Universidad Latina de Costa Rica

Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés

Topic:

Application of Writing Strategies to Motivate Students in Composition Skills at the Poás High School in 2018

Students:

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(TFG E#07)

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Application of Writing Strategies to Motivate Students in Composition Skills at the Poás High School in 2018

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Es todo, firmo en Grecia a los 5 días del mes de enero del año 2019.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

As a necessity to improve the composition skills of the students, this research pretends to apply different strategies to motivate the students' development in writing abilities.

The project starts by diagnosing the students' limitations and strengths on the writing skills through a diagnostic test that tells the researchers which parts of the area need to be worked on and which ones need to continue being reinforced. It is completely necessary to pay attention to both aspects; limitations and strengths, in order to have a clear idea of the process that must be developed. Also, the implementation of three writing activities is crucial to make the process more valid for the purpose of this project.

It is essential to demonstrate how the students' motivation can be affected positively or negatively their development of the writing process. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play a fundamental role in the learning process. Most of the students tend to feel bored in classes where writing activities are involved, so it is necessary that teachers and students work together in order to have attractive classes and feel comfortable when writing has to be developed in and outside the classroom. At the end of the process, it is necessary to assess the improvement of the students according to the implemented activities. This assessment shows if the strategies and activities applied during the process were useful and suitable for the students' improvement of the skills.

It is the main goal to prove that writing cannot just be something bored to do in classes at school, but necessary for the development of critical thinking in students; and as a motivation to express their ideas in different ways.

1.2 Rationale

The main concern to start this project is about what can motivate students to write and learn how to compose properly, what can push them to get interested in writing skills, why is this something that does not catch their minds?. It is well known that students do not want to write essays because they are afraid to commit mistakes, or they do not have the basis to start writing even a paragraph, meanwhile, what students are not aware of is that

writing can open their minds in a good way to start thinking but their own and creating amazing stories, essays even a short paragraph by applying simple steps that might help them to express what they desire. The main goal of this work is to apply different strategies such as how to do brainstorms, organizing ideas in order to express the message to say, in that way the full essay, paragraph or writing material will be clearer and understandable. If students follow steps they will be able to send a clear message to the receiver. Most of the time pupils are not familiarized with the parts of the essay or at least how they should start their writings, if they get familiarized with the most common terms it may help learners to feel comfortable; and at the same time, it is important to make them feel that their writings are of interest and teachers or readers respect their ideas at all times. Educators must be familiarized with interesting topics for students to develop, moving from the basic to complex, and taking into account their ideas. If pupils have good foundations to start their own essay following the steps it includes, the task is developed following the correct sequence and of course catching their attention, so at the end, students will be highly motivated with the learning process.

1.3 Purpose

The main concern of this project consist on the motivation students have regarding composition and how they feel when writing. Some strategies like deliberated explanations, free writing and rewards can help them improve their writing skills.

1.3.1 General Objective

To apply writing strategies to motivate students in composition skills

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

To diagnose students' limitations and strengths in writing skills through a diagnostic test

To implement three writing activities to improve students' skills

To assess students´ improvement in writing after the implemented activities

1.4 Research Questions

The next set of questions pretend to determine the course of this project, and the findings can help researchers to determine how to motivate students through the composition process and learning-teaching experience.

What strategies are being applied to motivate students in the developing of the writing skills?

What are the strengths and limitations students present when writing?

What are three strategies that may help students to improve writing skills?

1.5 Definition of Terms

a. Approach: to make advances to especially in order to create the desired result.

b. Composition: an intellectual creation such as a piece of writing.

c. Limitation: something that controls how much of something is possible or allowed.

d. Methods: a systematic plan followed in presenting material for instruction.

e. Motivation: a motivating force, stimulus, or influence.

f. Pedagogy: the art, science, or profession of teaching.

g. Syllabus: a summary outline of a discourse treatise, or course of study or of examination requirements.

h. Strengths: a strong attribute or inherent asset.

i. Trends: to show a tendency.

j. Strategies / strategy: The art of devising or employing plans or stratagems toward a goal.

k. Skill: a learned power of doing something competently: a developed aptitude or ability.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

2.1 Writing as a Process to Discover Meaning

According to Zamel, V. (1982) "(…) revision should become the main component of this instruction, that writing teachers should intervene throughout the process, and that students should learn to view their writing as someone else's reading" It is extremely necessary to make students able to believe that their writings are valuable. Students must reread their writings with a critical thinking perspective, believing that they are reviewing and learning from other writers, so they will be able to criticize their own work and make any change that must be made.

When writing, the majority of the methods make emphasis on the format and correctness, leaving behind the main purpose, which is to send a message that may catch readers attention until the end. Writing is a process of discovering in which the learners are able to learn and discover the meaning of different words or phrases that are meant to be used in their writings. (Zamel, V, 1982)

The teaching methods or pedagogical approaches can help students to improve their writing skills but in order to get good results teacher must handle and explain to students in a proper manner to get good results along the writing process. The approaches that may improve the composition development are the ones that focus on usage, structure and correct form. Furthermore, Zamel, V states that "writing assignments are made for the sole purpose of testing the mastery of specific grammatical structures and that few involve invention techniques or pre-writing strategies." (1982) It means, teachers pay little attention to the writing process of the students, they do not care about the ideas, the doubts, and how students develop themselves when writing a paragraph or essay, the techniques provided by the teachers and the preparation to start writing.

