamental skill for globalized communication, it is necessary to become competent users of this ability. However, it is important to acknowledge that learning how to write as a native speaker and as a foreign speaker of a language are two completely different settings.

English learning, and language learning in general, is a very complex field of study due to the fact that all the process occurs in the brain, and it is not physically visible. However, researchers have come up with many different constants, which have been important principles in English Language teaching. That is why we have had, and have non-native English speakers. Nevertheless, when it comes to learning how to write in a foreign language, different stylistic and grammatical conventions apply based on the nature of

the language. Consequently, understanding and developing these writing rules should be an important part of the EFL lessons. This could possibly be accomplished through the use of portfolio based learning.

The English language has for long been part of the different curricula at the various educational systems in the world. The need for a unified means of communication has established English as the official language used for trade, and commerce around the globe. This necessity has expanded beyond spoken language making written language as important through the use of the internet. Our country has not been left behind on this tendency. Therefore, learning how to use English on its different forms is no longer optative, but it is a need if we are to live up to the challenges of our modern society.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Overview of writing

1.1.1. What is writing?

Writing is by far one of the most important inventions of man. It is a very old form of communication that is capable of transcending time and space. Many scientists are still amazed at the variety of writing forms coming from the past, and the ability of ancient civilizations to convey messages that may perhaps still be beyond our understanding.

Writing is involved directly or indirectly in every activity we do. That is why it is one of the most important abilities we learn in our lives. In the everyday world, we take it for granted. We do not really analyze how our world would be without it. Nevertheless, “writing” with all its different forms of expression and implications is always working and transmitting whatever message we would want to send. Let us analyze some important aspects to consider when it comes to this important ability.

1.1.1.1. Writing in the modern world

Writing is one of the most powerful tools we have as a civilization. Some ancient people considered it so important and so powerful that they believed it was invented by gods, or powerful deities (AncientScripts.com : Writing

systems, 2005). Nowadays, the importance of writing goes beyond a religious purpose. This is an activity that is directly or indirectly part of every activity we do. It is clear that in the modern world society this ability has become an essential part of human interaction. It only takes a glance to our surrounding to realize how immerse in our daily life it is. We can find it everywhere. In addition, it is one of the first abilities we develop at school in conjunction with reading, and through our school, college and university years, we use it consistently.

If we go a bit back into history, and we start at a period of time where we can talk about a civilized society. Even before the telephone was invented, the only means for long distance communication was writing. Old stories tell us how carrier pigeons were used for transporting letters from one place to another, giving writing the highest importance in that specific period of time. Nevertheless, writing was not only a means of communication, but also a form of art expression. A tangible proof of the importance of writing in the old days traces back to important literary works where we could mention pompous authors such as: William Shakespeare, Mark Twain, T.S. Elliot, among others, who did not only passed a message on to the generations, but also, transformed the perception of writing so we can now see it as a talent as well.

Modernity has presented different perspectives on writing that in combination with images has had an even greater impact on people. The advent of the media, and most importantly the television, has contributed for us to lose

some interest in writing as it was regarded in the past. For instance, many people would rather watch a film based on a novel, than read the book itself. However, it is important to mention that the written word is starting to play other roles on our modernized society. A clear example of this is the internet. This massive network is able to provide thousands of millions of bits on information. Interestingly, a lot of the information we find is written the same way a novel could have been written in the past. Except, we have replaced the pen by the keyboard, and the paper by the screen. In this context, if we see writing as the ability to produce meaningful symbols with our own hands, we surely would not be writing, but if we see writing beyond that, as the ability to apply those symbols and transfer a coherent message, we would indeed be writing. Another interesting analogy would be one important aspect of the internet, which is the e-mail. Even though we are not using our own hands to write this message we are still writing it, only the instruments are different. In order to pass the message we will be no longer using a carrier pigeon.

Writing has everything to do with education as we perceive it now. Not all languages possess a writing system, but languages that do, are regarded to have a higher status. The way we address education, is based on the fact that we do own a writing system, and knowledge in all areas has developed from this point on. The way we have dealt with education has not changed in the sense that we are basing our studies on what someone else has written on the subject, and we still use, and will continue using books, or probably e-books in the future, for reference. The question is; could we have gotten this

far in our development as a society without a writing system? Considering the importance of this aspect of life now, we would most likely say no. However, we can always leave room for some healthy doubt.

1.1.1.2. Concepts of writing and their influence on ELT

Writing is at the core of our modernized society. Therefore, it is important to know some of the many different definitions that have been given to the word "writing." All of them contribute important information to the understanding of this skill, and even though some concepts might slightly differ, they all share certain important features. It is necessary to understand what writing is from different perspectives and points of view in order to better shape our comprehension on this ability, as well as knowing their impact on English Language Teaching.

There are old traces of written forms of communication in the world because of the ancient human need for expression. Because of the emergence of larger settlements and communities, the need for managing and recording information grew since interpersonal communication was not always possible (Britishmuseum.org : What is writing?, 2008). Since then, writing has evolved from what we know as hieroglyphics to the current system we have got in our present time. However, the following general definition can still be understood and applied in both contexts: Writing refers to the use of a set of visible or tactile signs to represent units of language in a systematic way (AncientScripts.com : Writing System, 2007). Another technical definition

coming from a dictionary would tell us that writing is to trace or form (characters, letters, words, etc.) on the surface of some material, as with a pen, pencil, or other instrument or means (Dictionary.com : Writing, 2008). Writing can also be defined as the representation of language in a textual medium through the use of a set of signs and symbols (Wikipedia.org : Writing, 2009). Finally, Thornton (1980: 16) mentions that writing is the visual representation of the sounds of language, which is a behavior that succeeded speech in the history of human language. All these definitions indeed share common concepts which can be simplified in some important key words: representation, symbols, language.

From a simplistic point of view, and based on the previously stated definitions, we might get the impression that writing is a secondary part of language considering it comes after speaking. However, we have to analyze that, when we refer to writing in the context of communication, we might not be referring solely to the ability to put symbols into paper because one could simply memorize a few symbols from the Chinese alphabet, then put them on paper, and then claim we can write on Chinese. Therefore, writing covers a wider spectrum in our understanding.

When we refer to writing we are also referring to the ability of conveying coherent messages and passing them on to people for them to read and understand. It is not only about putting words together on paper, but also giving meaning to them. It is important to mention that we do not necessarily want to modify the concepts we have, but to extend them so we cannot only

understand what writing means in terms of physical ability but also in terms of its use and purpose. When it comes to ELT, we are actually looking for the same thing. The main difference will be the interference students would have from their native language. Nevertheless, our highest objective will always be that our students can communicate as well as they could do on their mother tongue.

1.1.1.3. Characteristics of written language

Having analyzed what writing is, we have to also take into consideration another aspect. Writing has many different features which make it a unique form of communication. It is obviously related to reading, so we could say that we can have two different perspectives based on this premise. The perspective of the reader has more to do with evaluating, understanding, and deciphering a written work, whereas the perspective of a writer has more to do with producing, and conveying clearness and comprehension. The following characteristics have a lot to do with both skills; reading and writing. However, they will have the perspective of a writer, since they are more relevant to our study.

With no doubt one of the most highlighted characteristics of written language refers to its ability of extending the capacity of human memory which can be fickle at times. Despite being criticized in ancient times by philosophers like Plato based on the argument that writing decreases the memory capacity of the brain making it lazy, it was a very useful invention for complex and populated cultures. The losing memory argument could probably be

supported by non-writing cultures capacity of transmitting proses and long poems throughout generations without alteration. Nevertheless, writing was used with inventiveness for record keeping. For example, for correctly counting agricultural products, for keeping the calendar to plant crops at the correct time, and for many other uses.

Brown (2001: 341-342) mentions seven important characteristics that are present in writing. These are: permanence, production time, distance, orthography, complexity, vocabulary and formality. Permanence refers to the abdication on the part of the writer to the power of emending, clarifying, or withdrawing information from the message once it has been delivered. This does not mean that a writer will not be able to retract from his words, if he is mistaken. This rather means that the written word is capable of lasting long time, in contrast to oral production which is momentary in nature. Secondly, production time makes reference to the fact that writing a good piece as well as becoming a good writer requires quality practice time. This is something that is difficult to obtain when many institutions work in terms of time limits, and this is possibly not enough when developing writing. Thirdly, distance besides referring to writing being able to cross large extensions of space, also refers to anticipating the audience. Cognitive empathy plays a great role here, since the writer has to guess the audience's general knowledge beforehand, and there might be perception, and interpretation problems at stake. Fourthly, orthography in simple terms would be the equivalent of pauses and intonation when speaking. Undoubtedly, this is a very important aspect that is usually taken for granted. And it is important to remember that

every language has its own conventions when it comes to this feature. Fifthly, complexity deals with the ability to create syntactic and lexical variety in a piece of writing as well as the ability to eliminate redundancy, and combine sentences successfully. This is something that would come with practice and time. Sixthly, vocabulary tells us that there is greater demand on writing on the use of vocabulary than there is on speaking. As writers of a language it is important to use the richness of its lexicon. Finally, formality ranges from filling out a survey, to writing a complete essay. Each form of writing has its own conventions which must be followed. In this fashion, academic writing provides a great deal of challenge to students since they need to learn how to describe, explain, contrast, illustrate, among other writing abilities.

In the same fashion, Rivers and Temperley (1978: 263) tell us that the abstract quality of a written communication is intensified by: First, its detachment from expressive features: facial movement, tone of voice, emotional indicators, etc. Second, its lack of material context: Surroundings, feedback, etc. Third, its displacement on time: which has been already mentioned above, a piece of writing can be read at the moment it was written or after a long period of time. Many of these characteristics have made for writing to be a very *sui generis* skill. Its mastery requires a lot of work even to native speakers, not to mention non-native learners.

1.2. Approaches and methods for developing writing skills

1.2.1. Background on EFL/ESL writing teaching

If we refer to writing as recording language symbolically on paper, writing has always been a part of English teaching. Students would be practicing a form of writing, whenever they practice completion exercises on paper. However, developing written fluency refers to a lot more than that. It is not only related to the ability of writing single sentences, or filling in the gaps with the correct word. It refers to the ability of expressing a complete message and being able to pass it on to people without obstructing the intention of the ideas conveyed there. That is why it is important to know what fluency is in terms of writing.

The ability to be fluent can be taken from different points of view. For Instance, Billows (1964: 182) states the concept of fluency of expression. The basic idea is that the good writing teacher does not only commend and condemn what students do, but also, brings out the ability and knowledge that may be hidden in the student. Writing could be a good instrument to do this. In this understanding, the idea is for students to get the ability that will allow their ideas to flow from inside out which can potentiate learning greatly. From a different perspective, in a more linguistic understanding of fluency, we can say that language teachers have spoken for a long time about the difference between fluency and accuracy on oral skills. Accuracy basically refers to the correctness of language, and fluency to the ability to communicate without too many pauses that would obstruct the pace of

communication. The same concepts can be applied to writing. It is important to consider that due to the conventions of writing, for the most part, accuracy determines how fluent foreign learners can get to be (Broughton, Brumfit and Flavell , 1978: 118).

Another fundamental aspect to mention is communication. Language itself is communication. Therefore, English teaching practice aims at developing communicative competence contrary linguistic competence only (Maley , 1986: 87). That is why the idea of communication is such a relevant aspect in this matter. Even though most traditional courses have been mainly concerned with teaching grammatical accuracy, at the very beginner stage communication can start at a sentence level. With time, students will learn cohesive devices for linking sentences together until the formation of acceptable texts can be achieved (Johnson , 1982: 176). However, for many years there has been a gap to bridge between communicative competence and linguistic competence. This is understandable since the classroom context itself makes communication elusive. Communication emerges when there is a necessity to communicate (Revell , 1981: 5-6).

According to Widdowson (1983: 111) teaching courses have followed a certain sequence to present language to students. Generally speaking, this order consists of a reading passage, comprehension questions, grammar exercises and some type of exercise in composition. Certain textbooks stress some aspects more than others. When it comes to the last two aspects of this sequence, it is necessary to point out that although *grammar exercises*

provide practice in sentence construction, the objective is not to produce statements in writing with some communicative purpose. It is rather to “manifest students’ knowledge of the working of the system of the language” (Widdowson , 1983: 115). It is important to orient these types of exercises towards the development of the writing ability. A very widely used activity to promote written communicative practice has been for a long time the free composition. Because of its abstract nature it tends to cause some problems especially with students who tend to lack creativity and immediate ideas to write about. Even though composing may be an activity dependent on the student only, it is a very useful tool. It is not possible to deny its frequent use in the classroom which can promote a basic need, and a firsthand source of communication which could exist between the teacher and the learner.

1.2.1.1. Basic Considerations

What is the similarity between swimming and writing? Brown (2001: 334) presents an interesting argument based on this premise. In general, human beings learn how to walk and talk, but swimming and writing are specific learned behaviors. We learn to swim if there is a body of water available, and we learn to write if we are part of a literate society. In both cases, we need someone to teach us. It is important to mention that not all societies possess a writing system, it is certainly a privilege to have one, and benefit from it. One of the points here is that just as with swimming, not everyone is a skillful writer. Different degrees of performance are always present in the learning processes.

Different educators address their teaching in different ways. Technically speaking, this is known as methodology, and this is indeed an aspect with a lot of significance in the learning process. Teachers have acquired with experience, the knowledge that tells them what works and what does not in their particular classroom setting. This is perceivable through the techniques they use in order to enhance learning on a specific skill. It is not possible to say some things are either right or wrong on this field. For instance, a teacher who uses continuous repetition as the principal teaching and learning procedure may do so, because he has seen some improvement on his students, despite the fact that the use of this activity may tiresome after some time. In sum, the way a teacher will approach his classroom will have great incidence in the development of students learning.

Another aspect which is perhaps beyond a teacher's methodological use is the course syllabus that the educational institution is employing. It is important because up to a certain point, it is the framework by which the teacher's procedures in the classroom will be determined. As for writing, according to Broughton et al (1978: 177), ideally, the development of writing skills should be determined by a programme. This programme would contain the types of writing students should be able to master, as well as, guidelines and ways of achieving success for teachers. Having a program to develop writing on its own is a great idea, if we are talking about an institute that can manipulate its syllabus. However, many educational institutions work on a static syllabus that has specific objectives to be covered, therefore this idea

could be unpractical up to a degree, in which case, writing will be practiced in the time assigned by the teacher.

1.2.1.2. Brief history of EFL/ESL writing teaching

It has already been mentioned that writing has always been part of English teaching from the mechanic point of view of this skill, i.e. the ability to put language on paper. However, it is also necessary to take a look at the teaching of writing from a communicative perspective taking into consideration the main methods used on English language teaching. All this different methods have emphasized in distinct ways the importance of writing as a communicative skill. It is important to understand and analyze this, because that can give us understanding on the current practice of writing teaching. These methods are perhaps the main contribution to the understanding of the history of languages teaching.

