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A case study of an English as a foreign language writing learner - TEFL program portfolio

Degree thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis describes two aspects of teaching English as a foreign language that are essential to be considered by any EFL teacher. The first is a student's writing case study developed with the purpose of helping a pre-intermediate English language learner reinforce and acquire some writing strategies necessary for his future studies. The period in which the collection of data took place was six weeks. During that time the learner provided good writing samples that reflected some of his strengths and weaknesses while writing. Remedial work was done in order to provide the learner with a good foundation from which he could continue developing his writing abilities. The second component of this study is a standard- based position paper elaborated with the purpose of contemplating all the requirements a well-qualified English teacher should have. Using evidence from the work done throughout the TEFL master's program the researcher was able to self-evaluate her work as an EFL teacher and determine some aspects that need to be addressed to be a more competent teacher.

INTRODUCTION

The writing skill aimed to be developed through the case study was selected based on the great need Ecuadorian English language learners possess to write properly. Most of the young people who have already graduated from university have not benefitted from an integral education process in which the encouragement to develop literacy skills prevails. That is the reason why a considerable amount of Ecuadorian young adults still present several weaknesses while reading and writing. Thus, writing in the mother tongue becomes a challenging and even tedious task for people whose intensive and extensive writing skills were not appropriately expanded and encouraged.

The same problem occurs when teachers of foreign languages make their students write. Learners do not really know the steps necessary for a successful writing process. English students do not enjoy working on writing tasks because they see them as impossible to handle. Depending on the students' foreign language level, a special writing program has to be elaborated and implemented as to guide learners on how the writing process works. The main objective of the first part of this research is therefore to determine the student's main problems while writing to provide him with some language skills reinforcement needed to continue his English courses.

The first chapter describes the case study itself. The subject of study and the setting in which the investigation took place are comprehensively analyzed. The data collected from the student consists of nine writing samples that vary in their language level complexity. All of the written examples include an explanation of the language being taught at each lesson as well as a description of the student's performance. The teacher's feedback is included in the student's work to let him know his progress during the writing lessons.

Another aspect enclosed in this thesis is the one related to foreign language teaching standards applied in foreign countries. Ecuador is experiencing a change in its educational system. In the past being a teacher was an option that students who were rejected from traditional careers such as medicine, architecture, engineering and some others had. Consequently, those educators did not possess the vocation and preparation needed to teach future professionals. Nowadays, the new reform aims to

provide learners with quality education and the best way to achieve it is by having well-qualified educators. Teachers are now required to pass several exams to prove they are suitable for the job. They are also receiving training and financial support from the government to improve their education and perform their tasks efficiently. In this thesis an international model such as the TESOL/NCATE standards is exposed. The main goal is to provide Ecuadorian language educators with an excellent set of guidelines teachers should be able to accomplish to be considered competent.

The second chapter in this research illustrates the implementation of the TESOL/NCATE standards used by the most prestigious colleges that prepare future educators in the United States. The TESOL standards are divided in five domains. Each domain covers a substantial part of teaching such as the knowledge of English as a system, language acquisition and development, culture and language learning, lesson planning and implementation, technology in the language classroom, assessment, ESL research and history, as well as professional development. Finally, some authentic work developed by the thesis writer through the master's program has been used to portray the implementation of the aforementioned standards in this TEFL program.

METHOD

The case study took place in the city of Ambato-Ecuador in the months of March and April 2012. The subject of analysis was a pre-intermediate adult English learner who studied English some years ago and decided to refresh his language knowledge through some private lessons. At the end of a six-week preparation period the learner needed to take a placement test at the language institution he intended to continue his English studies. The focus of this study was on the learner's English writing ability development.

The method used for the research was qualitative provided that its main foundation was exploring a human situation. The instruments used to collect data were nine writing samples graded in their complexity level and developed according to the student's language learning needs. Two or three samples were taken every week as to give the learner enough opportunities to practice and improve his writing ability. After each writing task, the learner received immediate feedback and if it was necessary some reinforcement on certain writing aspects. The data analysis was also qualitative. It was necessary to state the study participant's experiences as well to gather useful information before, during and after the research process. A pre and post test were given to the learner to determine his starting point, what he required to practice more and his advance. At the end of the research a self-evaluation test was taken by the learner to receive some useful feedback concerning his own performance and what he felt needed to be enhanced.