2.1.2 The Nature of the Writing Skill

The act of composition is by nature solitary, but it is public as well because writing is intended for an audience. It is less spontaneous and more permanent; the writer is not available to interact with the reader or adopt any part of it once it had been published. For this reason, the conventions of writing tend to be less flexible than those of conversation, and the language tends to be standardized.

a. A writing programme

There should be a programme to develop writing skills which work all the way through the educational system. Such a syllabus would list the main types of writing for the students to master at the conclusion of the course. Writing is a skill to be practiced, it seems to be convenient to start with the motivation and then to focus on structure. Writing should be first controlled writing, then guided writing, and finally free writing (also call, free composition). Free composition means that sometimes the title is provided and everything else is done by the student. Controlled writing pretends to ask specific questions about what should be answered. Guided writing is when the title is provided as well as the brainstorm and main ideas that must be included on the task. Free writing concludes with the ability to create a personal essay with their own ideas, the student can develop each paragraph including what he or she wants to communicate to the future readers; if it pretends to be public or for a specific purpose.

b. Goals of the writing programme

Students should be able to correct their own mistakes while working in the editing phase; in each draft students should be able to identify their mistakes. Writers must be able to increase the amount of written material produced, ideas must be clear, with coherence and sequence. He or she can limit the complexity and the time for the task to be completed.

2.1.3 Implications for Teaching

Writing behaviors suggest teaching by using strategies that are made for native speakers, but are effective for teaching all levels of writings, including composition. (Zalma, V, 1982) It means students are able to start writing as native speakers start their process to compose.

Composing requires for some students different steps to write and put their ideas on paper. The first step to follow is to find ideas to explore and write about. Zalma, V mentions that "While more skilled writers have established certain methods that allow them to proceed with this exploration, less proficient writers need to be taught how to make use of prewriting strategies or invention techniques." (1982) For students that are not accustomed to write or have no experience writing, teachers must provide the possibility to

brainstorm their ideas, help students to explore information and get ideas from it, teach them to make an outline and guide them through the whole writing process.

According to Zalma, V (1982) "Another important aspect of the composing process concerns the way writers feel about the topics they are asked to write about." The more comfortable a person, student or teacher feels about the topics to be written, the more motivated he or she will be to write and express their ideas. When the topic does not make the writer enjoy the composition process, writers will not be able to write freely and without complications in regards to putting their ideas and feelings on the essay or paragraph.

> "Writing instruction that focuses on rhetorical forms and requires students to compose papers on artificial topics in order to demonstrate mastery of these forms fails to recognize that writers write both quantitatively more and qualitatively better when they are composing papers about topics that engage them"(Zalma, V, 1982)

Teachers must take into account the student's interests in topics for writing. The writing will be motivated by the student's feelings and responses about a topic they have had some experience about, and will be easier for them to develop their ideas and give form to the composition.

To teach writing as a process of discovery implies that revision becomes the main focus of the course and the teacher, who traditionally provides feedback after the fact, intervenes to guide students throughout the process. The relation student-teacher during the process of composing need to be held on drafts, so the students are able to learn while they are creating their pieces of work and which areas they need to improve in order to have a successful process of composition. (Zalma, V, 1982)

2.1.4 Teaching Strategies

In order to teach a group of students a new topic or in this case how to write a short paragraph. It is necessary to apply effective strategies that provide the students the insights to start writing and have a significant process for developing their ideas. As students are just learning a new topic, it is essential to start by explaining the terms, characteristics or steps of the phenomenon. Explanations are a significant part of the learning process. According to Hoban, G (2015) "An explanation is a statement or set of statements that clarifies the reasons, causes, context, or principles that underpin a particular phenomenon." (p. 423) It helps the pupils understand the topic and clarify doubts related to it.

Most of the time explanations are meant to elicit why things work, what something is, or how things happen (Hoban, G. 2015) The author mentions that good explanations often include five parts such as:

> "(i) naming or specifying the concept, (ii) describing elements or components of the concept in an appropriate order, (iii) explaining how the elements relate or connect to each other, (iv) providing an example, and (v) summarizing with a concluding statement." (Hoban, G. 2015)

So, one of the strategies to be applied during the classes is the deliberated explanation of terms in which students are able to understand the concept, learn it, visualize examples related to the terms and how they are used, and conclusion ideas of concepts.

Another teaching strategy that must be applied during the classes is free writing. As it was mentioned before, free compositions make students write about a topic of their interest. According to Nordquist, R (2017) "In composition, freewriting is a discovery (or prewriting) strategy intended to encourage the development of ideas without concern for the conventional rules of writing." It can be said that in freewriting there is no pressure to follow grammatical rules. It consists on putting on a paper all the ideas that come to mind. By doing freewriting people just force themselves to write without stopping for a certain amount of time, and not all the time people will obtain good writings or results but that is not the goal (Nordquist, R. 2017) As teachers, it is necessary to take into account students' interests to develop a good paragraph or essay. Developing these types of activities help

students feel comfortable and enjoy the process of writing. Students may find interesting to write about field trips, the IB process, overcoming health problems and even music. So, giving them the opportunity to write freely and choose topics of interest for them will improve their development on the topic and catch their attention during the lessons.

To catch students' attention or interest during classes is one of the most difficult aspects in a teacher's life. Students need to feel motivated to keep involved in the learning process. Students can improve their motivation by being in a class with innovative activities, doing things differently rather than just paying attention to the teacher. Students need to be the center of the class and their good behaviors need to be reinforced through rewards. The motivation must be worked daily that is why students should be encouraged through positive phrases like "Excellent", "You can do it", "Keep going". According to Cascio, C (2017) "Verbal praise is the most common form of rewards that teachers offer students; it consists of complimenting students when they behave in a way that is positive" When praising students, they should know why the teacher is complimenting his/her behavior in order to continue doing the things right.