One of the first methods to be used was the grammar-translation method. This method emphasized that the learning of a language had the purpose of understanding literature. Therefore, it mainly developed the skills of reading and writing. Composition played an important role on the development of writing. This method emphasized the practice of this technique by providing the students with a topic to present in English. A variation would be to produce a précis of a passage that has already been read (Larsen-Freeman , 1986: 14).

On the other hand, the basic premise of the direct method is that language learning should resemble first language learning, i.e. no translation, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules (Brown , 2001: 21). The role of writing was also important. For instance, the teacher would dictate a paragraph about UK history, but in order for students to produce language, they could either write a paragraph about the same topic in their own words, or they could use a reading passage as a model.

The Audio-lingual method emerged at a time when languages learning was needed for military purposes. Language courses that specially focused on aural and oral skills were taught. Dialogues were the primary activity that was used; therefore not much emphasis was put into written production besides, the completion of dialogues and some games to develop grammar skills (Larsen-Freeman , 1986: 47).

Whereas the Audio-lingual method was favored by behaviorism and the idea that languages were learnt through stimulus and response, cognitivism turned languages teaching towards the deep structure of language. As stated by Brown (2001: 24, 25) these new ideas brought different innovative methods which were probably not the godsend their creators thought they would be, but contributed on the idea of incorporating different interesting elements in current approaches to language teaching.

The community language learning method considered students as whole persons meaning that not only feelings and intellect are taken into account

but, also their relationship among students. This was important because by interacting with the other students, each person could lower the defenses that prevented open interpersonal communication (Larsen-Freeman , 1986: 89). The development of writing was done by producing dual-language texts in the form of articles, letters, etc. (Bhatt et al, 2004). Nevertheless, writing did not have a great importance as understanding and speaking did.

Another method that also considered other aspects besides students' intellect was Suggestopedia. To summarize its basic principle, it can be said that this method "capitalized on relaxed states of mind for maximum retention of material" (Brown , 2001: 27). Creativity, Imagination, and music are main themes used in the classroom. Writing is not a major strength as Vocabulary is, but it is also practiced through imaginative compositions like describing one's dreams house (Larsen-Freeman , 1986: 83).

The silent way also came with an interesting proposal. It put special emphasis on discovery learning procedures and it stressed the importance of developing independence, autonomy, and responsibility on the learner. According to Larsen (1986: 64) all four skills are practiced from the beginning. Students will read and write as reinforcement to what they have already produced orally. However, direct communicative written practice is not very much perceived on this method.

The Total physical response method also had an interesting premise. It stressed the importance of listening as it was observed on first language

learning, and it was also based on the association between memory and motor activity (Brown , 2001: 30). As it was already mentioned, understanding language precedes production. It is thought that writing will come naturally, and not formal instruction is needed. Therefore, there are not established writing tasks when it comes to this method (Cabello , 2006).

The idea of recreating first language learning together with cognitive theory also gave birth to the natural approach. The goal of this language teaching idea was communicational skills at everyday language situations. The idea of writing in this approach has more to do with the goals and needs of the student than with its methodological usefulness. That is to say, writing will have a functional task, in which case students will be provided with appropriate exercises that will enable them to acquire the necessary writing styles students need to learn (Matsumoto , 1997).

The last language teaching trend we will analyze is the communicative approach. The basic premise on this approach is that the structures of language are important, but the communication ideal would not be complete if only these were taught. Language has to accomplish a communicative function whether it is arguing, persuading or promising. All four skills are practiced from the beginning. Writing skills are seen in the same way as oral skills. Communication takes place through negotiation between the speaker and the listener, in this case the writer and the reader. Therefore writing is used in order to accomplish a function just as speaking is (Larsen-Freeman , 1986: 134).

We have seen different ways in which writing skills teaching has been approached. They vary from almost null direct emphasis as in the case of total physical response, to emphatic functional production as in the case of the communicative approach. It is necessary to notice that a main instrument to develop writing skills has been composition, which is also used currently. This is an activity that has accompanied writing teaching for a long time, because of its productive nature. It is an activity which, perhaps except for the topic, elicits everything from the students. Another aspect worth mentioning is that if we are to judge from what we have read, the development of writing skills has never had a primary role on language teaching, and it is understandable since there are many important things teachers have to do before focusing on this skill. Nevertheless, writing should be a primary area of concern, or at least it should have a more significant role in language teaching.

1.2.2. Summary of research on Second and Foreign Language Writing

The development on the understanding of writing in the language teaching context has evolved along with the understanding of all the other skills. Among the different realizations educators had were the teaching of fluency, not only accuracy, the use of authentic contexts and texts in class, as well as, the focus on linguistic communication. The 1980s with the communicative language method were responsible for this contribution (Brown , 2001: 334).

All this study has aroused certain controversial aspects which will be now analyzed.

1.2.2.1. Composing vs. Writing

It has already been mentioned that in EFL contexts we cannot see writing simply as the representation of spoken language. The writing process needs a different set of abilities. Writing covers different rhetorical conventions which need to be addressed in a specific way designed for this goal. Composing is a very important written practice as a pedagogical exercise. It is often the result of thinking, drafting and revising. That is why writing pedagogy focuses on generating ideas, organizing them in a coherent way, using rhetorical conventions, revising for clearer meaning, editing for appropriate grammar, and producing a final product (Brown , 2001: 335).

1.2.2.2. Process vs. Product

This is certainly an aspect which has changed over time. Half a century ago, teachers focused mainly on the final product of writing whether it is the essay, the report, or the story. Teachers were concerned about what the final result should “look” like (Brown , 2001: 335). Writing was supposed to meet certain standards. Of course, there is nothing wrong with evaluating students’ work based on parameters of skill. However, teachers became aware that if students created language they could see more positive results. This could be visible because students could focus more on content and message as well as on their personal motivation to write. This is how the process approach to writing instruction was developed. As stated in Brown’s, (2001: 335) among the many advantages of using this approach are:

- Helping student writers understand their composing process.
- Giving students time to write and rewrite.
- Placing importance on the process of revision.
- Giving students feedback through the composing process, and not only the final product.
- Including individual conferences between teacher and student during the process of composition.

Going through the writing process implies many different things. It involves things like brain-storming, putting down ideas on paper, sharpening them, developing them, etc. Using this means using one's process approach to writing. The writer experiences different things like mental blocks, anxiety or frustration considering that his paper will be judged and graded by his teacher. Nevertheless, the process approach is an attempt to take advantage of the nature of writing as a thinking process (Brown , 2001: 336). Seeing writing as a process is a really important factor for the development of this skill. However, it is important to find a balance between process and product. It is not possible to diminish the value of product since; after all, this is the ultimate goal. "Process is not the end; it is the means to the end" (Brown , 2001: 337).

1.2.2.3. Authenticity

How much of our classroom writing is “real” writing? This is another aspect which needs to be addressed. In order to answer to this question it is necessary to ask how much writing is practiced by the average college-educated person in Western society. The most likely answer is that very little except for some e-mails, messages, forms, etc. As our society progresses it is even less necessary to compose every time. Academically speaking, it is indeed necessary to know how to express in writing in order to pass the course. According to Brown (2001: 339) English for academic purposes (EAP) would be the major consumer of writing techniques. All these range from short phrases, to brief paragraphs, to brief reports, to a full length research paper. If we consider other contexts such as vocational-technical English, students would need to fill out forms, write simple messages, write certain reports, and at the most creative expression, write a business letter. EAP is the approach that uses the composing process the most with things such as the development of ideas, argument, logic, etc. (Brown , 2001: 339).

Another way to look at this situation is by contrasting real writing and display writing. Real writing deals with the situation in which something has been written to fulfill a communicative purpose outside the classroom context, whereas display writing reflects the classroom condition in which the teacher is the only reader of the document. The question here is if we should incorporate more real writing in our teaching. The answer is absolutely yes because students would be able to convey true information on topics that are

relevant to them. However, display writing is a fact in the classroom. If students are able to perform well on this type of writing, this will help them in further academic goals (Brown , 2001: 340).

1.2.2.4. The role of the teacher

Communicative language teaching was the method that recognized writing as a thinking and composing process. It also stressed the importance of learner-centered instruction, and changed the role of the teacher from one of an authoritative director and arbiter, to one of a facilitator instead. This has many implications that are relevant to the learning process. Students can bring, and develop their own ideas, as well as, offer their critical analysis and find their own voice in writing (Brown , 2001: 340). The idea is that the teacher can offer help in the thinking and composing process, but has to respect students' opinions and ideas. According to Littlewood (1987: 19) unnecessary intervention on the teacher's part may prevent the learners from becoming truly involved in the activity. On the contrary, another problem might be that many teachers rather refrain from involving on students writing at all. Teachers can provide useful information that can help students on their improvement without disrespecting students' values and beliefs. The challenge is making this feedback relevant and helpful for students. Otherwise, they will just read their suggestions and just disregard them right after they read them. Teachers are still exploring alternatives to provide feedback to student writing (Brown , 2001: 340).

In conclusion, if we have to consider all the aspects regarding writing, being a writing teacher is indeed a challenging and exciting task. The complexity goes beyond what a teacher can do in the classroom because if we are to consider all these aspects in our lessons, we would not be able to cover anything else but writing. This is a skill that could have a separate course. So, the greatest challenge is developing this skill as well as all others in a class that is very limited by time constraints.

1.2.3. Considering the level

Educational Institutions have realities that range from differing a lot, to differing very little. The importance that the institution gives to a certain subject is going to determine the level students will have, not only in English, but in any other subject. Because of this, it is important to establish certain parameters to determine which are high levels, and which are low levels. This is relevant to writing, because analyzing when we should start developing written skills could turn into a quite controversial topic. It is important to mention that the level of difficulty cannot simply be established by a topic, the level has more to do with more complex conventions of writing (Bright and McGregor, 1977: 130-131). Finocchiaro (1986: 129) stated some years ago that writing should be deferred until teachers have led students through several stages over a long period of time. Only after this period students would be able to perform some type of composition assignment. This is obviously true, especially if we consider that some students are absolute beginners in which case writing will have to be delayed until the student has learned the most basic and relevant conventions about English.

However, as it was mentioned, we need to analyze the reality of an institution in order to determine if the student has some, little or no knowledge at all. We need to analyze the course-content in these terms as well. It might be the case that we are not actually teaching absolute beginners but false beginners, and the course-content reality is in the same situation. Given the importance English has acquired in the last years, this could be the most likely option. This means the writing development could have a place in the teaching course even if we are talking about beginners. Nevertheless, if we have students from different educational backgrounds, we will have different levels reflecting different realities in the same classroom.

Having this in mind, it is important to analyze the current fashion, in which we perceive levels as well as the writing processes, and techniques we can use in our classrooms. Evaluation also plays an important role in the writing process, which goes in hand with an important feature of writing. It is not possible to underestimate the ability and capacity of our students just because they might be beginners. Even with absolute beginners after a few lessons we could ask them to provide a couple of sentences related to a certain thing. This, itself, could be considered as the beginning of a very short paragraph on a specific topic.

1.2.3.1. Types of written language at elementary level

We have already mentioned that writing comes in many different forms. However, it is important to ask, how many of those forms are we likely to develop on our students considering our own reality. Even though in theory we would like to develop them all, in the practice the reality might not be very encouraging.

Brown (2001: 302-303) tells us that literally speaking there are hundreds of different types of written texts. Each has specific conventions and rules that identify them. Here is a list covering some of them:

- Non-fiction: essays, reports, articles
- Fiction: short stories, novels, poetry
- Letters: personal, business
- Greeting cards
- Diaries, journals
- Memos
- Messages
- Announcements
- Forms, applications
- Questionnaires
- Directions
- Labels
- Bills

- Recipes
- Maps
- Manuals
- Menus
- Schedules
- Invitations
- Comic strips, cartoons

(Brown , 2001: 302-303)

It is indeed possible to mention many more types of written language. How many of the ones we have mentioned could be developed at an elementary level? Probably, we will not be able to practice many except for writing some postcards, simple notes or messages, and filling out forms. But, if we are to cover other aspects of the syllabus in the English lesson, it is impossible to focus on the development of all the above mentioned in a course of study. Keeping the “real” element to the development of this skill is obviously necessary. However, we do not have to forget how important it is to focus on the compositional nature of writing from the academic point of view. We will see how possible it is as we analyze some other important elements as we progress on our study.

1.2.3.2. Types of classroom writing performance

Even though there are many different types of written texts, writing performance tends to be quite limited. (Brown , 2001: 343) Here we present some concepts available on this matter:

- Imitative, or writing down

At the beginning of the learning process, when students are just starting to write, they would begin by writing letters, words, and sentences in order to understand the rules of the orthographic code. The process can involve dictation which covers some steps like reading the text several times before the teacher starts to make pauses so students can write what they hear. Then, the teacher can read the whole paragraph again so students can double check their work. Spelling or punctuation errors are not as severe as grammatical errors (Brown , 2001: 343).

- Controlled or guided

Writing can be actively used for learning, reinforcing or assessing grammatical concepts. Controlled writing does not allow much creativity on the part of the writer. A common way to practice controlled writing is by presenting students a paragraph where verbs, as well as time expressions have to be changed to the past, so that the text can be fully coherent. On the other hand, guided writing loosens up the teacher's control, but still offers

great incentives. An example of guided writing would be telling the students a story and eliciting the story from them by asking them some questions such as: Where do the characters meet? Who does he fall in love with? The teacher can prepare several questions that can help students to produce the complete story (Brown , 2001: 344). According to Wright (1981: 42) the degree of guidance will be relative to the directions given to students. For example, students can be provided with a sequence of instructions, or with a general instruction. The first one will provide more detail on the language students can use, but the other one will leave it open to students' own interpretation and creativity.

- Self- writing

Self writing is having only the self in mind as an audience. A large amount of self writing serves for academic purposes such as note-taking which is done with the purpose of later recall. Writing a diary or a journal is also part of this category. We can also consider dialogue journals as part of this category because even though it is written for oneself, it has two audiences (Brown , 2001: 344).

- Display writing

It was stated before that writing as part of the school syllabus is an intrinsic part of it. Short answer exercises, essay examinations, or even research reports will involve an element of display. For EFL students one of the

academic skills they need to master is a whole set of display writing techniques (Brown , 2001: 345). Developing writing in the classroom could involve interaction. “Our desire to write also increases as others show interest in what we have written” (Russo and Rivers , 1988: 83). Writing skill can also be developed by class writing, group writing, and individual writing. It is the teacher who can decide to use interactivity according to his own situation.