Apart from the writing case study, a compilation of detailed samples of the TEFL Master's Program work done by the candidate was also presented and thoroughly explained. It demonstrated the teaching skills and new knowledge acquired by the student throughout the courses based on the TESOL/NCATE standards. The samples were collected based on what the student considered to be the activities that proved to be the most useful in her everyday teaching practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory presented in this section covers two significant characteristics of teaching English as a foreign/second language. The first one is writing as a language skill. It includes a brief introduction to how important writing is in literacy and the way second language writing develops in learners. Besides, some ESL writing strategies used by students, as well as how teaching writing should be approached is also presented. Common mistakes English learners make when writing in a second or foreign language at a pre-intermediate level and some activities that can enhance the students' involvement while working with writing are also included. The second part corresponds to the TESOL/NCATE standards. The way they have been classified and the elements they cover to assure future language teachers are qualified to perform in the education field efficiently are embraced in detail.

Writing

Reading and writing, literacy main components, are behaviors that people learn when culturally taught (Lenneberg, 1967). A person can be a poor, good or excellent writer depending on the degree to which such skill was developed throughout his/her education process. In the past, those who were able to interpret and encode messages using writing devices were considered well-educated (Hyland, 2002). However, nowadays, for someone to be knowledgeable in the writing field it is necessary for him/her not only to be able to write, but to be able to perform different writing tasks such as filling a form, writing a short story, developing an essay or writing research work effectively based on the social or educational context the person operates (Tribble, 1996).

While working with the writing ability, three aspects that may not seem of significance but have to be contemplated are: handwriting, spelling, layout and punctuation (Harmer, 2007). Technology has become a really useful tool when writing; nevertheless, there are still some activities that require people to write by hand and here is where handwriting comes. For those people whose mother tongue does not share the same alphabet than the target language it becomes difficult to produce some letters. They will need

reinforcement and practice to be able to express their ideas and opinions appropriately using paper and pencil.

Spelling, if incorrectly presented in a piece of work could be interpreted as being instruction deficient. English spelling is especially complex for language learners because the way a word is pronounced does not correspond to the way it is written. A good technique to help students improve spelling could be working with common words and analyze their sounds, contrast them with some similar spelt terminology with different pronunciation and try to understand spelling rules.

Organization and punctuation rules vary from one language community to another. What could be seen as acceptable for some writers might not be for some others. For instance, the use of full stops instead of commas, capitalization in months, days of the week and nationalities, commonly used in English are some of the things language learners have to be taught in order to be clearly understood (Harmer, 2007).

Second language writing

Language teaching tendencies have changed throughout the time as a result of teachers' need to find the most suitable method to help learners acquire a second language. Teaching the four language skills has experienced the same progression and the search for a more communicative, student-centered approach is the target while working with reading, speaking, listening and writing (Brown, 2001). During the last 20 years research has brought some controversial concerns regarding teaching/learning how to write in a second language.

The first issue involves the difference between composing and writing. For some linguists writing was visualized as the graphic representation of what people said. Therefore, oral and written performances were the same. The only difference was the production of audible or readable evidence. Such idea has been rejected and now research proves that writing is a skill that differs from the others and needs to be taught differently. Composing, which is the ability to put ideas together in an organized way as to express the intended meaning, requires the development of individual skills. Research main goal on this topic has been to find the best strategies to teach learners how to produce ideas, organize them in the correct sequence, give the written text

cohesion and coherence and edit the draft to achieve a good quality final result (Brown, 2001).

The second topic of debate is the difference between process and product. In the past, writing teachers concentrated on the final product their students created. This final result had to meet certain writing standards such as a good grammar use, correct spelling and punctuation and utilization of rhetorical principles. Pre-made models were used so students could employ them as an example to write theirs. Nowadays, the aforementioned writing standards continue to be important, however, learners are given more flexibility with the language to use according to the meaning they want to convey while writing, and the way they want to reach their audience. As a result, the writing process has become the focus of ESL writing teachers (Brown, 2001).

Shih (1986) suggested some guidelines for a writing process program. He mentioned that the focal point should be the process to arrive to a final product. The researcher also contemplated the need to help learners identify their writing abilities development and encourage them the use of some techniques like brainstorming, drafting and editing. Besides, he recommended providing students with enough time to write and to verify the written content. Finally, Shih (1986) emphasized the importance of giving learners the freedom to express their ideas and thoughts and supply permanent teacher and classmates' feedback.