Also, tangible and activity rewards are important for students to feel part of the classes and that teachers are interested in what they are doing. Cascio, C (2017) mentions that "Tangible rewards and activity rewards are awards you supply directly to the student, without the step of symbols or tokens in between." Some of the tangible rewards and activity rewards consist of items such as toys, school supplies, being the teacher's assistant, a line leader or the captain of group activities.

2.2 Modern Trends in Teaching English

Currently teaching English as a second language is mostly focused on the communicative approach giving less importance to the writing form of communication; it is something that is less time consuming for students and teachers. But, it is necessary to focus on what is needed since nowadays English is not just a spoken language all over the world; the most important books and manuals are mostly written in that language. If you travel around the world you will see lots of English everywhere; also instructions or place names are given in this language. That is why it is important to promote the development

of all skills in order to open new opportunities worldwide. In the case of teachers, it is a good idea to take into account different strategies to teach students using what is available to catch their attention and bet more fluent in the language.

In a Journal called Modern Approaches and Methods in Teaching English Language, writers mentioned some modern tools to make the communicative process pleasurable along the learning process as: **Web-based learning**, there are thousands of English web tools that offer training for learning speaking, reading and writing, those are more interactive in different ways and moving forward from the beginner level to advanced. It pretends to prepared students to be able to reply to emails or text messages in English language. This interchange can help students to feel more confident writing to someone, this person could be the teacher or a native speaker that can provide feedback to the students. **Suggestopedia,** also called a pseudoscience, is a method developed by a Bulgarian psychotherapist Dr. Georgie Lozenoves, the purpose of suggestopedia is to enhance learning by the power of suggestion. It pretends that learners can remove the mental barriers to learning.   **New age devices,** smartphones and electronic devices are playing an important role in our society, especially for youth that is engaged with technology The media streaming devices like Google Chromecast and Rokku make group studies more interactive at the same time learners can enrich their vocabulary while they enjoy their favorite programs.

2.2.1 The Role of the Modern Teacher

For the researchers at the International Journal of Research Innovation, the term role comes from sociology and it refers to the way in which an individual should behave. Richards and Rogers conceive the teacher role´s as a part of the design and component of a method. The Little Wood sees the teacher as a facilitator, an overseer, classroom manager, consultant and advisor and a time a co-communicator. To Harmer, the teacher is a controller, organizer, assessor, promotor, resource, tutor and observer.

The role of teachers can be described as follows:

a. Facilitator

b. Independent participant

c. Needs analyst

d. Counselor

e. Group processing manager

In order for teachers to reach the objective in the teaching process, it is necessary to know what the needs in the classroom are; what are the strengths and weakness for students in order to reach the purpose of the course. It is important for the teacher to be updated and well trained to apply the different approaches and methods to prepare students in all areas.

2.3 Motivation

Everything human beings do is guided by some motivation. Students' goals represent the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation they have in order to accomplish a specific objective in their life. According to Nguyen, C (2008) "Motivation is essential to learning since it is the driving force for students' to complete tasks that build knowledge." Student's major motivation must be related to the education they receive. Through education, students will be successful in life. Learning outcomes are evidence of the motivation students have regarding the subject or skill, so it is the teachers' issue to make students feel motivated with the tasks they must complete to improve their skills.

Most of the time, motivational considerations can be summed up as being either task or ego-oriented. (Nguyen C, 2008) The motivation of the students is always guided as a task or obligation they must fulfill in order to pass a test and have an excellent academic growth (extrinsic motivation) or as a personal fulfillment of their goals (intrinsic motivation). Students' motivation may change at any moment; motivation can have ups and downs in any person. It can go from the student who does not want to learn and become into the student who overcomes the demotivation, and the student who is motivated and changes the behavior towards the subject or proposed objective. Pupils can change their

minds upon exposure to stimulating environments that capture their attention. (Nguyen C, 2008)

2.3.1 Teaching Techniques that Motivate

As a way to improve the students' motivation and have a better result on their development, it is essential to make emphasis on task-oriented learning in which the learner performance is evaluated based on an absolute scale rather than a scale that compares each other. This kind of evaluation provides the students' participation and self –improvement in learning. Also, it is necessary to incorporate questions that require explanations, justifications and production rather than memorization.

Nguyen, C (2008) mentions the author Woodburn (1977) who states that using techniques in which they make emphasis on relating the topics to their current activities, students feel more comfortable and motivated to learn, giving a greater purpose to the task that must be done. Pupils need to know that what they learn in their classrooms has relevance and significance to their daily lives, so teachers must provide topics that can be highly related to the students' activities, routines and interests to compose and improve their writing skills.

Nguyen, C (2008) states that "(…) starting off a course with students engaged in learning about current research topics in a particular discipline as it relates to the course." It is important to remember that instructors are researchers, too. They need to be looking for information and new topics that can be of interest to students and engage them to continue working on their skills and paying attention.

> "The advantage of this technique is that it grabs students' attention and allows them to explore their interests in directions that excite them. This technique does, however, require preparation by the instructor to research the most newsworthy findings and to prepare supplemental information in support of the current research."(Nguyen, C, 2008)

2.3.2 Psychological Aspects of Motivation and Learning

According to Nguyen, C (2008) who mentions the author Moore (2007) expresses that students who attend to classes highly motivated are able to keep learning and improving their skills without additional help, but unmotivated students are not able to improve their progress without the necessity of a reward.