- Real writing

We also mentioned that real writing is also an important part of the classroom. Moreover, some classroom writings point towards authentic communication. Brown (2001: 346) tells us that real and display writing are two ends of a continuum and in between there is some combination of both. Interactive activities that require students to exchange information with each other and with the instructor are necessary. Activities like diaries, letters, post cards, notes, messages, etc. can take place in an interactive classroom. Even though some activities may be very unnatural, the genuine exchange of information can certainly happen (Brown , 2001: 346).

1.2.3.3. Basic principles for designing writing techniques

Brown (2001: 346-356) also presents a number of specific principles for designing writing techniques. We will present the ones that apply at an elementary level.

- Incorporate practices of “good” writers

If we are to devise a technique where writing is the goal, it is worth considering some of the things that efficient writers do. For instance, the technique should include some of the following practices:

- Focus on a main idea in writing
- Spend some time planning to write
- Let their ideas flow onto the paper
- Follow a general organizational plan
- Obtain feedback on their writing
- Revise their work efficiently
- Making as many revisions as needed

(Brown , 2001: 346)

- Balance process and product

Writing is undoubtedly a composing process that requires different drafts before obtaining an effective product. Students need to be led through appropriate stages in the composing process. Nevertheless, it is also important not to lose sight of what the ultimate goal is, by getting caught up in the process. Students need to see that every step that led to the final product was worth the effort. The teacher also plays an important role as a guide and a responder. This role should not be underestimated (Brown , 2001: 347).

- Connect reading and writing

Obviously, students learn to write in part by carefully observing what has been written before. Students learn by reading a written work. If students read before writing, this can help them gain some knowledge not only about how they should write, but also about subject matter that can help them with ideas if that is the topic they will be writing about (Brown , 2001: 347).

- Provide as much authentic writing as possible

The piece of writing, whether it is real or displayed, can still be authentic as long as it covers the following conditions: The writing purpose is clear to students; the audience has been specified; and there is at least some intent to convey meaning. There are different ways to promote authenticity such as: sharing with other students, publishing a class newsletter, writing letters to people outside of class, etc. These all can be considered as authentic writing (Brown , 2001: 347).

- Frame techniques in terms of prewriting, drafting, and revising stages.

Whenever we consider process writing we typically refer to three stages of writing. Prewriting promotes the generation of ideas which can be done by: reading, brainstorming, listing, discussing, freewriting, etc. Drafting and revising are also very important parts of the process. From a traditional perspective, students would have been given a timed assignment to be

completed by the end of the period, or it could have been a homework in which case there is no opportunity for systematic practice, and it assumes students already know how to work on their own. The drafting and revising process makes use of some strategies such as: monitoring one's writing, peer-reviewing for content, using instructor's feedback, editing for grammatical errors, proofreading, etc (Brown , 2001: 348).

- Try to offer techniques that are as interactive as possible

Writing is not merely an isolated activity. It can also be an interactive activity as students work in pairs to generate ideas, and to peer-edit. Writing techniques that focus on passing on messages and exchanging ideas are part of interactive classrooms. Activities like group collaboration, brainstorming, and critiquing could be included as well. A community of learners can surely help students become better writers (Brown , 2001: 355).

- Sensibly apply methods of responding to and correcting students' writing

Writing correction needs to be applied sensibly because it is a process that includes an extensive planning stage. Mistakes can be treated in the drafting and revising stages. At the beginning stage errors are not directly treated by the instructor. They are rather treated by means of self-correction, peer correction, and instructor-initiated comments.

It is important to remember that in the process stage the teacher has to act as a guide and facilitator which will be a more productive way to respond. Only after the final work has been handed in, the teacher may assume the position of a judge and evaluator. Ideally speaking, written comments may have to suffice. (Brown , 2001: 355) Some guidelines for responding to the first draft may include:

- Resist the temptation to treat minor grammatical errors-can at this stage be pointed out either directly (say, by circling) or indirectly (for instance, by a tick next to the line where the error occurs).
- Resist the temptation to rewrite students' sentences
- Comment holistically on the overall thesis, and general organization
- Comment on aspects that appear to be irrelevant to the topic
- Question obvious inadequate choices of words and awkward expressions that are important to the topic

(Brown , 2001: 355)

For following drafts responses can include:

- Minor grammatical and mechanical errors should be pointed out, but not corrected for the students.
- Comment on the clarity of all the main and supporting ideas, as well as on the arguments and logic
- Comment on any further ideas of expressions which might not be clear

- Check cohesive devices on paragraphs

(Brown , 2001: 356)

In the case of compositions, according to Haycraft (1978: 121) one of the most comprehensive methods for correcting writing is the one suggested by H.A. Cartledge. Here you divide up mistakes into categories and use abbreviations to indicate them. We can use the following categories and abbreviations: Grammar: G; Spelling: SP; Word Order: WO; Punctuation: P; Vocabulary: V; Prepositions: PR; Verb: VB. Teachers can create their own prompts to approach this technique. The most important thing is to allow students to discover their own mistakes and provide solutions for them.

- Clearly instruct students on the rhetorical conventions of writing.

Every single type of writing has its own properties. It is not possible to simply assume that students will be able to pick up all this information as they write. It is necessary to make them clear to students. Reading can certainly help on this matter. In terms of academic writing, students need to know some features that will help them explain, propose solutions, debate, and argue. Some of which could be:

- A clear statement of the topic
- Use of main ideas to develop the topic
- Use of supporting ideas

- Supporting by “telling”: describing
- Supporting by “showing”: giving evidence, facts, etc
- Supporting by linking cause and effect
- Supporting by using comparisons and/or contrasts

(Brown , 2001: 356)

1.2.3.4. Evaluating student writing at elementary level

In a process-oriented approach, the evaluation of writing tends to be a quite problematic issue. This is due to the dilemma of being a guide and facilitator of students' performance on a progressive process, as well as the judge. According to Brown (2001: 356) dealing with this dual role requires wisdom and sensitivity. He mentions that “the key to being a judge is fairness and explicitness in what you take into account in the evaluation.”

The Common European Framework for Languages mentions certain aspects which are worth analyzing and taking into consideration at this point. This document provides us with a self-assessment grid which states the following:

Table 1.1. Self assessment grid: elementary writing

| | A1 | A2 |
|---------|---|---|
| Writing | I can write simple postcard, for example sending holidays greeting. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registrations form. | I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something. |

(Council of Europe , 2001: 26)

The above chart presents what a student would be able to do, pragmatically speaking, at the end of his instruction on an elementary level. Nevertheless, the CEF also presents some other indicators some of which have to do with productive as well as interactive activities and strategies. Within the written production spectrum the CEF provides us with an illustrative scale which has been adapted as follows:

Table 1.2. Written production and interaction illustrative scales

| | Overall Written Production | Overall Written interaction |
|----|--|---|
| A1 | Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences. | Can ask for or pass on personal details in written form. |
| A2 | Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because' | Can write short, simple formulaic notes relating to matters in areas of immediate need. |

(Council of Europe , 2001: 61-62)

We can see that even at an elementary stage we can consider using composition as an important activity for the development of writings skills. However, we need to mention that even though we can know the types of writing performance we could analyze for assessment, experts disagree on the system of weighting the categories to be evaluated. Brown (2001: 357)

presents the following categories for evaluating writing which has been summarized:

Content

- Thesis statement
- Related ideas
- Opinions
- Use of description, cause/effect
- Consistent focus

Organization

- Logical sequence of ideas
- Appropriate length
- Conclusion

Discourse

- Paragraph unity
- Transitions
- Cohesion
- Rhetorical conventions

Syntax

Vocabulary

Mechanics

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Neatness and appearance

Whenever teachers need to quantify these categories because of administrative reasons, they can assign a point scale to each category (say, 0 to 5). However, it is possible to emphasize the first categories more heavily so to give priority to the content of the evaluated material. Ideally speaking, final evaluation on one composition simply creates feedback that the student can use for the next composition (Brown , 2001: 358).

Meaningful learning is greatly important in writing. Getting students involved in topics of interest and significance to them, through different stages of process writing, will result into developing fluency in this very relevant skill.

1.3. Portfolio-based learning in Writing

The word “portfolio” may bring many different ideas to mind. As stated by Ewing and Handson, (2009) it may make us think of an artist's collection of works, a leather case for carrying important papers, or maybe a group of financial investments. But, in the educational context of the word, it is an important tool that can be used to potentiate the acquisition of knowledge. Among the different methods to approach learning, portfolios have become an alternative and very popular way to do so in recent years. Their popularity is a well-known fact that does not only affect languages teaching, but many other areas of study. With this in mind, their application in the EFL classroom

will indeed contribute with positive and insightful learning. Let us analyze what this tool is as well as its implications.

1.3.1. What is a learning portfolio?

As stated by Park, (2004) the idea of portfolio-based learning and assessment started to emerge around the mid-1980s. At that time, especially in the United States, educational specialists were concerned about the declining educational standards they were witnessing. Therefore, they decided to place more emphasis on testing in order to raise students' standards, based on the belief that the more students are tested, the more they will be motivated to improve their efforts and performance. In aspects like written composition, this view of testing was seen as counterproductive to the complete process of teaching and learning the complex, and many-sided skill of writing. Consequently, many writing specialists started to research on different ways to measure student writing that would be more consistent with a process approach to writing, which would allow teachers to have a different perspective to students writing rather than a single, timed test, usually placed at the end of the course. "In an attempt to find an attractive alternative approach to writing assessment, many composition researchers began to experiment with portfolio-based approaches, and, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, portfolio pedagogy began to emerge as a personal, multiple-use tool for both teachers and Students" (Park , 2004).

The definition of portfolio within this framework converges in the following idea: A portfolio is an organized collection of students' work that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas. (Genesee and Upshur , 1996: 99) A portfolio will show the process, progress and production of students' learning. Portfolios can include essays, compositions, poetry, reports, and virtually anything one would wish to include. The content of a portfolio can be adapted to accomplish a specific goal, which means that it can respond to students needs. A portfolio is not by any means prescriptive in the way in which it can be used.

1.3.2. Why should we use portfolio-based learning?

According to Brown (2001: 419) early in our history portfolios were thought to be an instrument that could only be applied with younger children. With the help of their teacher they would compile a portfolio of art work to show their parents. Nevertheless, "learners of different ages are benefiting from the tangible and hands-on nature of portfolio development." (Brown , 2001: 419).

Portfolio-based learning is founded on the premise that learning can only take place if students reflect on that experience, and conceptualize new 'rules' for action based on their experience and reflection, and then test those rules in another concrete situation (Higher Education Academy , 2009). The application of this concept can certainly be reflected in this approach to learning. Creating an atmosphere of consistent practice is primary on the

development of this idea. Whatever skill we decide to emphasize can be the focus of the portfolio.

We have previously stated that portfolio-based learning is not a feature that belongs to the EFL context only. Its premise, which is developing knowledge, and learning by reflection could be and has been applied to many different learning circumstances. The study performed by Eccleston, Greaves and Kant, (Eccleston et al, 2001: 135) which took place at the Northern school of Anesthesia, Newcastle upon Tyne, explains about its usefulness on the learning process. The authors mention that one of the first things they wanted to analyze was the impact of practical knowledge in comparison to theoretical knowledge. They believed that just as a person learns from his own experiences, students could also record their own experiences with the use of their portfolio, having a more practical experience to learning rather than a theoretical one. Nevertheless, they discovered that students did not really reflect on their own learning when they were asked to go through their pieces of work. The reflection process was rather mechanical, therefore they concluded a better reflection process needed to be created and provided. Based on previous research the authors realized that an excellent way to make reflection more meaningful was by sharing it with peers either orally or in writing. Sharing the experience in the latter form specially called the attention of the researchers. It promoted objectivity on the experience because it required the student thinking about the occurrences from distance, and it also allowed other students to see the experience from a different perspective. The study concludes by pointing out that applying portfolio-

based learning on this context successfully helped students enhance their learning by means of reflecting and sharing their own learning process, Another interesting conclusion, is that instead of stating that a portfolio is a collection of students work, the authors assert that a “portfolio is a collection of reflection on selected experiences” (Eccleston et al, 2001: 136 -141).

Genesee and Upshur state that the implementation of portfolios is an excellent way to involve students "as active collaborators in documenting and monitoring their own progress and in identifying learning goals" (Genesee and Upshur , 1996: 144). Portfolios provide: a continuous, cumulative record of language development; holistic view of learning; insight into individual progress; collaborative assessment and goal-setting; tangible, and sharable evidence. Students should feel that they are agents of reflection and decision-making (Genesee and Upshur , 1996: 144). Portfolios can offer a method of synthesizing information on learning by showcasing language accomplishments.

To summarize, portfolio-based learning enunciates that involving students in framing objectives, developing mechanisms for self-introspection and self-assessment, and mechanisms by which the teacher can monitor each student's progress toward the defined objectives can significantly enhance the apprenticeship of the students (Sahu, Soudarssanane and Roy , 2008).

1.3.3. General guidelines for developing a portfolio

In order to develop a learning portfolio, there are certain aspects that need to be taken into consideration. It is important to annotate that this guidelines are a general help for implementing a portfolio and are not necessarily a must-do but indeed things that will assist on providing a better understanding to the process. Brown (2001: 419) mentions the following guidelines:

- Specify the purpose of the portfolio. (To stress accomplishments, to provide tangible material for feedback from the teacher, etc.)
- Give clear directions to students on how to get started. (students might feel confused about what to do)
- Collect portfolios on pre-announced dates and return them promptly.
- Be clear to yourself on the main purpose of the portfolio and make sure your feedback speaks to that purpose.
- Help students to process your feedback, and show them how to respond to your responses. This processing might take place with general guidelines in class, in a conference, or through written feedback.

Making the process as impeccable as possible for students is a must. Students need to know what the challenge they are facing is all about, and they should know about the benefits they will obtain from the whole course of action.

1.3.4. Gradual development of a portfolio

Going through the process of portfolio-based learning requires establishing certain steps to lead us through the outgrowth of the project. Moreover, we cannot forget that the educational institution constraints will play an important role on the nature of the portfolio. Students' needs are another variable that will play an interesting role. All these aspects all together will be the ones that will ultimately set up the foundation, and the outcome of the portfolio. Having said this, Lema (2009: 4) provides us with six major steps which have been summarized as follows:

- Explanation and orientation. The idea of a portfolio is presented to students, the idea of reflective learning is discussed
- Clarifying and focusing. The content of the portfolio is discussed. Guidelines are given for assembling items to include in the portfolio.
- Planning. Students together with the teacher establish how the process of the portfolio will unfold.
- Creating the portfolio: This involves the actual assembling of the portfolio items
- Assessing: Portfolios can be used as a tool for evaluation
- Sharing: The class can share and compare their portfolios

It is important to remember that the stage of creating a portfolio is going to be a gradual process determined by time constraints relative to students' needs as well as time availability. Another aspect which needs to be emphasized is

the necessity to create an element of self-reflection which will be the basis to promote learning.