Contrastive rhetoric is another concern when teaching second language writing. Kaplan (1966) presented a journal article in which he asserted different language speakers had distinctive written discourse, that is to say a tendency to write in a particular way. For instance, he mentioned an example that showed how an English speaker demonstrated a straight to the point way of writing, whereas Chinese or Japanese speakers showed a spiral form to arrive to the intended point. His view had some factual information behind because it is evident that a language and the culture it involves follow certain principles that had been acquired through education, social interaction and judgment and that are represented while writing. Nevertheless, after experts in the field Kaplan's (1966) statements were common assumptions that had no experimental groundwork and for that reason they could not been taken as serious research.

Connor (1996) affirmed that contrastive rhetoric was not only influenced by the learner's mother tongue, but also by the literacy level of the writer, genres, discourse types, linguistics relativity among other factors that put together were the core of a specific form of writing. After looking at how different a learner could write due to his/her cultural influence, a teacher should benefit from the student's rhetorical practices to guide the writing process towards a clearer and understandable perception of how to express ideas in English.

Another characteristic worth to mention in second language writing is the difference between L1 and L2. Forty years ago, research on the topic mentioned the similarity in the development of L1 and L2 writing skills. Consequently, some experts recommended the use of similar techniques when working on the L2 writing process (Silva, 1993). Yet, it is now accepted that L1 and L2 writing procedures differ in many aspects and teachers need to understand how. Silva (1993) presented a study where it was shown that L2 writing learners did not use a lot of planning before writing. Their vocabulary use was limited; they made more grammatical mistakes and did not sequence their work appropriately. They also tried to communicate in a different way.

 On the other hand, as it was previously mentioned when talking about cultural differences and their influence on teaching second language writing, different does not necessarily mean incorrect. What teachers need to concentrate on after Silva (1993) is the presentation of varied writing settings to familiarize students with rhetorical conventions, understand and use cultural difference to help students improve their writing skills, and the way L2 learners are evaluated which should take into account the fact that they are not native speakers of the language and as a result their writing production will vary.

Authenticity is also an important feature while teaching L2 learners how to write. In language classes most of the exercises used to make students practice writing skills is not really what they will need when encountered with a real-life writing task. These days due to the enhancement and popularity of technology, writing has been reduced to a skill that only requires people to write short messages or use few words in order to communicate. For that reason, teachers should try to deal with the students' authentic

need to write in an English context and provide them with practice aimed at those situations (Brown, 2001).

An additional point regarded as essential in L2 writing is the teacher's role. The implementation of new trends while teaching a second language has brought many positive outcomes. The use of methods that emphasize the central role of the learner in the process and that give students the freedom to use their background knowledge to express ideas has changed the teacher's director role to the one of an assistant and tutor while teaching writing. Nonetheless, Reid (1994) stressed the difference between being a tutor (guiding learners to express their ideas and opinions in an appropriate form) and a spectator (that allows learners so much freedom as to find themselves lost in the process). Being the latter what teachers should by all means reject as their new function.

Concerning practical techniques to guide teachers towards an effective practice while teaching writing, Ferris (1997) suggested that when providing students feedback from what they have written it was better to be clear on what it is expected from them I terms of content, organization, grammar, spelling rules rather than making encouraging comments or asking questions about why they did something.

ESL writing strategies

Language learners usually apply some writing techniques while working on a written text. In general, some of the current strategies they use have been acquired during their L1 literacy process. Hence, it is necessary to understand what procedures ESL writers apply as tools to help them develop a piece of writing and provide them with more tactics to enhance their writing approach. Arndt (1987) proposed some writing strategies Chinese second language learners used when writing in both their L1 and L2. Those strategies were: planning what students will write about, choosing their writing layout, experimenting with the language to see which expressions are more suitable, saying again key words or phrases to encourage themselves to continue writing, re-reading the written text, asking themselves questions about the presentation of ideas and their sequence, changing the text to improve meaning and correcting some words to ameliorate the grammar or vocabulary used. Arndt (1987) noticed that those learners were more careful when selecting vocabulary in L2 than they were in their L1. The

researcher also observed that the learners' ability to think of more options for vocabulary use was greater in their L1.