> "Motivated students attend classes on a regular basis without a need for external rewards, they seek additional help when needed, and they turn in quality work on time. On the other hand, unmotivated students minimize the effort they exert, which result in continued poor performance."(Moore, 2007)

As it has been mentioned, students' motivation and behavior towards the learning process and the activities or skills that must be reinforced, make them feel happy and enjoy their time completing the exercises or attending to classes.

An important aspect to be threatened is to make students think positively. The notion students have about intelligence must be of attention. Some students believe that intelligence is fixed, so they tend to be shy when they face tasks that challenge them. Dweck (2008) mentioned by Nguyen (2008) expresses that "Their belief is that if they are challenged, they are not smart enough to complete the task, so why bother; whereas students who believe in a growth mindset thrive on opportunities to learn." It is the teachers' duty to make students understand that the brain is a muscle and they have to train it in order to get stronger. Pupils are able to get everything they want, so they need to be motivated constantly and reinforced their abilities and their positive thinking.

Also, students get motivation from the environment. Talking about psychological needs, human beings look for some acceptation or validation from the society, the same situation happens with pupils and their development and motivation for learning. It can be said that students are motivated to learn if they perceive having adequate support from their social environment; classmates, teachers, parents, principal and others, a positive environment to master skills and tasks, and an environment where their needs are met. (Nguyen, C, 2008)

2.3.3 Social Factors of Motivation and Learning

There are different factors that influence in the students' motivation who are of social importance. These factors go from classroom settings, social motives and the role of culture, to interpersonal and relational factors in the students' interaction. (Nguyen, C, 2008) The social environment in the classroom and the student-teacher interaction play a fundamental role in the motivation of the students.

It can be said that students who feel a sense of belonging are motivated and perform well in school. They feel this sense of belonging if they perceive their teachers help them in promoting interaction and respect between each other. Some teachers report that students are motivated to perform well if they believe their teachers care for their social, as well as academic needs. (Nguyen, C, 2008) Another essential aspect that takes place in the motivation and cognition of the students are the emotions directly related to the form of interpersonal relationships with peers, parents and teachers. Indeed, the interest in learning raises alertness and attention, which facilitates a desire and motivation to learn.

Summary

On this chapter, the importance of the teacher role in the writing process is to review the students' writings; as well as to guide pupils on the composition process so the students may understand what they are producing. The teachers may focus more on the meaning than the grammar structure. There are also different methods that help the learning process to be more interactive and attractive to students, like using modern technologies and incorporate them into the learning process. The teacher role currently is more as a facilitator, classroom manager or counselor. Readers can also find out motivational techniques in different areas as social and psychological learning.

CHAPTER III

Design and Method

3.1 Research Approach

This research describes how motivation in students can produce improvement in the composition area while they start the writing process. This is a qualitative research since what is being studied is highly related to attitudes, characteristics and qualities in this case, writing skills; also to provide better and more satisfactory compositions at the time they write. It might help not only students, but teachers. It is necessary to find innovative methods to teach, and keep learners motivated while learning; especially a second language. The main purpose of this work is to establish how the writing activities are effective and what techniques can be applied to improve this skill.

3.2 Sources and Subject of Information

In this research, the subjects of information are the students at Poás High School, in Costa Rica. One class of around fifteen students are developing the activities that had been presented and explain to them in order to start composing in different ways with controlled writing, guided writing until getting familiarized to write a free topic.

Subjects of information are web-based, observations and data collection from students to test previous knowledge and the ability to develop a paragraph.

3.3 Population and Sample

The research population refers to a group of individuals or objects that form part of the scientific inquiry. In this case, it makes reference to the individual who participates in the research.

The population helps to collect the qualitative data necessary to obtain a representative sample for the investigation according to the procedures followed during the application of the tools.

When doing a research, it is necessary to choose a sample of the total population in order to analyze the information and obtain the conclusions. There are different types of sampling the population. Some of them are the probability sampling and the nonprobability sampling. In this case, this research takes into account a nonprobability sampling.

The sample of investigation is the number of elements, chosen or not that are taken into account in order to have the results as a real representation of the population.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures and Tools

In order to collect the data necessary to show that motivation affects the development of the students in compositions during the writing process, different tools will be applied.

First of all, two instruments are going to be applied to get the information. The observation instrument is going to provide general insights into the structure of the class and the activities developed during the whole lessons. The other instrument consists of a diagnostic test which is going to provide information about the students' knowledge through different questions related to writing and the parts of a paragraph. At the end of the test, students are given a topic and they have to write a short paragraph with their previous knowledge.

Secondly, three different strategies are going to be applied to develop the composition of the students. The activities are going to be applied in two lessons in Academic English. The activities are described in the lesson plan for the day in which the activities will be developed. The activities consist of a deliberated explanation of the concepts, a freewriting activity with the use of music and the use of verbal praise and tangible rewards as a motivational strategy. Also, students keep in touch with the technology to participate in the process.

Finally, in order to assess the students' improvement in writing, they are asked to write another paragraph. The initial paragraph and the final paragraph are going to be compared to observe the differences and similarities between the paragraphs and how much they have improved their writing skills after the activities being applied.

All these data will be analyzed to proof if students feel motivated when writing.