On the other hand, Thomas et al (2005: 5) state that the development of a portfolio has also shown some concerns. Firstly, teachers are especially concerned with the amount of time this approach involves if the educator is to monitor and guide the whole process. Nevertheless, while it was agreed that this would require a great investment of time, it was also agreed that any teacher who really knows their students spends many hours after and before school doing record keeping and other tasks. Secondly, setting standards for the portfolios could turn into complete disagreement. However, it was suggested that each individual teacher should set their own criteria based on meeting the objectives established by the curriculum and goals. Thirdly, a lack of interest on the part of the teachers could lead to failure on implementing portfolio-based learning. Teachers must have a great interest in adopting the portfolio learning process if they are to use it. Finally, an issue related to the use of portfolio-based learning involves the current role of traditional testing. It is a well known fact that traditional assessment, i.e. exams and tests, has failed to cover the wide variety of learning styles turning into a very questionable form of evaluation. Nevertheless, there are also some concerns about portfolios, particularly when used for large-scale performance evaluation. "One major area of concern is the complexity involved in grading such collections of writing, such as developing appropriate grading guidelines maintaining consistency in portfolio grading and avoiding subjectivity in grading" (Park , 2004). Park (2004) tells us that

possible solution to these issues is the development of explicit instructions for both students and instructors that ensure consistency and reliability in both the compilation and evaluation of portfolios. To summarize, all the above aspects mentioned, are worth considering when implementing this approach. Nevertheless, a most important aspect involves the fact that it provides a means for those students at risk for academic failure to demonstrate progress within a format less restrictive and inflexible than the traditional means. We shall expand the assessment aspect of portfolio-based learning in the next part.

1.3.5. Portfolio Assessment and Evaluation

We have briefly mentioned the difficulty on assessing a portfolio and the problems that it may arouse. Even though the primary focus of portfolio-based learning is concentrating on a continuous process of gaining knowledge more than on a product, it would be unfair not to provide students with a grade for their effort. Let us analyze some of the advantages and disadvantages to portfolio assessment as stated Sewell, Marczak, and Horn (2007).

Some of the advantages of using portfolio assessment include:

- It allows the evaluators to see the student, and the group, as individual, each unique with its own characteristics, needs, and strengths.
- It provides a perspective future analysis and planning. By viewing the total pattern of individual participants, one can identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, and barriers to success.
- Promotes a shift in ownership; students can take an active role in examining where they have been and where they want to go.
- Portfolio assessment offers another possibility for addressing the shortcomings of traditional assessment. It offers the possibility of assessing the more complex and important aspects of an area or topic.

Some of the disadvantages of using portfolio assessment include:

- It may be seen as less reliable or fair than more quantitative evaluations such as test or exam scores.
- It can be very time consuming for teachers to organize and evaluate the contents, especially if portfolios have to be done in addition to traditional testing and grading.
- Having to develop your own individualized criteria can be difficult or unfamiliar at first.
- If goals and criteria are not clear, the portfolio can be just a miscellaneous collection of artifacts that don't show patterns of growth or achievement.
- Like any other form of qualitative data, data from portfolio assessments can be difficult to analyze.

The primary focus of the debate has been based on the validity and reliability of such type of assessment. Even though the primary focus of portfolio-based learning is serving for self-assessment, it is an aspect which can certainly not escape to mind.

An assessment can be considered as valid when it enables students to demonstrate that they have achieved the primary objectives of the course and it requires teachers to make their judgments based on those intended objectives. In the same way, it is reliable when there is close agreement on assessment judgments between assessors (Higher Education Academy ,

2009). Baume (2002) explains how portfolios can be a valid and reliable form of assessment. According to him, at the end of a course, teachers need a valid assessment method, meaning, one that will show them if and how far the student has achieved what the course was intended to help him achieve. "A well-implemented and student-owned personal development plan at the start of the course will increase the chances of the student achieving his goals. The portfolio is a fine vehicle for valid assessment during and at the end of the course. Portfolios and their assessment can lead to valid assessment tasks and processes. Beyond that, the use of portfolios can reduce the fragmentation which can characterize some assessment methods" (Baume , 2002).

In terms of reliability, Baume (2002) explains that there are limits to how reliable any non-trivial assessment process can be. Portfolios are certainly non-trivial, and these reliability limits apply to portfolios as well as to other assessment methods. The author states that these limits vary from subject to subject. For example, it is generally easier to develop a reliable assessment process in a numerically-based than in a textually- or visually-based subject. Nevertheless, there are ways in which the level of reliability can be increased such as: providing clarity to the task the students are performing, providing clarity to the assessment criteria, and having continued discussion with the students during the course about their outcomes, and the objectives still to accomplish.

An aspect of assessment which is still a subjective matter but it is not least important refers to fairness. Baume (2002) tells us that students may find portfolios fairer than other assessment methods, but why is that so? Some of the reasons include:

- Portfolios involve work done over a period of time, averaging accomplishments and failures in performance.
- They may allow students to revise and then to comment on work they have done.
- They may represent work the student cares about.
- They show you a single overall view of the student, their learning and development and achievement.

Again, it is necessary to recall the notion that portfolios serve as a self-assessment tool. Therefore, portfolios are undermined if a teacher assigns grades to them. Why? "Once a teacher assigns a grade, the portfolio shifts ownership from the students to the teacher. Grades are evaluative by nature, and by grading portfolios, the teacher evaluates for the students instead of having the students evaluate and reflect for themselves" (Pearson Education , 2009). Nevertheless, it all may depend on the teacher's own views and opinions to assessment, and in addition it is likely that the teacher has already evaluated individual items of the portfolio. It is important to mention that the teacher may choose to have either an ongoing assessment as exemplified in the previous sentence, or a summative one, in which a holistic judgment can be made. But, as with any approach to the learning process it

is probably wiser to incorporate both on our evaluation. Having said this, we can proceed to analyze the most relevant aspects which can be evaluated in a portfolio. According to Lema, (2009: 4) the teacher could evaluate:

- Growth. The portfolio shows skill improvement, goal attainment, increase in self awareness as a language learner
- Voice. The portfolio contains instances of students' reflective thinking, creativity, opinions.
- Accuracy. The portfolio contains work which shows students' ability to control English vocabulary and structure with reduced mistakes.
- Organization. The portfolio should demonstrate students' attention to detail, neatness, and presentation of contents.

The teacher could create a rubric, in which these aspects are evaluated in levels such as exceptional, commendable, acceptable, and unsatisfactory. It all depends on the reality of the classroom in which portfolio-based learning is taking place.

Portfolios comprehend structured records of achievement of students' personal development. They can help the teacher and the students to acquire a more integrated view of their learning and development in comparison to more conventional, and often fragmented, assessment methods. Portfolios allow a more natural cycle of work and learning, with drafts, feedback, revisions and with reflection on learning and development (Baume , 2002). Portfolio-based learning can indeed be a powerful tool that

can be used in the classroom. It is an approach that can bring a different color into the language learning environments. It can create insightful, progressive and reflective learning which are indeed the type of things that create motivation on students leading to more successful learning.

1.4. Hypothesis formulation

The application of portfolio-based learning improves the development of elementary writing communicative fluency at the first level at the Languages and Linguistics school at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Ambato.

1.4.1. Independent Variable

The application of portfolio-based learning

1.4.2. Dependent Variable

The development of elementary writing communicative fluency

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Methodology

Gathering information is a process that requires methods that are congruent to the purpose of the proposed study. Taking into consideration the nature of the present dissertation, that is to say, having a theoretical background and a practical application, it is important to apply the scientific method in order to obtain our information. Plainly speaking, “the scientific method is a way to ask and answer scientific questions by making observations and doing experiments.” (sciencebuddies.org , 2007). The same website explains that the process consists of the following steps:

- Asking a Question
- Doing Background Research
- Constructing a Hypothesis
- Testing the hypothesis by doing an experiment
- Analyzing Data and drawing a Conclusion
- Communicating the Results

As we can see we are fulfilling with the steps necessary to give our research scientific validity. With this in mind, we could also call this research work an experimental study. However, experimental studies are considered to be rather taken from random events. In other words, experimental studies take

their samples from a random group of people or occurrences. Therefore the study hereby cannot be considered as an experimental study but rather a **Quasi-Experimental** study. This is because our samples are taken from pre-established groups in a specific learning environment, and not randomly as an experimental study states. Nevertheless, the study can still be reliable since we will apply the previously mentioned scientific method to analyze data.

We are also dealing with a quantitative research because results will be based on statistical analysis based on results we will acquire. There will be, then, a control group and an experimental group. The control group will express the analysis without the use of the techniques whereas the experimental group will express the analysis with the use of the techniques. The qualitative element will also have a place here. The information we obtain will be subjected to inferential studies that will allow us to arrive at different conclusions based on our statistic analysis.

Both groups are meant to exemplify the reality of a particular learning environment. That is why; results and conclusions deriving from this study cannot have global repercussions because they present a specific setting with specific characteristics and conditions. Even so, the following work attempts to provide data on what could be an environment of similar learning circumstances. Specifically speaking, the purpose of the research work is to present another means for developing writing skills. That is through the use of portfolio based learning. It is important to demonstrate how this can bring

positive results in the EFL classroom when building up written abilities. This is certainly not a must-do in the language classroom. It is only another light that could be taken into consideration when approaching the development of this ability in class.

2.2. Universe and Sample

The Universe of the present work is formed by the students of English as a foreign language at PUCESA. During the semester September – February 2008-2009, the languages department counted on a total number of 826 students distributed in 58 levels of instruction according to their students' own personal level and progress on their studies. The first level, which was chosen for the study, counted on 11 levels with 192 students distributed in all the different periods. From the first level we chose the ones from the two p.m. period which had 4 levels having a number of 71 students. This can be considered as our sample. The experimental group was chosen to be the First Level D whereas the control group consisted of the remaining Firsts levels, A, B, and C. In order to balance both groups, it was necessary to randomly choose a similar number of students from these three groups having 34 students to go through the study. It is important to mention that the first level D originally started with 19 students, unfortunately 2 of them dropped out not much after the beginning of the semester so they could not be considered for the study.

2.3. Subject of Study and Place

As we mentioned previously, the research took place at PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA DEL ECUADOR SEDE AMABATO. PUCESA is a prestigious institution that has gained its respect from more than a decade of academic excellence. The philosophy of the university is based on the Christian motto: "ser mas para servir mejor." Depending on our perception it could mean different things. For us, it means that in order to be able to provide help, we have to create a better version of ourselves which comes with education.

The Languages and Linguistics department at PUCESA has for many years provided quality instruction on English as a Foreign Language. The proficiency course is organized on eight levels of instruction. The reason we have chosen to do our research here is because the university provides us with a good environment which is propitious for research having students with different backgrounds and educational contexts.

More specifically speaking, we have chosen the first level because we believe that without proper fundamentals on writing performance students will have to face difficulties in the future that could be avoided if they developed this abilities early on the foreign language learning process. We have to add that the study has been taken to practice in normal periods of English classes in the chosen levels and times. And, the information will be compiled through a method for measuring written performance with the aid of a Written English Scoring Rubric (see Annex 1)

2.4. Data Collection

Data Collection is a process that describes preparing and gathering data. This is with the purpose of process improvement on a specific subject of research. The purpose of data collection is to obtain information to keep on record, to make decisions about important issues, and to pass information on to others. There are many different ways in which the researcher can collect information. In this research we have chosen a method than can allow for objective results. Therefore, in order to collect data a pretest and a posttest were used. However, it is important to define the specific instrument to be used for evaluation as well as the parameters to be evaluated.

2.4.1. Instrument Elaboration

In order to assess students' abilities on this skill a Written English Scoring Rubric needs to be applied. (see Annex 1) The mentioned sheet contained a set of parameters to be rated and a series of possible ratings. The evaluated parameters were both linguistic and communicative. Each rating concept has a numerical value that ranges from 0.5 to 2.5. It is important to keep the same assessment concepts for both, the pretest and the posttest, so we can observe the results of the techniques that have been used. Both tests will be marked over 10 points.

As for the pretest, students were given specific instructions and ideas for generating a written composition in the form of a paragraph. (see Annex 2)

Students were evaluated using the scoring rubric sheet on the following aspects: accuracy, mechanics, content and organization, as referred above.

As for the posttest, students were given similar instructions except that the topic was different. (see Annex 3) They had to generate a written composition in the form of a paragraph. Students were evaluated using the scoring rubric sheet on the following aspects: accuracy, mechanics, content and organization, as referred above.

2.4.2. Verification and Validation of Instruments

The use of composition as a tool for evaluating writing is not new. From the traditional point of view, this has been a tool that is quite controversial because many educators think that it is not possible for students to demonstrate the knowledge they possess in one piece of writing. However, we have to remember that we are not evaluating specific, but rather general aspects which are relative to what students know. Then, it is important to make the process easier and more productive for students. The way we validate this instrument is by providing students with the information they will write about. In other words, “the writer needs to possess knowledge of the subject he intends to write about, knowledge of the relevant language and finally knowledge of personal aspects involved in writing and how to control them” (Romero et al , 2005). This is why we used a short period of adaptation so we can provide students with a range of knowledge they could use. By the time they received the pretest students knew in advanced some of the aspects they could include. A similar process happened with the

posttest. By the time they took it, they were even more familiarized with what they had to do. In sum, we can validate the instrument by extending a simple writing instruction so students can have ideas on what they could write about.

2.4.3. Application of Instruments

At the beginning of the semester students went through a normal period of adaptation which took place during the first week. After this period they were told that an important focus was going to be placed on written composition and that during the semester we would attempt to develop their writing skills through the use of portfolio-based learning. Before starting with portfolio-based learning techniques, the pretest was applied. The pretest was obviously not applied straight after the beginning of the semester. Pupils studied the first lesson from their textbook in order to provide the whole group students with the same background information in order to take the pretest. However, it is undeniable that students' broader background coming from high school or previous education on the language was going to make for different levels on students knowledge. The pretest took place on the twenty-third of September 2008. The addressed topic was "Describing a person you know." Both groups were provided with the same topic. The pre-test was provided in the simplest form of formality. The instructions were written on the board, and students used a simple piece of paper to develop this free writing activity (see annex 2). Their abilities were assessed as stated in part 2.4.1. The pre-test was marked over 10 points meaning that each aspect was evaluated over 2.5 points.