A second study with ESL writing learners presented by Wenden (1991) exposed the students' use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies before and while developing a text. The corresponding metacognitive techniques learners used to adjust their knowledge were: planning, evaluating and monitoring. Students also applied some cognitive strategies that helped them learn new information and use it when necessary, such as explaining, clarifying, referring to different sources, rearranging, declining and confirming. Wenden (1991) explained that cognitive strategies assisted the execution of metacognitive tactics and that the former's function was more limited.

After some dialogue and talk-aloud investigation with ESL learners Victori (1995) categorized the writing skills into seven types. The first was *planning strategies* that the writer uses to map ideas and organize the text. The second was *monitoring strategies* that are used to control the writing progression and visualize possible problems. *Evaluating strategies* applied to reassess parts of the text or layout that need to be modified. *Resourcing strategies* used to help the writer look for different options while using vocabulary, grammar or information. *Repeating strategies* implemented when it is necessary to re-use a phrase somewhere in the text. *Reduction strategies* used to erase or paraphrase information that could cause any understanding problem. The last group of strategies was *the use of L1 techniques* to incorporate in the written text fresh ideas, assess or clarify thoughts written in the L2.

Riazi (1997) studied the writing skills needed by college students, whose L2 was English, while composing research papers. Apart from the techniques abovementioned by previous investigators, categories concerning social and search strategies were added. Social techniques involve the communication with people who can be of help while writing, and search strategies include the decision making process when collecting data from different sources.

Mu (2007) proposed a taxonomy that includes all the major work done by the most important researchers in the ESL teaching writing field. It is a complete classification of all the techniques used by English language learners during the writing process. The

first category (see Table 1) corresponds to the writing strategy being utilized. The second group consists of the sub-strategies that play an important role when applying the global strategy. The last column in the table makes reference to when in the writing process the strategies and sub-strategies are more likely to be implemented.

Table 1. Mu's proposal for a Taxonomy of ESL Writing Strategies (2007).

Writing strategy	Sub-strategies	Speculation
Rhetorical strategies	Organisation Use of L1 Formatting/Modelling Comparing	Beginning/development/ending Translate generated idea into ESL Genre consideration Different rhetorical conventions
Meta-cognitive strategies	Planning Monitoring Evaluating	Finding focus Checking and identifying problems Reconsidering written text, goals
Cognitive strategies	Generating ideas Revising Elaborating Clarification Retrieval Rehearsing Summarising	Repeating, lead-in, inferencing, etc. Making changes in plan, written text Extending the contents of writing Disposing of confusions Getting information from memory Trying out ideas or language Synthesising what has read
Communicative strategies	Avoidance Reduction Sense of readers	Avoiding some problem Giving up some difficulties Anticipating readers' response
Social/affective strategies	Resourcing Getting feedback Assigning goals Rest/deferral	Referring to libraries, dictionaries Getting support from professor, peers Dissolve the load of the task Reducing anxiety

Teaching ESL/EFL writing

Teaching how to write in the ESL/EFL classroom is one of the most difficult challenges teachers and students face. Some years ago writing was practiced in the language class with the only objective of revising the grammar and vocabulary being taught. Tribble (1996) affirmed that learners were not developing their writing skills; they were consolidating the structures presented by the teacher. Even these days, when a more communicative approach to language learning is favored, some teachers do not see writing as an essential skill students need to develop in order to communicate.

The increasing demand for language learners to write specific texts depending on their authentic needs has motivated second language researchers to look for the most appropriate methods to teach learners how to write (Carter & Nunan, 2001). The focus of teaching writing has shifted from a grammar-centered to a more student-centered, discoursal approach and new areas of language teaching like English for Specific Purposes have emerged as a response to the students' special requirements.

While working on a written text in English, language learners have been usually told what they are expected to present as a final result, but they have not been taught how to work on the various steps they need to follow in order to achieve a well-written product. As a result, learners find writing activities a rather overwhelming task (Tribble, 1996). Teaching learners that the writing process entails pre-writing, writing and post-writing phases and having them practice each step will give students strong foundations to develop a written text appropriately. Focusing on the process rather than the product while writing is called process approach and according to Tribble (1996) it exploits the learner's imagination to create written texts. Moreover, it emphasizes the progress the writer makes in order to attain his/her writing objectives.