Summary

On this chapter, the steps of collecting and analyzing data are described for a better understand of the readers. This project consists of a qualitative research based on the compositions skills and how students can be motivated to compose. The subjects and sources of information are the most important for obtaining the data and analyzed it correctly, in this case the primary subject and source of information are the tenth grade students from Poas High School and the secondary sources of information are articles from the web and books scientifically proof. Finally, all the procedure of collecting data is described from the observation form that is used to get the general information from the group, the strategies applied during the class to prove how students can improve their skills and assess students to see if the strategies worked or not.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This chapter is an analysis of findings along the observation, application process, first the students did the assessment without previous explanation of the content to find out what they already knew about parts of the paragraph. Right after the evaluation, the teacher proceeded to explain the terms and its function in the paragraph; once students are aware of the terms they are ready to start composing in order to apply what was taught.

4.1 Data

a. Class Observation: To obtain general information from the group and how their lessons are performed, an observation form was applied in two lessons. The group consists of 20 students, who have three lessons of academic English and six lessons of conversational English per week. Also, the Students' age was of 16 years old.

Regarding to the use of a textbook, it can be seen that there is no textbook and students used to work with worksheets and board explanations from the teacher. This give the teacher the possibility to choose better the exercises and activities that must be done by students. Another aspect observed during the lessons was the general attitude of students towards learning; most students participate when the teacher asks questions or gives explanations about the topic. Some students show interest on the topics and some others prefer not to participate or pay attention because they do not find it interesting and necessary. These group of students are kind of motivated but they do not express it.

The use of the language is essential in every class, but through the lessons students used the mother tongue to ask questions to the teacher and talk between each other about topics completely different to what was being studied in the class. Even though it as an English class, the language was used to answer the questions of the teacher. Also, the teacher used the language to explain the topic and give the instructions of the activities.

The distribution of the lesson followed the sequence of warm up, teacher's role, practice, production and consolidation. The teacher makes emphasis on her explanations (teacher's role), and the reading and writing (use of grammatical structures) skills of students which required a total of 55 min more than one lesson. The last aspect observed

with the observation was the use of supporting materials and as students do not have a textbook the teacher work with the use of photocopies and technology (PPT'S) for her explanations.

b. Diagnostic Assessment: it consists of four restrictive answers where eleven students from 10th grade have to answer sincerely and individually. Then, pupils are asked to write a short paragraph including a topic sentence, three detail ideas and a concluding sentence.

QUESTIONS	MOST COMMON ANSWERS
1.What is a topic sentence?	a. The most important sentence in the paragraph.(4sts) b. Main idea in the sentence. (2sts) c. Important words or topics of the paragraph. (2sts) b. No accuracy in the answer .(2 sts)
2. What are supporting details?	a. Specific sentences/ideas that explain/support the paragraph. (4 sts) b. Important ideas that help to understand a thing. (2 sts) c. There´s no accuracy in the answer. (5 sts)
3. What is a concluding sentence?	a. Final sentence of the paragraph that summarizes the topic and ideas.(5 sts) b. Final part of the paragraph. (2 sts) c. Complement of all ideas.(1 st) d. No answer. (3 sts)
4. Which are the parts of the paragraph?	a. Topic sentence, supporting details and concluding sentence. (4 sts) b. Introduction, body, conclusion.(3 sts) c. Start, principal idea, end. (1 st) d. No answer. (3 sts)

As it was mentioned before, students should write a short paragraph in which they include the topic sentence, three detail ideas and the concluding sentence. Through the assessment can be seen that the majority of students were not able to write clear topic sentences, place them in their correct place and restate them on the concluding sentence. A total of seven students wrote an unclear sentence which was not supported neither restated on detail ideas and the closing sentence. Then, three students did not produce a paragraph.

One student decided not to write, and two students wrote one sentence with no coherence and grammatical errors. Lastly, one student wrote a topic sentence in its correct place, but it was not restated in the concluding sentence.

Regarding the detail ideas, a total of three students did not include detail ideas because there was no production. Other three students include one detail idea that was related to the topic they chose to write about. Just 1 student included two detail ideas that gave reasons about the topic. To end up with the detail ideas, four students were able to write three detail ideas supporting the topic.

Analyzing the written paragraphs, the eleven students were not able to write a clear and correctly placed concluding sentence. The discents could not restate the main idea of the paragraph in a closing sentence.

In addition to all what has been analyzed, it is necessary to mention there is a lack of vocabulary, a misspelling of words and a bad use of mechanics that affect the students' ability of production.

c. Final Writing Assessment: Students are asked to write a paragraph in which they have to include a topic sentence, three detail ideas and a closing sentence. The pupils were able to choose the topic they would like to write about. From the eleven students in the group, a total of 4 students participated in the final writing assessment.

Comparing the paragraphs written by students in the diagnostic assessment and the final assessment. It can be seen that two of the students wrote the topic sentence in a clear way and place it correctly. Also, they were able to restate it on the concluding sentence. One student wrote an unclear topic sentence, but it was restated on the conclusion and one student did not write a clear topic sentence, it was not restated in the closing sentence, and it was not in its correct place. Continuing with the parts of the paragraph, a total of two students included two detail ideas to support the topic sentence, one student included one detail idea supporting the topic correctly and one student did not write detail ideas. To finish with the parts of the paragraph, one student wrote a clear concluding sentence, placed it in its correct place and restated the main idea, two students wrote an unclear concluding

sentence, but it was restated on the conclusion. And the last student did not write a clear, correctly placed concluding sentence and it was not restated in the closing.

Regarding the legibility of the paragraphs, a total of four students presented legible handwriting or typing. Students are able to write in a good manner and the handwriting is easy to recognize ideas.