After the Pretest was carried out, we set some general guidelines for students such as the way in which we would handle feedback, i.e. through the use of general indications, and written notes. They were specially told that a self-discovery approach to error correction was going to be used, as well as the Cartledge Method. Students were also told that they could hand in up to 3 drafts as well as a final work. They were also told that different activities were going to be used during the process to enhance the whole process.

Not surprisingly the results of the pretests revealed that even though most of the students had some background knowledge on the notion of paragraph writing, they struggled on coming up with ideas to write about. Students themselves provided some ideas which were drawn on the board and then the web was added to their portfolio (See Annex 3). Their pretests also showed some minor mistakes which were pointed out for them to analyze. For some students the next draft they handed in, turn out to be the last one as in our chosen example (see annex 4). Whereas for other students it was still another draft which continued to have some grammatical mistakes which were analyzed in class. We realized that students had some problems aspects such as mechanics and accuracy therefore some exercises were prepared for them to practice and include in their portfolio. (see annexes 5 and 6) Nevertheless, we did not put much emphasis on the latter since students coped with that on their textbooks.

As we started another topic, we chose to create another piece of writing, we wanted to emphasize the importance of brainstorming so once again we started with a free writing exercise, this time the topic was describing a town or city (See annex 7). Interestingly we discovered that the text contained more grammatical mistakes than errors having to do with mechanics. Those mistakes were addressed in class. We also wanted our students to come up with a list of things they could say to expand their writing. They mentioned several aspects which were included on their following draft (See Annex 8). Nevertheless, we could not avoid noticing that the more students wrote the more sentence structure mistakes students started to make. We decided to create very simple sentence structure exercise for helping them on this matter (see annex 9). The third draft (see annex 10) had a more consistent writing structure, it had some minor vocabulary mistakes which were pointed out in class. The final draft was much better (see annex 11).

For the next piece of writing we started by providing students with a worksheet so they can brainstorm what they were going to write (see annex 12). The first draft was excellent in providing a view of what students can do in terms of fluency. In this opportunity, we used the Cartledge Method for students to find their own mistakes. We have highlighted them since they could not be scanned (see annex 13). Once again the process for developing this piece was rather fast on our chosen sample. Nevertheless, interestingly, errors had the same nature on all the other works. They were minor mistakes which students tend to neglect without intention (see annex 14). It was simply

solved by getting students to analyze what they have written. The final draft had virtually no mistakes (see annex 15).

After three months students were assessed once again in order to determine, and calculate their improvement. The posttest was carried out in a similar way as the pretest. It took place on the eighteenth of December 2008. The chosen topic was "Writing a mini-biography." Students were given clear instructions on the aspects that could be included and they were evaluated on the parameters stated on part 2.4.1. The test was also marked over 10 points assigning each aspect 2.5 points. This time we could witness that their fluency of expression had improved. Nevertheless, it was difficult for them to focus on the specified topic, without providing information which is not relevant (see annex 15). This is a theme that has a lot to do with our writing style in our native language. Nevertheless, we can still say that it is a good work for first level students.

At the end of the process the whole group commented on the experience and on what they did not know about writing in a foreign language. They mentioned aspects such as the importance of brainstorming, the necessity for basic notions on punctuation, the significance of reflecting on one's mistakes, and learning, among many other things. Time played an important role in the process. We would have wanted to make the process longer in order to have an even more efficient and complete portfolio, but unfortunately, the syllabus and contents of the course needed to be covered as well. However, we have included another student's pieces of writing at the

beginning and at the end of the process, so the results can be more clearly observable in spite of time constraints. (see annexes 16 and 17).

In conclusion, we could see that step by step students started to use the knowledge they had, and it developed into more communication and fluency. Students were given the opportunity to discover their mistakes instead of just correcting them without any analytical thinking. Students gained more confidence, and started to grasp the idea behind being clear in their expression, organizing their thoughts and providing a fluent text. During the time of study we were able to do the process using different topics that included class writing, and for the diagnostic part teacher correction, as well as self correction. We can describe the whole procedure as a spiral process in which every time students approached a new topic to write about, they could use their knowledge more efficiently.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

3.1. Background for Analysis and Interpretation

Before proceeding to the Analysis of data it is important to bring to surface essential aspects that condition the results obtained here. Firstly, it is necessary to mention that the textbook used is: Face 2 Face elementary by Chris Redston and Gillie Cunningham. The textbook plays an important role in the analysis because at PUCESA the syllabus is to a great extent based on the contents of the book. Therefore, the textbook was a main resource when providing the subject matter for developing writing skills.

Secondly, it is important to recall that students are developing writing at an elementary level only. However, we are not dealing with complete beginners. It is assumed that students have received instruction in English in the past since they come from other educational institutions. The textbook assumes the same thing. During the first level students are supposed to cover eight units from their textbook. This material comprehends twelve units in total at the end of which students are supposed to master elementary level as stated by the CEF (see part 1.2.3.4.) Nevertheless, as students do not finish their book and our educational environment might be quite different to what could be an ideal classroom setting it is important to adapt the objectives to what students need.

Thirdly, it is important to mention the role of time. At PUCESA, the syllabus has to be studied accordingly with the book during an hour everyday from Monday to Friday. The textbook provides a variety of activities to be developed during the course. If we were to apply every single activity presented by textbook, we would simply not have time to spend on weaknesses students may show, or time to develop any writing abilities at all. That is why adapting the textbook to the specific learning environment, has been the way in which PUCESA has worked for many years, and it is the same way we have attempted to develop writing skills.

Finally, the students' personal situation plays a very important role when it comes to writing. There might be certain attitudes students have towards learning English itself not to mention to writing on this language. These attitudes are based on their past experiences on this skill, and even though the main focus of this dissertation was not to create a good attitude towards it, we attempted not to make the situation monotonous for students. In sum, taking all these aspects into consideration will help to better understand the results that will be shown in the next section.

3.2. Analysis and Interpretation of Pretests

Table 3.1. Results of the Pretest on the control group

| FIRST LEVELS CONTROL GROUP | | Accuracy | Mechanics | Content | Organization | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-------|
| 1 | ARCOS FERNANDA | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 2 | CAJAS KARLA | 2 | 1 | 1.5 | 1 | 5.5 |
| 3 | ESPEJO O'BRIAN | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 7 |
| 4 | ESTRELLA IVONNE | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 5 | GAVILANES MARIO | 1.5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5.5 |
| 6 | GUEVARA ALEXANDRA | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 7.5 |
| 7 | MICHUY YASMIN | 1.5 | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 6.5 |
| 8 | MORALES CHRISTIAN | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 2 | 6.5 |
| 9 | ORTIZ GRACE | 1.5 | 1 | 1 | 1.5 | 5 |
| 10 | ORTIZ JOHANA | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 7.5 |
| 11 | RODRIGUEZ POLETH | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 7 |
| 12 | SALTOS LORENA | 1.5 | 1 | 1.5 | 2 | 6 |
| 13 | SANCHEZ EDGAR | 1 | 1 | 1.5 | 1 | 4.5 |
| 14 | TIGASI RUTH | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6 |
| 15 | TOBAR VICTORIA | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 1 | 6.5 |
| 16 | VALENCIA CRISTINA | 2 | 1.5 | 1 | 1 | 5.5 |
| 17 | VELASTEGUI JESSICA | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6.5 |
| AVERAGE | | 1.76 | 1.59 | 1.59 | 1.47 | 6.41 |

Mean: 6.41

Standard Deviation: 1.02

Table 3.2. Results of the Pretest on the experimental group

| FIRST LEVEL D EXPERIMENTAL GROUP | | Accuracy | Mechanics | Content | Organization | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-------|
| 1 | ACUÑA MAITE | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7.5 |
| 2 | BARRIGA MIGUEL | 1 | 1.5 | 1 | 1 | 4.5 |
| 3 | BAUTISTA RENATA | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6.5 |
| 4 | CAÑAR ESTEFANIA | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1 | 6 |
| 5 | CASTRO LENIN | 1.5 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5.5 |
| 6 | FACTOS BRIAN | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6 |
| 7 | GAVILANES YESENIA | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6.5 |
| 8 | GAVILANEZ HECTOR | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 9 | GONZALEZ MONICA | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 7 |
| 10 | GUERRERO ALEJANDRO | 0.5 | 1 | 0.5 | 1 | 3 |
| 11 | MARIN MALENA | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 7.5 |
| 12 | MAYORGA SANTIAGO | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 7.5 |
| 13 | RODRIGUEZ JOSE | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| 14 | SUAREZ RUBEN | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6.5 |
| 15 | TORRES GINO | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6.5 |
| 16 | VILLACIS CAROLINA | 2 | 1 | 1.5 | 1 | 5.5 |
| 17 | VILLACIS ADRIANA | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 7 |
| AVERAGE | | 1.62 | 1.65 | 1.50 | 1.41 | 6.18 |

Mean: 6.18

Standard Deviation: 1.35

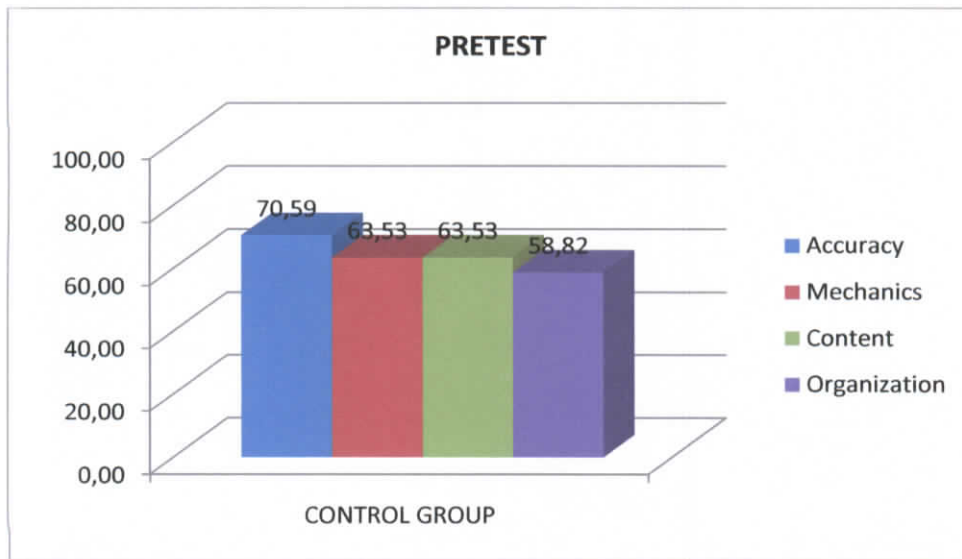
The control group shows the following results: mean 6.41, and the standard deviation 1.02. The experimental group: mean 6.18, and the standard deviation 1.35.

The standard deviation allows us to see that both groups come from different situations in which we have students that get different range of grades. The aspect we need to consider as relevant in our study is that the difference between both means are not too wide. This tells us that the control group and the experimental group are more or less at the same level of proficiency on

this skill. It is possible to analyze that even though one could expect higher grades from students, there is indeed some background knowledge, coming from students' previous education, on what writing implies.

3.2.1. Illustration of evaluated parameters

Figure 3.1. Percentages of the Pretest on the control group using the evaluated parameters.

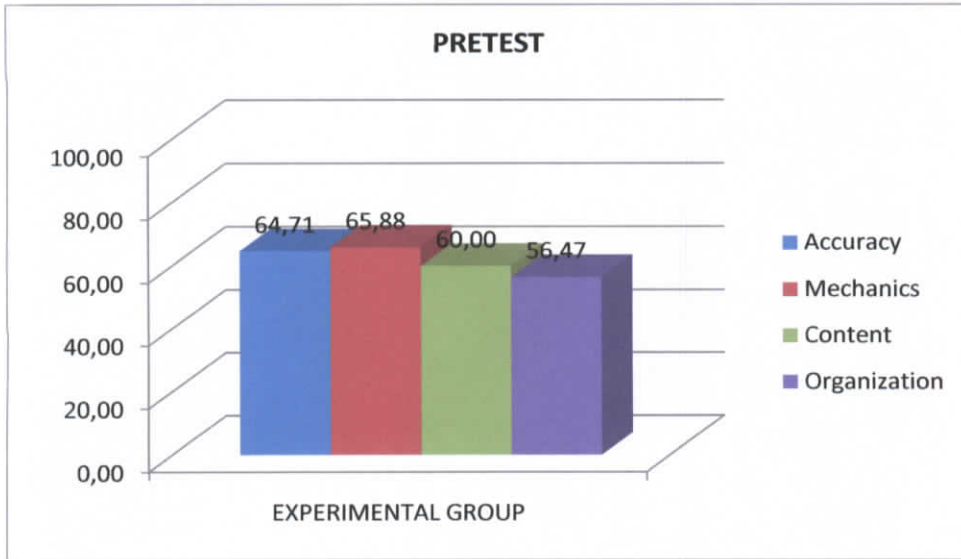


It is possible to appreciate that the parameter that obtained the highest score was accuracy 70.59% followed by mechanics and content which obtained 63.53% each and finally organization with 58.82%. Using the CEF reference, students would be considered to be developing their abilities in the A1 - Breakthrough stage.

The results tell us that students have certain knowledge when it comes to grammar and vocabulary, but they lack some knowledge on conventions such as punctuation which most likely was transferred from their native language. In the same way students can make themselves clear up to a point

but still need to learn better ways to make their message clearer. However, they show some problems on organizing their ideas so they can be fluent.

Figure 3.2. Percentages of the Pretest on the experimental group using the evaluated parameters



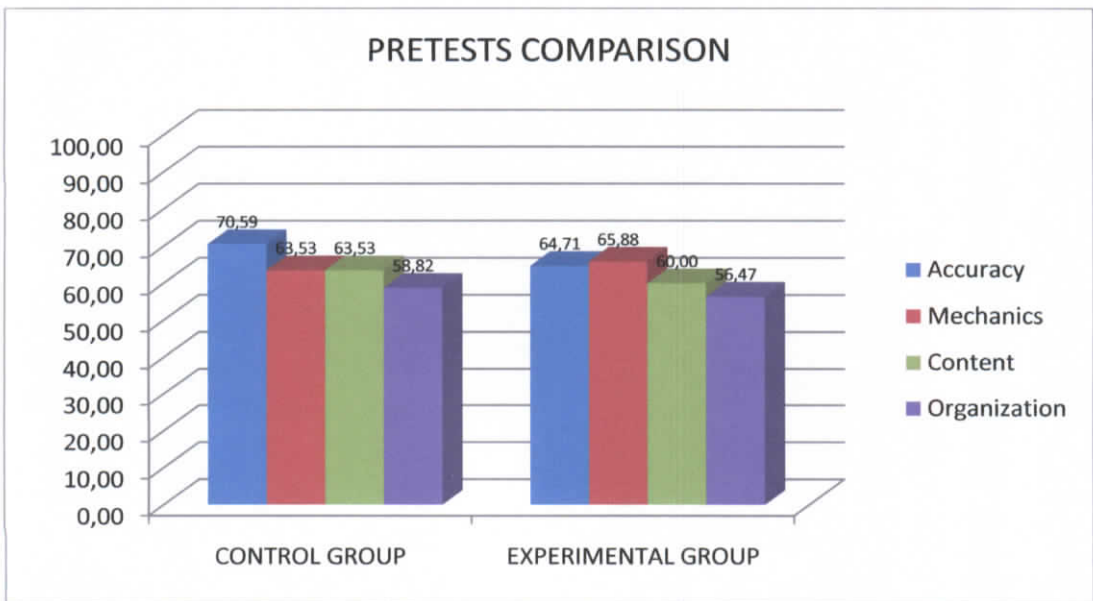
The results displayed from the experimental group are slightly different from the ones displayed in the control group. Accuracy presents 64.71%, mechanics 65.88 %, content 60.00%, and organization 56.47%

The results explain that students have managed to use basic spelling and punctuation rules more effectively than the other aspects. This might most likely come from transferring these abilities from their native language. However, this is relative since this aspect can only be understood considering that in reality their performance was not the best but they managed to obtain better results here. We can also see that accuracy is

another better scored aspect, but their abilities to pass messages and organized their ideas still need to be worked on.

3.2.2. Comparison of results among groups

Figure 3.3. Percentages of the Pretest on the experimental and control groups using the evaluated parameters



Generally speaking, it is possible to notice that both groups are quite similar on their performance. One of the main differences can be observed in accuracy in which the students from the control group are somewhat superior to the students on the experimental group. Since the control group was determined from three different groups, it is possible that best performing students at this aspect were chosen by chance. The teachers who helped on collecting this data did this the way they considered it appropriate. If they assigned it as a homework it is possible that only the more outstanding students handed in their work. However, the difference is not severely wide.

Another interesting difference is students performance on mechanics in which the experimental group does better. Even though the difference is not really wide, we can assume that their abilities on this skill were transferred from their native language. Their ability to convey messages also presents a difference that favours the control group, it possibly has to do with their ability on accuracy. Finally, both groups present lower scores on their ability to organize their ideas and to make their text fluent. Nevertheless, the control group still presents a slight superiority which is coherent with their skills on the other aspects.

3.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Posttests

Table 3.4. Results of the Posttest on the control group

| FIRST LEVELS CONTROL GROUP | | Accuracy | Mechanics | Content | Organization | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-------|
| 1 | ARCOS FERNANDA | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 2 | CAJAS KARLA | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 2.5 | 9 |
| 3 | ESPEJO O'BRIAN | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 4 | ESTRELLA IVONNE | 2 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 9.5 |
| 5 | GAVILANES MARIO | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 9 |
| 6 | GUEVARA ALEXANDRA | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 8.5 |
| 7 | MICHUY YASMIN | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7.5 |
| 8 | MORALES CHRISTIAN | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6 |
| 9 | ORTIZ GRACE | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 8.5 |
| 10 | ORTIZ JOHANA | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 2 | 8.5 |
| 11 | RODRIGUEZ POLETH | 2 | 2.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 7.5 |
| 12 | SALTOS LORENA | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 9 |
| 13 | SANCHEZ EDGAR | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 7.5 |
| 14 | TIGASI RUTH | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 15 | TOBAR VICTORIA | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 8 |
| 16 | VALENCIA CRISTINA | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 2 | 7 |
| 17 | VELASTEGUI JESSICA | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 7 |
| AVERAGE | | 1.91 | 2.09 | 2.06 | 1.97 | 8.03 |

Mean: 8.03

Standard Deviation: 0.89

Table 3.5. Results of the Posttest on the experimental group

| FIRST LEVEL D EXPERIMENTAL GROUP | | Accuracy | Mechanics | Content | Organization | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-------|
| 1 | ACUÑA MAITE | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 9 |
| 2 | BARRIGA MIGUEL | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 2 | 8.5 |
| 3 | BAUTISTA RENATA | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 8 |
| 4 | CAÑAR ESTEFANIA | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 9 |
| 5 | CASTRO LENIN | 1.5 | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 7 |
| 6 | FACTOS BRIAN | 1.5 | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 8 |
| 7 | GAVILANES YESENIA | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 2 | 8.5 |
| 8 | GAVILANEZ HECTOR | 2.5 | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 9 |
| 9 | GONZALEZ MONICA | 2 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 9.5 |
| 10 | GUERRERO ALEJANDRO | 1 | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 6 |
| 11 | MARIN MALENA | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 2 | 8.5 |
| 12 | MAYORGA SANTIAGO | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 10 |
| 13 | RODRIGUEZ JOSE | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6.5 |
| 14 | SUAREZ RUBEN | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 9 |
| 15 | TORRES GINO | 2 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2 | 9 |
| 16 | VILLACIS CAROLINA | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 7 |
| 17 | VILLACIS ADRIANA | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| AVERAGE | | 1.91 | 2.18 | 2.15 | 2.03 | 8.26 |

Mean: 8.26

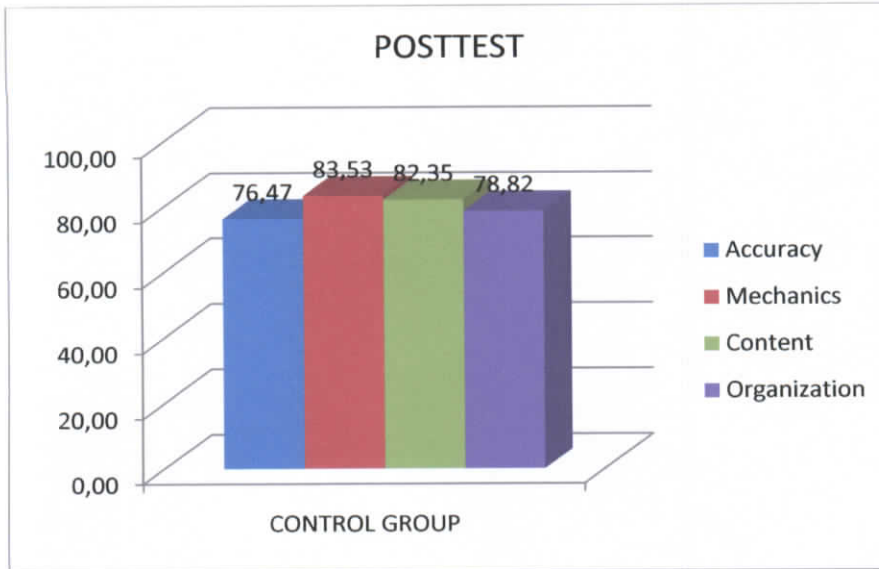
Standard Deviation: 1.09

The results on the control group show a mean of 8.03 and a standard deviation of 0.89. The experimental group showed a mean of 8.26, and a standard deviation of 1.09. It is possible to appreciate that the means of both groups have increased in comparison to the ones of the pretest. The mean of the control group increased by 1.62 points implying a 25% growth, and the mean of the experimental group increased by 2.09 points suggesting a 33% growth.

The results obtained from both groups on their means and on their standard deviations allow us to state that the scores come from two different settings. We can clearly see that both groups have increased on their written performance. Of course, this is due to the fact that both groups have received instruction in English as a foreign language; therefore developing into a higher level of proficiency was expected. Nevertheless, it is important to see that the growth of the experimental group was higher than the growth of the control group. This could indeed suggest that there has been a significant change on the development of the experimental group in comparison to the development of the control group. However, it is important to apply a statistical tool such as the *t-test* in order to validate data. This analysis will take place on part 3.4.

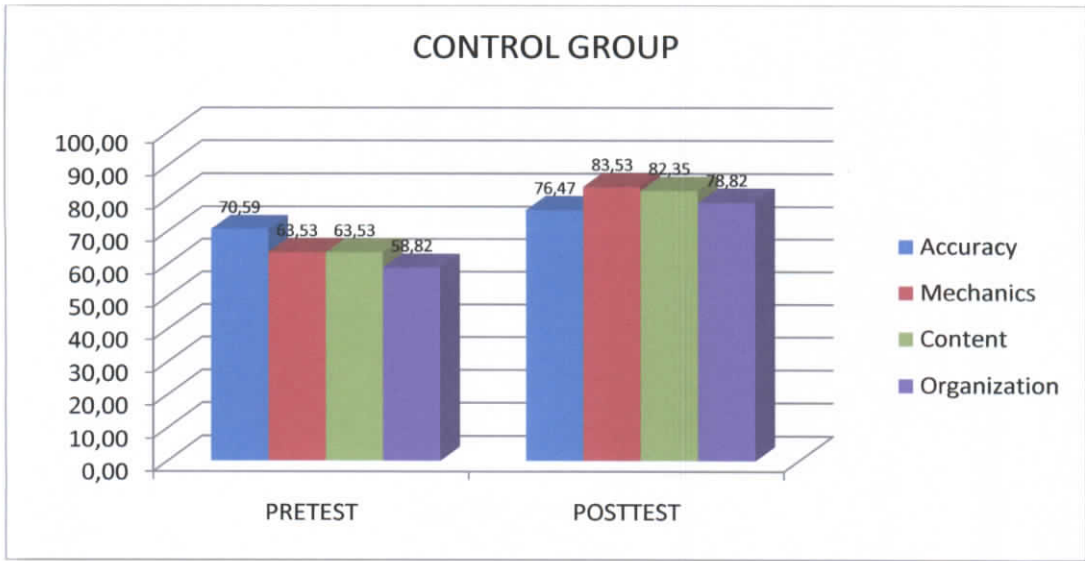
3.3.1. Illustration of evaluated parameters

Figure 3.4. Percentages of the Posttest on the control group using the evaluated parameters.



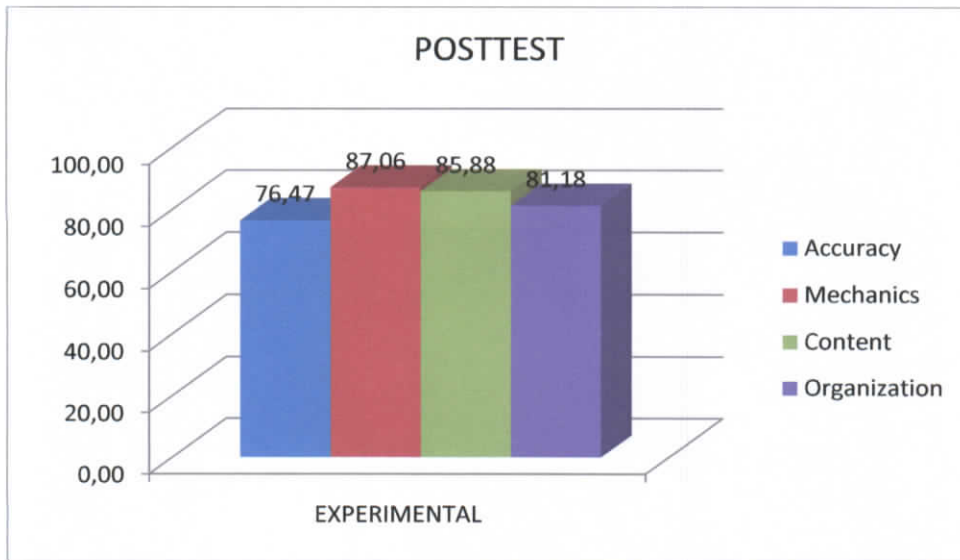
We can appreciate that performance on the evaluated aspects has increased. Interestingly, some aspects that previously had a low mark have increased more than others. Accuracy has obtained 76.47%, mechanics has 83.53%, content has 82.35% and organization has 78.82%. In order to better appreciate the difference we can analyze following graphic:

Figure 3.5. Comparison of pretest and posttest on the control group



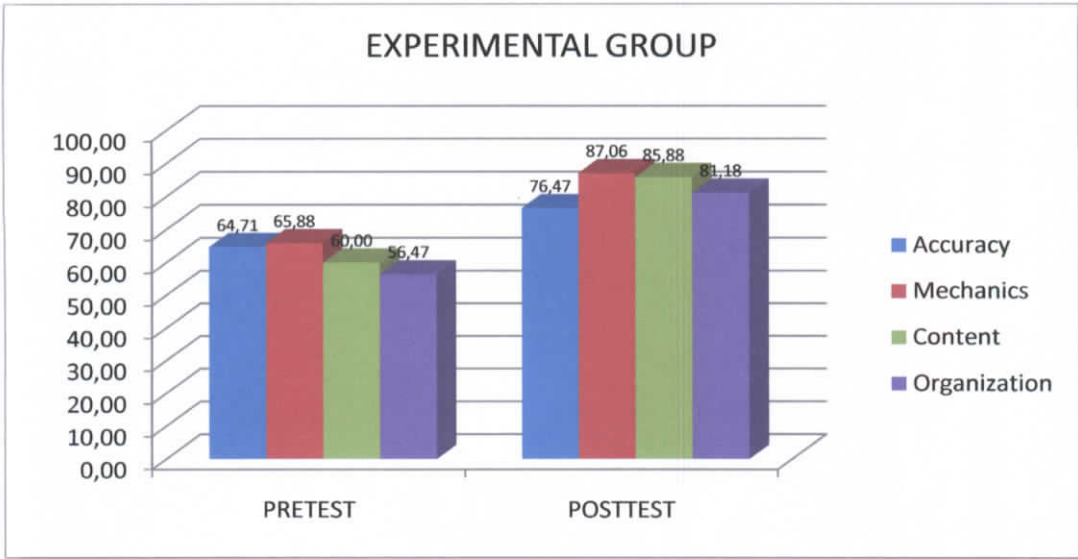
It is observable that accuracy has kept pretty much the same trend of development. However, mechanics as well as content have substantially improved. The development of mechanics may be due to the fact that students practice a great deal of writing when doing exercises in their books. Similarly, students have improved on their ability to pass their messages probably due to the fact that they are asked to convey their own ideas based on the topics provided by their textbook. Organization was somewhat still a weak area. Nevertheless, they have improved their ability on organizing, and providing ideas to make their text fluent.