Finally, the mechanics and use of grammatical structures presented important results. Two students write paragraphs that showed from three to five punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors and the other two paragraphs presented more than six errors in punctuation and spelling. Regarding the grammatical structures, students confused verb tenses and agreement, the plural of nouns and the vocabulary was not used in context.

4.2 Restatement of Questions and Discussions

The main concern to start this research project was about the writing strategies that are being applied in the classroom, what are successful with students and which ones need to be improved. It is necessary to start by the deliberated explanation of terms, what is wrong?, first of all teachers are not taking the time to explain parts of the paragraph to students, steps to compose an article and so on, because it is not part of the syllabus; the work will be to add those strategies that do not exist in the curriculum to start improving the composition process little by little until making students aware of the importance of the developing of four skills and not to focus all the attention just on one or two, it may help students to think in the second language and develop fluency.

The strengths are few, but the motivation to learn something takes an important place on the teaching process. Limitation, on one hand, is a lot, but nothing can limit passion to teach and learn especially when it is a second language, pupils should find easy to write in a second language if they develop it on their mother tongue. By applying good strategies students may not just be able to write but also to develop critical thinking and they show their insights. At the end some questions show up, How can teachers contribute to improving the syllabus? Are teachers able to walk an extra mile for their students adding writing experiences to them?

Summary

This chapter shows the analyzed data obtained by the researchers. All the information provided by the students and the observation done during the classes show essential insights for the project. The observation form showed that teachers are free to decide how and what materials are necessary for the student to develop their skills. The diagnostic test gave important insights regarding the management of terms like topic sentence, detail ideas, and concluding sentences in which students somehow know what each term means and how to recognize it. Also, there is a lack of vocabulary in students, misspelling of words and bad use of mechanics that continued in the assessment activity when they improved a little the composition of topic sentences and detail ideas, but they did not do a good job with the verb tenses, the plural of nouns and the use of vocabulary. It also explained that different questions appear about teachers' role and how to improve the syllabus of English and letting students produce and compose with their own experiences.

Chapter V

Conclusions

Along the process of this project it is seen that at all times motivation place an important role on the teaching and learning process, specially because students and teachers will never stop learning from each other, this work is based on how to teach students to write in a motivated way the findings did not surprise anyone because it is known that in Costa Rica writing is not the main goal of learning the other language, most people preferred conversational classes instead of grammar or anything related to writing, they mostly want things move faster as in the speaking skill or listening. Each skill has its own challenge, but it is really important to master all of them in that way the person can develop different activities by using what they learned, starting to talk to a native speaker or move to another country and be able to read instructions or even write their information.

As a conclusion for this job, it is found that small things can help students to produce, for instance, the folders that were given to students in the class on the activities, it was something that caught their attention and they make positive comments about it, so students felt that someone cares about them and prepared something nice to work with them, most of the times teachers do not focus on something as writing because they are not well instructed to teach that part and they may feel afraid to commit mistakes. Some of the techniques that can be applied develop students skills could be those that are related to technology or the use of technological devices such as the email, but in case this is not something that students have handy they can still work with the traditional paper, in that case, will be teachers challenge to find out how to do it different for students to put in their ideas, and that was exactly what worked on this case.

5.1 Implications

The research process was not easy since writing skills are left apart most of the time, it takes longer time to develop an essay than to teach vocabulary to talk about a topic, including that grammar is the boring part for students, most of Costa Rican public schools focused on aspects as writing comprehension to understand the question of a test, also on vocabulary and most basic thing as family members, animals, parts of the body and so on; it is true that teaching writing involves a complete process and a follow up to get insight ideas from the writer and relay the correct message to readers.

5.2 Strengths and limitations

5.2.1 Strengths

a. Students willing to participate and learn.

b. Well prepared class, organized and group control at all times.

c. Students show their feelings without fear and in their own way most of them were able to relay the idea.

d. Motivation, students liked the way in which the activities were presented.

5.2.2 Limitations

a. Short time to work with students and get all observation and production done.

b. The strike in Costa Rica, all public institutions were on protest marches against the fiscal combo, students did not have regular classes and it was difficult to get all the group.

c. Few or none knowledge about writing process.

The group had a vague idea of some writing terms, about the parts of a paragraph and the composition process, so it took some time first to teach students about it and start from basic to complex, let's say. In fact, tenth grader students are not prepared to write even a full paragraph at least in public institutions what made the duty turn difficult.

5.3 Recommendations

Every teacher has its own way to do its duty but, along the time most of professors can get tired of being on the same spot, working and developing the same topics, that is why the main recommendation is to keep innovating, not just to motivate students but, also to keep the attitude and love for this profession. While looking for new strategies and ways to teach learners and teachers can improve together and is really important because students can feel when teachers want to do what they are supposed to, or when they loved to work with passion and organization.

On the writing field, one advised could be to push students to show up their abilities and to let them know that adults care about what they think, to put all their ideas in writing and analyze their progress.

Summary

The last chapter evidences the results from the procedures followed and how important motivation is to make students feel comfortable through the writing process. Also, the implications of applying the strategies are mentioned through all the chapter. The strengths and limitations presented demonstrate students' willingness to learn and express that they enjoy classes and activities that are interactive and innovative. Finally, recommendations are given to improve the teachers' job at high school and the students' abilities for composing. For students' little changes make the difference and make them feel happy and motivated.

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Annexes

Annex #1

Classroom Observation Form
General Information of the Group

The following classroom observation form pretends to collect general information about the group being studied by the students of the Universidad Latina de Costa Rica in order to obtain the degree in English Teaching.