Figure 3.6. Percentages of the Posttest on the experimental group using the evaluated parameters



We can observe that performance on the evaluated aspects has also increased as it increased with the other group. As we will analyze later the results here have followed a more constant pattern. Accuracy obtained 76.47%, mechanics 87.06%, content 85.88% and organization has 81.82%. In order to better understand the difference we can compare the results in the following graphic:

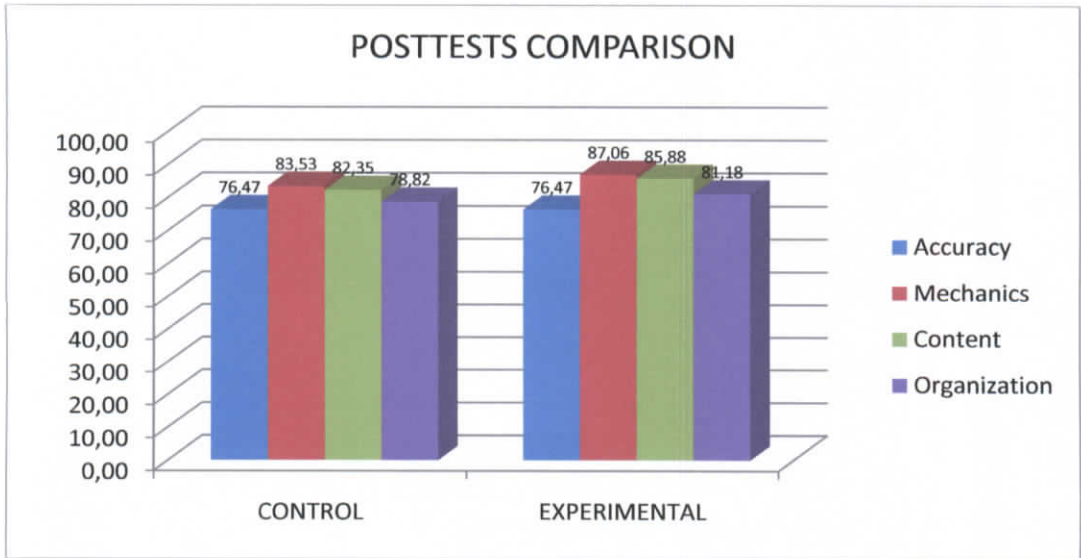
Figure 3.7. Comparison of pretest and posttest on the experimental group



If we were to judge students' improvement by the graphic, we could certainly say that they have significantly progressed on their abilities. It is interesting that parameters such as mechanics and content show great development, but it is even more interesting that organization showed better improvement than accuracy. It is not that we minimize the importance of accuracy but the main focus here was to provide students with abilities to communicate their ideas in a more fluent and better way.

3.3.2. Comparison of results among groups

Figure 3.8. Percentages of the Posttests on the experimental and control groups using the evaluated parameters



As it was mentioned before, both groups experienced some improvement on their means. It is important to remark that except for accuracy, all the other parameters on the experimental group express a higher level than the ones on the control group. It is important to remember that the students from the experimental group started having percentages that were slightly lower than the ones presented on the control group. Therefore even if the percentage of the experimental group might not seem dramatically higher than the control group, it is significant in the sense that students have overcome a difficult condition given by the circumstances as stated on the pretest. (see graphic 3.2.)

We can observe that the highest scored aspect is mechanics. This is understandable since the conventions of spelling and punctuation at a beginner level are not too complex. We are simply attempting to make students produce periods or commas to better separate and illustrate their ideas. Also, it is possible to see that the next high ranking aspects are content and organization. This is most likely due to the fact that a considerable part of their textbook concentrates on developing communicative abilities. We could say that it is relatively easier to develop the ability to convey a message than to master the conventions of structure that are suggested in organization. This is why the score of this aspect is not as high as the other two. As for accuracy, it is important to recall that communicative ability is not necessarily linked to perfect grammar and vocabulary. Despite the conditions established on the pretest of the experimental group, students have managed to improve their ability on this aspect, and they have reached a level which is similar to the one of the control group.

Another thing important mentioning is that students practiced grammar with the use of their textbook so we had assessed their grammar and vocabulary with the help of their book we could have possibly obtained better results on this aspect. Finally, we have to say that knowing accuracy conventions in theory does not necessarily mean we will be able to apply them. Students could know that they need to add a final S on the third person singular, but they may fail to do so when they are writing. Even so, almost certainly, both groups showed the necessary improvement on this aspect so communicative

abilities might not be affected if an insufficient level on this aspect had been attained.

3.4. Validation of results

As we mentioned in part 3.3, in order to make results more valid, it is important to use a statistical tool. For our purposes, we are going to use the **t-test**. The reason why we need to apply such statistical tool is because comparing results only with the help of the means from each group tends to be quite subjective and not very reliable. The t-test provides a way to analyze the reliability of results scientifically. An important feature of the t-test that is important mentioning is that it is a statistical concept that can be applied with samples that are not too large.

In order to calculate the t-test it is necessary to calculate the means of both groups as well as their deviation from the mean. This is represented in the following chart:

| EXPERIMENTAL GROUP | | CONTROL GROUP | |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Scores | Deviation from mean | Scores | Deviation from mean |
| 9 | 0.74 | 8 | -0.03 |
| 8.5 | 0.24 | 9 | 0.97 |
| 8 | -0.26 | 8 | -0.03 |
| 9 | 0.74 | 9.5 | 1.47 |
| 7 | -1.26 | 9 | 0.97 |
| 8 | -0.26 | 8.5 | 0.47 |
| 8.5 | 0.24 | 7.5 | -0.53 |
| 9 | 0.74 | 6 | -2.03 |
| 9.5 | 1.24 | 8.5 | 0.47 |
| 6 | -2.26 | 8.5 | 0.47 |
| 8.5 | 0.24 | 7.5 | -0.53 |
| 10 | 1.74 | 9 | 0.97 |
| 6.5 | -1.76 | 7.5 | -0.53 |
| 9 | 0.74 | 8 | -0.03 |
| 9 | 0.74 | 8 | -0.03 |
| 7 | -1.26 | 7 | -1.03 |
| 8 | -0.26 | 7 | -1.03 |
| Mean = 8.26 | $\sigma = 1.09$ | Mean = 8.03 | $\sigma = 0.89$ |

In order to calculate the t-test it is necessary, to apply the following formula:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\sigma_1^2}{N_1} + \frac{\sigma_2^2}{N_2}}}$$

Where: X = mean
 σ = Standard Deviation
N = number of students

The resolution of the formula using our data would be as follows.

$$t = \frac{8.26 - 8.03}{\sqrt{\frac{1.09^2}{17} + \frac{0.89^2}{17}}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.23}{\sqrt{\frac{1.19 + 0.79}{17}}} = \frac{0.23}{\sqrt{0.12}} = \frac{0.23}{0.34} = \mathbf{0.69}$$

The t-test provides us with a table of percentage points for upper probability of Student's t-distribution. In order to analyze our results on this table, it is necessary to establish a value called: degrees of freedom which is the total number of students – 2, we have to establish level of significance which ranges from 0.005 to 0.450. This will determine the amount of reliability. Considering our result, our degrees of freedom are 32, and our significance level is established on 0.250, meaning that our results are reliable on a scale of 75%. Normally, scientifically speaking we know that the closest results are to 100% the more accurate they are. However, we need to consider that the t-test assumes that at the beginning of the research and experimental process both groups started at the same level and this is not our case. Students from the experimental group had a somewhat lower mean, which makes our results even more meaningful. This leads us to maintain our initial premise: THE APPLICATION OF PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNING HAS IMPROVED THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY WRITING COMMUNICATIVE FLUENCY AT THE FIRST LEVEL AT THE LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS SCHOOL AT PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DEL ECUADOR SEDE AMBATO.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In the previous chapters we have analyzed the many different stages of the process for DEVELOPING WRITING COMMUNICATIVE FLUENCY THROUGH PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNING AT THE FIRST LEVEL AT THE LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS SCHOOL AT PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DEL ECUADOR SEDE AMBATO. We used a quasi-experimental method for data collection, and the results we obtained proved to be acceptable. Therefore, some conclusions need to be put into consideration:

- By examining the pretests we could appreciate that even though students had some knowledge about linguistic aspects of the language, they lacked some knowledge about the communicative features which are also very important on written performance. We could see that both groups obtained a mean around 6 which cannot really be considered as bad, and is justified considering that students had previous contact with English. Nevertheless, we can always aim at obtaining better results. The pretests allowed us to see the reality occurring in both groups. The information we found was that the control group had a slight dominance over the results of the experimental group. With this in mind, we could say that the improvement of the experimental group had a challenge to face. They did not only have to reach the level of the control group but it was desirable to surpass their

results. On the other side of the spectrum, the instrument we used to assess the pretest, not only provided students with some ideas on what they could write about, but it also gave them the freedom to apply what they know with the help of some information they saw in class. Tests tend to be associated with tense situations, but this test did not put the students under those circumstances. The activity was carried out pretty much at ease which is good, so ideas cannot be obstructed by nervousness or anxiety.

- After having an idea on what students were able to do in terms of communicating, we applied different activities in order to help students on producing language for fluency, and creating awareness for features such as mechanics and organization. We also tried to make students aware of what they were bringing on, from the processes they were going through. This is because one of the important ideas of a portfolio is that students are able to reflect about their learning by using this tool. We could say that the most important aspect of the portfolio is not the work that has been collected. The most important aspect of a portfolio is the mental collection of work which is composed by the students' desires, accomplishments, frustrations which cannot be seen but are present as a result of the whole process. Therefore, even though the impact of the instrument has academic implications, it would not have had any impact at all, if it had not gone through these other aspects that compose a human being.

- The posttests showed interesting results. We were able to compare the results of both groups to the results of their pretests, and we could also compare them to their counterparts on the control group. Without taking into

consideration the fact that the experimental group started at a somewhat lower level of proficiency, the results told us that students managed to overcome the situation by attaining higher marks than the control group except for accuracy in which they obtained the same mean. We need to remark that not only the experimental group experienced results but the control group did also. We need to remember that we are not only dealing with statistical data here, behind all the results we have human beings who have the right to develop their abilities. Beyond the techniques that might be used for developing writing, it is important to emphasize the necessity for students to feel that they are accomplishing their personal goals and objectives.

In sum, we can conclude that the main contribution that this work has provided is laying the foundations of written production on students. Since there is not a defined writing program at PUCESA, the process was meaningful to students because it provided students with the ideas that will help them in their future encounters with the skill of writing. It is probable that many students had gone through their educational process on English as a foreign language without having a clear idea of what writing communicative fluency is about. However, through this process students could see, appreciate and become aware of the importance and the impact this could have in their academic process. On the other hand, we could also conclude on the idea that what the teacher can gain from this type of experience might probably be in a way more enriching than what the student gains academically speaking. In this occasion, we had the opportunity not only to

learn about the different theories and techniques for writing development, and for scientific methodology, but we have also gained an important aspect which has to do with a more abstract reward. It is not a simple task to share knowledge with students so they can ultimately own it. The course of action requires patience and can only be carried out with positive attitude. Even gaining a minor part of this knowledge might be a privilege that no everyone could have.

Recommendations

Every process that requires some effort brings a rewarding experience as a result. The results of this specific process brought a great insight into the understanding of the foreign language teacher. Moreover, it brought a great deal of knowledge on aspects that refer not only to the aspects underlying the development of written skills, but also the procedures and concepts behind statistical research methodology which is fundamentally important when it comes to evaluating and understanding the educational process. Upon this basis we can formulate the following suggestions:

- In our environment, learning a language has for long been associated with learning grammatical rules by heart. It is undeniable that language teaching and learning has evolved through the years. Even though grammatical conventions are certainly important, there are also other aspects that need to be worked on during lessons. We have mentioned earlier that writing is part of every language classroom. However, it is most commonly used for completing grammar exercises than for communicating a message. The educational situation at PUCESA, probably because of the amount of contents to be covered, makes for little room when it comes to practicing or focusing on other type of activities. Nevertheless, if we want to help students on the primary purpose of the language, which is communication, we need to find the time. Therefore I would recommend teachers to allocate at least a little more time for communicative writing. This is with no doubt a skill that will provide students important academic rewards.

- We have previously stated that the application of a portfolio is not a process which is determined by specific parameters. It is a process that adapts to the particular situation of the classroom. It could include every single piece of work made by a student, or it could include specific items in which we would want to focus on. Creating a portfolio is recommended because it provides visual and tangible material that demonstrates what students have accomplished and achieved. The importance of a portfolio goes beyond the academic aspect of learning. It is an object that provides motivation since it can make a student feel proud of himself, and it can also make the student part of the learning process as he is involved in personalizing his portfolio. Finally, we could say that it is an example of what students could be able to accomplish in the future.

- When addressing writing itself, it is recommended to choose topics that are congruent with what students are learning and to make them appealing to students. As we have mentioned before, to a great extent the contents at PUCESA are based on the students' textbook. Even if we cannot change the topics provided by their textbook, we can choose the way in which we make the topic meaningful to students. The best way to do this is by associating the topic with the students. Most likely, if the topic which will be used for writing has nothing to do with what students know or with their environment, students will easily lose interest on it. On the contrary, if the topic is meaningful to students and they feel identified with it, they will not only feel motivated, but they will have more content to write about coming

from their own personal experience. If students have plenty of ideas to write about, this will develop into writing fluency.

Another recommendation which does not only apply to the EFL setting but to an Educational setting has to do with implementation and innovation. Whether it is portfolio-based learning or any other method, approach or technique, it is important to provide students with different ways to address learning. For many years, the educational environment has had a traditional view of how things should be in the classroom. Fortunately, things are changing now. Currently we have many different resources that were unimaginable some years ago. A great example of this is the internet. It is important to use all the resources we can have to hand in order to improve our teaching practice. Portfolio-based learning is not the only way to do things. There might be many other ways to develop writing skills. We could even create our own system based on our specific needs. The important thing is our ability to move with the changing winds.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

SCORING RUBRIC

| PARAMETERS | DESCRIPTORS | TOTAL |
|--------------|---|-------|
| Accuracy | Virtually no grammar mistakes, vocabulary appropriately used | 2.5 |
| | Minor grammar slips, good range of vocabulary | 2 |
| | Obvious grammar mistakes, not very adequate vocabulary | 1.5 |
| | Many grammar difficulties, fair vocabulary | 1 |
| | Severe grammar mistakes, poor vocabulary | 0.5 |
| | | 2.5 |
| Mechanics | Spelling and punctuation are effectively used | 2.5 |
| | Mostly effective use of spelling and punctuation | 2 |
| | Many misspelled words, some use of punctuation | 1.5 |
| | Several misspelled words, very little use of punctuation | 1 |
| | Even simple words misspelled, no punctuation at all | 0.5 |
| | | 2.5 |
| Content | Text is totally clear and shows good amount of content and creativity | 2.5 |
| | Text is reasonably clear and demonstrates creativity | 2 |
| | Text is passably clear and has customary creativity | 1.5 |
| | Text significantly unclear showing slight creativity | 1 |
| | Text is severely unclear, lacking any content or creativity | 0.5 |
| | | 2.5 |
| Organization | Ideas are evidently organized, allowing for fluency and form | 2.5 |
| | Ideas are logically organized demonstrating fluency and form | 2 |
| | Logical organization is acceptable, interrupting fluency and form | 1.5 |
| | Hardly any organization, fluency and form harshly affected | 1 |
| | Text lacks any logical sequence, hampering fluency and form | 0.5 |
| | | 2.5 |

TOTAL 10

ANNEX 2

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Ambato

Writing Pre-test – LEVEL 1

WRITE a paragraph about a member of your family, a friend or any person you know

Use what you learnt on Unit 1. Write as much as you can!