Group:	Teacher:	Number of Students:
Classroom:	Number of lessons a week:	Age of students:
Textbook (title, type, characteristics, etc.)		
General attitude of students towards learning (motivation, interest, participation, etc)		
Use of mother tongue (when, why, etc)		
Use of English (when, why, etc)		
Distribution of the lesson (sequence of activities, time spent on each, etc)		
Support materials used (photocopies, graded readers, etc)		

Done by: Emily Jiménez and Jeylin Solís

Annex #2

Poás High School / Tenth Grade
Action Research Project
Researchers: Emily Jiménez and Jeylin Solís

Diagnostic Test

Name:_____ **Date:**_____

Description of the test

The following test has not percentage in the grade of the class. The test helps the research teachers to conclude with the process of getting the degree of Licenciatura.

Indications:

- Answer the questions sincerely.
- Raise your hand if you have doubts.

Restrictive Answer. In this part you will find four questions. Answer them by writing complete sentences.

1. What is a topic sentence?

_____
_____
_____

2. What are supporting details?

_____
_____
_____

3. Which is a concluding sentence?

_____
_____
_____

4. Which are the parts of the paragraph?

_____
_____
_____

Production. Write a short paragraph. You should include a topic sentence, three supporting detail sentences and one concluding sentence. Choose one of the following topics in order to write your paragraph:

1. Overcoming health problems
2. A school field trip
3. My favorite place
4. A day I will always remember

_____

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Poás High School/ Tenth Grade
Action Research Project
Researchers: Emily Jiménez and Jeylin Solís
Objective of the Rubric: The aim of the rubric is to assess the students' performance on composition

	Criteria				Points
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**	
Topic sentence	The topic sentence is clear, correctly placed, and is restated in the closing sentence.	The topic sentence is either unclear or incorrectly placed, and is restated in the closing sentence.	Main idea/topic sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and is restated in the closing sentence.	The topic sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and is not restated in the closing sentence.	
Detail ideas	Paragraph has three or more detail ideas that support the main idea.	Paragraph has two detail ideas that support the main idea.	Paragraph has one detail idea that supports the main idea.	Paragraph has no detail ideas that support the main idea.	
Concluding Sentence	The concluding sentence is clear, correctly placed, and restates the main idea of the paragraph.	The concluding sentence is either unclear or incorrectly placed, and restates the main idea of the paragraph.	The concluding sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and restates the main idea of the paragraph.	The concluding sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and does not restate the main idea of the paragraph.	
Legibility	Legible handwriting or typing.	Marginally handwriting or typing.	Writing is not legible in places.	Writing is not legible.	
Mechanics and Grammar	Paragraph has no error in punctuation, capitalization and spelling.	Paragraph has one or two punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors.	Paragraph has three to five punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors.	Paragraph has six or more punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors.	
				Total	

Annex #3

Poás High School / Tenth Grade
Action Research Project
Researchers: Emily Jiménez and Jeylin Solís

Writing Assessment

Description of the Assignment

As a way to prove if the applied strategies during the lessons worked effectively and conclude with the process for obtaining the Licenciatura degree, it is necessary to apply the following assessment. It has no percentage on the grade of the students, but it is essential to write the conclusions of the project.

The assignment consists on writing a paragraph about a **<u>free topic</u>**. The student decides the topic he/she wants to write about. The paragraph must be sent by email to the research teachers.

Instructions:

1. Choose a topic of your interest that you would like to write about.

2. Make an outline including the topic sentence, and the ideas that you will develop in the paragraph.

3. The paragraph should include the topic sentence, three detail ideas, and a concluding sentence.

4. Legibility, Grammar and Mechanics are going to be evaluated.

5. Once you finish writing the paragraph, send it to the following emails:
emija0195@gmail.com and **jeysoja89@hotmail.com**

5. The paragraph is going to be evaluated with the same rubric as in the diagnostic test.

Poás High School/ Tenth Grade
Action Research Project
Researchers: Emily Jiménez and Jeylin Solís
Objective of the Rubric: The aim of the rubric is to assess the students' performance on composition

	Criteria				Points
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**	
Topic sentence	The topic sentence is clear, correctly placed, and is restated in the closing sentence.	The topic sentence is either unclear or incorrectly placed, and is restated in the closing sentence.	Main idea/topic sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and is restated in the closing sentence.	The topic sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and is not restated in the closing sentence.	
Detail ideas	Paragraph has three or more detail ideas that support the main idea.	Paragraph has two detail ideas that support the main idea.	Paragraph has one detail idea that supports the main idea.	Paragraph has no detail ideas that support the main idea.	
Concluding Sentence	The concluding sentence is clear, correctly placed, and restates the main idea of the paragraph.	The concluding sentence is either unclear or incorrectly placed, and restates the main idea of the paragraph.	The concluding sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and restates the main idea of the paragraph.	The concluding sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and does not restate the main idea of the paragraph.	
Legibility	Legible handwriting or typing.	Marginally handwriting or typing.	Writing is not legible in places.	Writing is not legible.	
Mechanics and Grammar	Paragraph has no error in punctuation, capitalization and spelling.	Paragraph has one or two punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors.	Paragraph has three to five punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors.	Paragraph has six or more punctuation, capitalization and spelling errors.	
				Total	

Annex #4

MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA
LESSON PLAN

Institution: Poás High School   **Level:** Tenth Grade
Researchers: Emily Jiménez and Jeylin Solís   **Time:** 80 minutes
General Objective: To recognize the parts of a paragraph in a given context   **Date:** October 3rd
Method/Approach: Content-Based Instruction
Cognitive Target: Production of topic sentences, detail ideas and concluding sentences