Name: Gauilanes Yesenia
 Date: 23-09-08

Writing Project

Present a friend or a member of your family

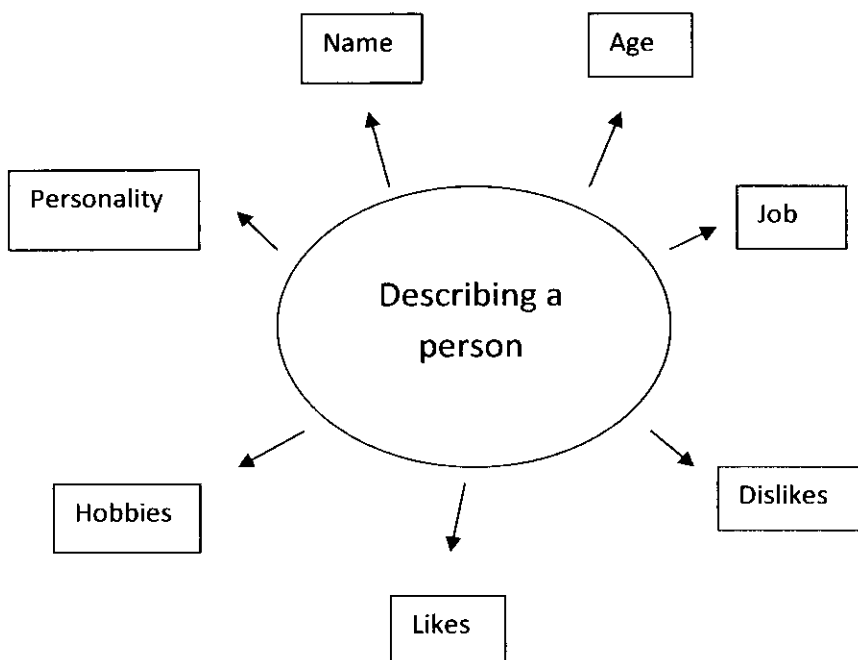
My Mother is very important in my life ; Her name is Eva Espín,
 She is 40 years old , She's from Ecuador ; Her favorite color
 is Blue , She play the piano and play the basketball with
 my brother.

Evaluation:

| | |
|---------------|------------|
| Accuracy: | 2 / 2.5 |
| Mechanics: | 1.5 / 2.5 |
| Content: | 1.5 / 2.5 |
| Organization: | 1.5 / 2.5 |
| TOTAL: | 6.5 |

ANNEX 3

Brainstorming on what to write about



ANNEX 4

Second Draft on the same topic

Name: Gavilanes Yesenia

Date: 25-09-08

Writing Project

Present a friend or a member of your family

My Mother is very important in my life. Her name is Eva Espín.

She is 40 years old. She's from Ecuador. Her favorite color is blue. She is a Doctor. Her favorite food is pizza.

She is very very happy. She is a good person.

ANNEX 5**Capitalization exercise**

Rewrite each sentence correctly.

1. a lot of people didn't have a job during the great depression.

2. it was very hot wednesday.

3. We had a barbecue on memorial day.

4. December 7 is pearl harbour day.

5. my home state is Florida.

6. my birthday is next Thursday.

7. my dad got a saw for father's day.

8. we will go to a movie Saturday.

ANNEX 6**Punctuation exercise**

Read the sentences. Do you use a full stop (.) or a question mark (?)

1. What time does the bus arrive _____
2. My favorite food is pizza _____
3. The baby cub likes to snuggle up to his mother to keep warm _____
4. Do you know how to ride a bicycle _____
5. What is your favorite season _____
6. My brother plays football _____
7. Did you enjoy Joey's birthday party _____
8. Is your mother a good cook _____
9. It rained on Wednesday _____
10. I love to read _____
11. Tommy's favorite sport is basketball _____
12. Where are you going on vacation _____
13. Do you like vegetables _____

ANNEX 7

Free writing on Describing your town

Describe your town or a town
you know

Ambato is a big town. It is beautiful town. The hotels in Ambato are very expensive. It have much places. There are some parks. They are for relax. There is any beach. There are some supermarkets. They are cheap. There isn't an airport near here. There are pharmacy.

Yesenia Gavilanes

ANNEX 8

Second draft on Describing your town

Describe your town or a town
you know

Ambato is a big town. It is a beautiful town. There are some hotels. They are very expensive. In Ambato, ~~is necessary the hotels~~, because ~~arrive~~ ^{arrive} ~~much~~ people. There are some places. There are some parks. I can go out with my family and my friends. The parks are big. There isn't ~~any~~ beach. There are some supermarkets. They are cheap. I can buy a bottle of water and a chocolate ^{there}. There isn't an airport near here. There are some houses. There are some bookshop. They are necessary for the students. I can buy envelopes and stamps ^{there}.

Yesenia Gavilanes.

ANNEX 9**Sentence Structure Exercise**

Organize the following words into sentences

a lot / big / parks / are / there / of

city / beautiful / Ambato / is / a

here / like / I / to / live

enjoy / I / city / my / much very

here / likes / everybody / help / people / other

ANNEX 10

Third draft on Describing your town

Describe your town or a town
you know

Ambato is a big town. It is a beautiful town. There are some hotels. They are very expensive. There are some places. There are some parks. I can go ~~out~~^{there} with my family and my friends. The parks are big. There isn't beach. There are some supermarkets. They are cheap. I can buy a bottle of water and a chocolate. ~~there~~
There isn't an airport near here. There are some houses. There are some bookshops. They are necessary for the students. I can buy envelopes.

Yesenia Gavilanes.

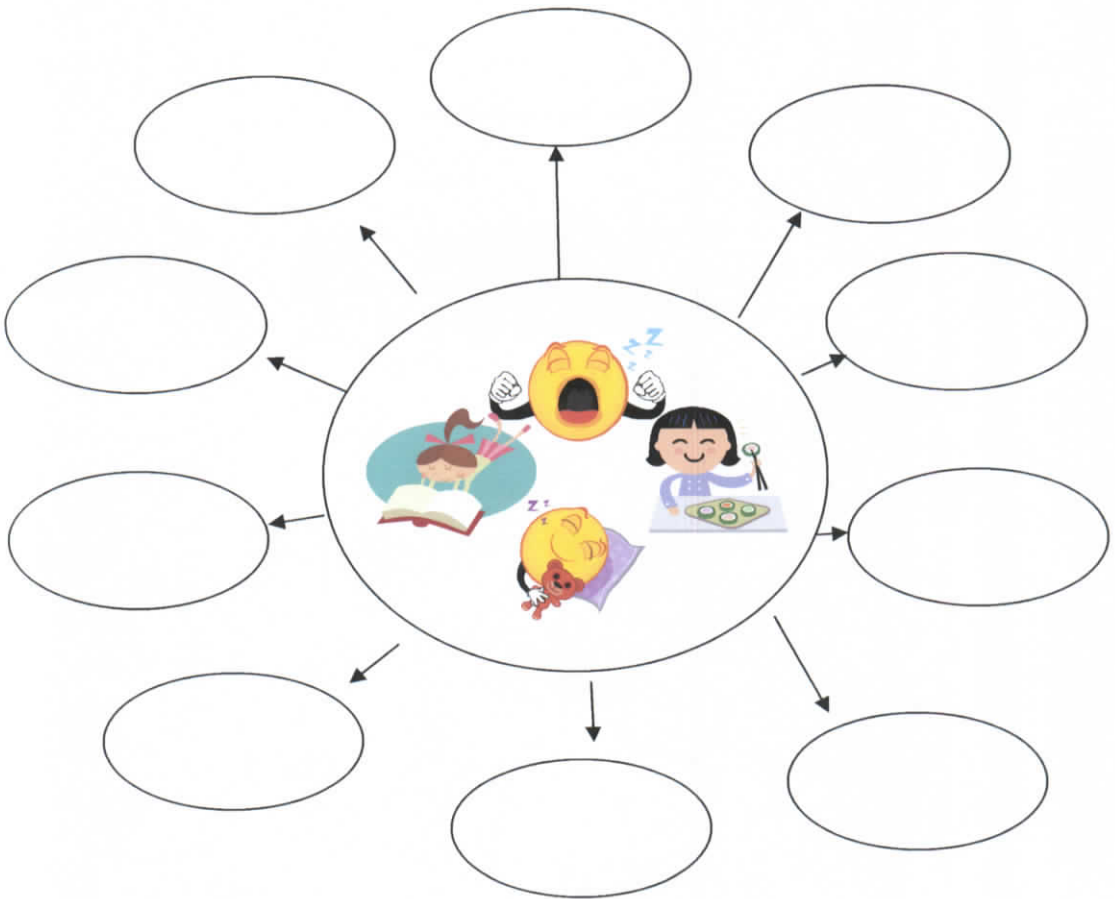
ANNEX 11

Final Draft

Describe your town or a town you know

Ambato is a big town. It is a beautiful town. There are some hotels. They are very expensive. There are some places. There are some parks. The parks are big. There isn't a beach. There are some supermarkets. They are cheap. I can buy a bottle of water. There isn't an airport near here. There are some houses. There are some book shops. They are necessary for the students. I can buy envelopes.

Yesenia Gavilanes

ANNEX 12**Brainstorming on Daily Routines**

ANNEX 13

First draft on Daily Routines

Name: Gavilanes Yesenia

Date: 23-10-08

Writing

My daily routine and my weekends

MW I get up at 6:00 o'clock. I take a shower. I have
 breakfast at 6:30 with my family in my house. It
 MW very fun eat in family. I leave home with my sister.
 I start classes at 7:0'clock. The classes are very
 interesting. The finish classes at 12:45. Then I have
 WO lunch with my friends in my house. After that, I start
 VA classes at 2:00 o'clock. The English's classes is very
 WO fun. The finish classes at 3:00 o'clock. Then I get
 V home at 3:30. I playing the guitar with my brother
 and my sister. Then I go to bed at 10:00 o'clock.
 PR with my sister. I am very happy with my daily routine.
 In my weekends. My weekends are very fun.
 P I get up at 9:00 o'clock. I take a shower. I
 eat out with my family. Next, I visit my friends.
 Then we go shopping and buy shoes. Next I go to
 P the cinema with my family. After that, I go to concerts
 with my friends. We like the romantic's music.
 WO It's very fun the weekends.

ANNEX 14

Second Draft on Daily routines

Name: Gavilanes Yesenia

Date: 04/11/08

Writing

My daily routine and my weekends

I get up at 6:00 o'clock. I take a shower. I have breakfast at 6:30 with my family in my house. It is very fun. I leave home with my sister. I start classes at 7:30 o'clock. I finish classes at 12:45. The classes are very interesting. Then I have lunch with my friends in my house. After that, I start classes at 2:00 o'clock. The English classes are very fun. I finish classes at 3:00 o'clock. Then I get home at 3:30. I play the guitar with my brother and my sister. Then I go to bed at 10:00 o'clock with my sister. I am very happy with my daily routine.

The weekends are very fun. I get up at 9:00 o'clock. I take a shower. I eat out with my family and my friends. We visit my grandparents. Then we go shopping and buy shoes. Next, I go to the cinema with my family. After that I go to concerts with my friends.

ANNEX 14

Final Draft on Daily routines

Name: Yesenia Gavilanes.

Date: 11-11-08

Writing

My daily routine and my weekends.

I get up at 6:00 o'clock. It is boring. I take a shower. I have breakfast at 6:30 with my family in my house. It is very fun. I leave home with my sister. I start classes at 7:00 o'clock. ^{They are} It is interesting. I finish classes at 12:45. The classes are very important. Then, I have lunch with my friends in my house. After that, I start classes at 2:00 o'clock. The English classes are fun. I finish classes at 3:00 o'clock. Then, I get home at 3:30. I play the guitar with my brother and my sister. Then, I go to bed at 10:00 o'clock with my sister. I am very happy with my daily routine.

The weekends are important in my life. I get up at 8:00 o'clock. I take a shower. I eat out with my family and my friends. Next, I visit my grandparents. Then, we go shopping and buy shoes. Next, I go to the cinema with my family. After that I go to concerts with my friends.

ANNEX 15

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Ambato

Writing Posttest – LEVEL 1

WRITE a mini-biography about a famous celebrity, a well-known person, or a person you know well. Include anything you consider is worth telling.

Writing

My grandfather was born in 1920. He was very important in my life. He was a good person. He went to Esmeraldas and He visited his family in the vacation. His favorite color was red. He ate rice and vegetables. His name was Fernando. He was happy. He lived in Quito with his family. He had a house and a car, because He traveled to different places. He played soccer with his friends. His life was very interesting. He was fun and friendly. He had four children. He died in 2000.


Yesenia Gavilanes

Evaluation:

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| Accuracy: | 2 / 2.5 |
| Mechanics: | 2.5 / 2.5 |
| Content: | 2 / 2.5 |
| Organization: | 2 / 2.5 |
| TOTAL | 8.5 |

ANNEX 16

Samples of first writings

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p style="text-align: center;">Homework</p> <p>She is Hipatia. She is from Ecuador. She's 28 years old. She is an accountant. She likes red. Her birthday is on September 2nd. She likes chinese food. She's very intelligent. She's an interesting person.</p> |
|---|--|

ANNEX 17

Samples of writings with Development

Writing Project N°3

My daily routine and my weekends:

I get up early at 6:00 a.m. Then, I take a shower everyday at 6:15 a.m. I always have breakfast in my dining room at 6:20 a.m. I brush my teeth three times a day. After that, I go to high school at 6:40 a.m. in my car with my father. I usually finish classes at 12:40 p.m. I like my high school. Then, I have lunch at 1:30 p.m. in my house. After that, I start classes at university at 2:00 p.m., it's very interesting because I learn English. Next, I do my homework and I study the lessons. I usually watch tv for an hour. Then, ^{Finally} I go to bed at 10:00 p.m. At the weekends, I get up at 9:00 a.m. I usually have coffee with my friends or do sport. I often go to the cinema with my family. I go to bed at 11:30 p.m. In sum, my life is excellent.

Santiago Mayorga

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