LINGUISTIC OBJECTIVES	MEDIATION ACTIVITIES	EVALUATION OF THE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIES	TIME
	Routine: Greet students Call the roll Arrange the classroom Show the agenda		5 minutes
	Warm Up: -Students are asked to sit on a circle. -Students are asked to pay attention to the name of the story given by the teacher. -Students are asked to start telling a story with		10 minutes

	the name of the story. -Students take turns to tell the story.		
Recognizing the parts of the paragraph through a power point presentation.	**Presentation:** -Students are asked to pay attention to the teacher explaining the concepts of topic sentence, detail ideas and concluding sentence.	Recognition of the paragraph structure.	15 minutes.
Identifying the appropriate form of writing for a particular task.	**Practice:** -Students are given three different worksheets. -Students are asked to read the information on the worksheet and answer the questions related to what was explained during the ppt. -Each worksheet corresponds to one part of the paragraph. **See annexes #1, #2, and #3**	Identification of the paragraph parts.	25 minutes
Producing a paragraph through freewriting while listening to a song.	**Production:** -Students are given a color sheet of paper. -Students are asked to write about an specific topic related to their interests. -Students are asked to start writing freely while they listen to an instrumental song. -Students are asked to write about the given topic according to what the song make them	Production of the paragraph through freewriting.	10 minutes

	feel. -Students are asked to write for 10 minutes.		
Using explanation of terms to produce a paragraph	**Consolidation:** -Students are asked to choose a title about an interesting topic that catches their attention. -Students are asked to write a short paragraph according to steps explained by teachers.	Usage of terms to produce short paragraphs.	10 minutes
	Extra activity: -Students are asked to share with their classmates about the experience creating stories.	Analysis of the stories.	5 min
			80 minutes

Curricular Accommodations:	**Materials:** paper, pen, pencil, worksheets, color folders, chocolates, computer, speaker, projector, Gmail
Chronicles:	

Lesson Plan Annex #1

Poás High School

Writing Paragraphs – Topic Sentence

To write a good paragraph, you need to come up with a good topic sentence. Think about the two parts that make up your topic sentence: actual topic + controlling idea (what you plan to say about the topic). For example: <u>Parents can protect their toddlers</u> by <u>taking certain safety precautions at home.</u>

Read each sentence below. Circle the topic sentence and underline the controlling idea.

1. When you want to play a new game, you must learn the rules first.

2. People who like to read often enjoy many different kinds of books

3. When we got our new dog, we taught her to obey some basic commands.

4. The plot of a good short story should go through five specific stages.

- **Write your own topic sentence**.

_____

Topic Sentence. Time4writing.com.retrieved from https://www.time4writing.com/writing-paragraphs/topic-sentence/ on September 29th, 2018

Lesson Plan Annex #2

Writing Paragraphs - Supporting Details

> Every paragraph depends on how well the main topic is supported. The topic sentence makes a claim about something, and the following sentences must contain supporting details showing why that claim is true. The details must be strong and interesting, and must relate directly to the topic.

Read each paragraph, choose which sentence provides supporting details that best replaces the brackets.

a) Every good friend you have should show some important qualities. Strong loyalty is one of the best traits of a friend, because that means he or she will always stand up for you. **[... missing sentence …]** And most of all, a friend is willing to forgive you if you make a mistake and are sorry about it. When you both show these important attitudes to each other, you will be friends for many years.

_____ Friendships sometimes don't last, because people change.

_____ Honesty will get you through hard times, because it creates trust and confidence.

_____ Competing with a friend will often create hard feelings.

b) George Washington, the country's first president, set the United States on a strong course right at the beginning. He had already shown the people how they could win battles when it looked, at first, like they would lose. Then, during his term, he started many processes in government that presidents still use today. **[... missing sentence …]** Thanks to Washington's leadership, the new country was set on the right path for the future.

_____ Jefferson was upset at Washington for not supporting France in a war with Britain.

_____ Washington turned to farming after he retired from being president.

_____ He won approval from all Americans, which made the country strong when it was just

starting.

Supporting Details. Time4writing.com.retrieved from https://www.time4writing.com/writing-paragraphs/supporting-details/ on September 29th, 2018

Lesson Plan Annex #3

Writing paragraphs – Concluding Sentence

> After your paragraph is adequately supported, you will need to provide a concluding sentence. A concluding sentence can do many things. It can let the reader know you are finished; it can summarize what you have already written, or, it can restate your main idea.

Write a "x" before the concluding sentence that best fits the type of paragraph.

1. My cat wasn't just my best friend, but she thought she was my protector. I once lounged under a tree, reading a book, while my cat sat across the lawn. When a small dog happened by, staring me in the face, my cat thought I was in danger. She raced across the lawn, all puffed up, meowing furiously to make the dog leave.

_____ My cat watched over me in the same way that I took care of her.

_____ A feline is a marvel of grace and ferocity in the same lovely package.

2. There's a beach near San Diego that is very peaceful to walk on. It's long and flat, with fine sand shifting gently under your feet. The waves surge in, slowly and calmly, never overpowering you as you walk. The only sounds you hear are cries of gulls and a gentle wash of water.

_____ Geological processes have created this useful division between land and sea.

_____ This beach allows you to walk and meditate in peace.

- **Based on your topic sentence and supporting ideas, write a concluding sentence.**

_____

_____

Concluding Sentence. Time4writing.com.retrieved from https://www.time4writing.com/writing-paragraphs/concluding-sentence/ on September 29th, 2018