White and Arndt (1991) commented on the role teachers and learners have while applying a process approach to writing. They stated that teachers leave the role of written texts graders and become written text readers responding to the content of the piece of work rather than on its form. Students, on the other hand, are motivated to think about their audience and know that their ideas can be changed any time if necessary to get meaning across. The researchers continue explaining that grammar is important but as an instrument to elaborate a writing piece, it is not the heart of the process. White and Arndt (1991) also proposed some comprehensive stages English learners should follow to work in the writing process successfully. They mentioned the subsequent steps:

- Pre-writing
- Focusing ideas
- First draft
- Revision
- Editing
- Publishing

In the pre-writing stage students are motivated to think about how to approximate writing. Learners do not need to produce their writing piece yet; they have to let their ideas flow. They can obtain their inspiration from different sources such as movies, magazines, newspapers, own experiences, music, memoires, research or their imagination. All the information previously mentioned can provide them with useful ideas to write about. Some of the suggested pre-writing activities are: free-writing, listing, visualizing, brainstorming, mapping and using graphic organizers.

Focusing ideas, the second writing stage, consists of having learners write without giving too much attention to correctness or organization. The important part is meaning. Students have to ensure their text is logical, and verify if there is any information that needs to be included or excluded. Some recommended focusing ideas activities are: fast writing, in which students write for five to ten minutes without stopping and later on they check accuracy. Another activity is group composition where learners share ideas in order to develop their writing text. Changing viewpoints is a focusing ideas task that involves the presentation of a role-play or story first and then students select one character they might identify with and present different points of view. The last proposed activity in this stage is varying form. Various text types are chosen for the activity and students are asked to imagine how different they would be if they were for instance letters or magazine articles.

In the first draft period learners' ideas are expressed on paper. The focus continues to be the content not the technicalities. Students' ideas emerge without difficulty and they are able to write rapidly. At this stage the writer should ask him/herself some relevant questions about the purpose of the writing piece, the audience interest in his/her written text, the best layout for his/her work, the necessary details that will sustain the main ideas, a good way to start the piece as to capture the reader's interest and the form in which the writing should adequately end.

The next point in the writing process is revision. It comprises the selection of appropriate content and communication of ideas to improve the writing piece; it is not a grammar or spelling checking phase. The writer needs to see his/her writing from different points of view and be self-critical of his/her own work. Others' perspectives are gladly received during this part of the writing process. Teachers, students and family members could be

of great help with fresh ideas or possible improvement. Suggested activities for the revision stage are A.R.R.R (adding, rearranging, removing and replacing) and R.A.G (read around the group). The latter consists of having different groups read anonymous written texts and on a separate piece of paper they have to write comments to be afterwards discussed.

Editing is the step that follows revision. At this point of the writing process mechanics and grammar have to be corrected. There are two recommended types of editing, self and peer editing. In the first, the writer needs to meticulously read his/her work and analyze if sentences seem sensible. In contrast, peer editing is usually done through a checklist provided by the teacher. Learners are required to read their friends' work and confirm if the text has accomplished the specified standards using the checklist. While editing one's written work it is a good idea to see errors as a way to improve writing. Errors are a normal part of the learning process and it is possible to know the kind of mistakes students are expected to make depending on their English level as to provide them with some corrective advice.

The last stage in the writing process suggested by White and Arndt (1991) is publishing. Students prepare their final version of the written text and share it with his/her audience. The writer at this point expects to receive some useful feedback that certifies his/her work. Learners could use the author's chair technique to sit in front of an audience and read his/her work to them. Another way to publish one's written piece is through blogs, on-line magazines or use class newspapers or boards to present the work to the public.

Common writing errors caused by EFL learners at a pre-intermediate level

After an extensive study with Taiwanese students on writing error production, Chiang (1993) sustained that almost seventy percent of the errors made by language learners at a pre-intermediate level when writing were caused by language transfer. He also noticed that the use of simple, run-on sentences was another frequent mistake the aforementioned group made. Another similar study presented by Paradowiski (2007) supports that language learners' L1 knowledge influences second language acquisition making it simple or more complicated. Li (2008) asserts that when language learners are developing their language abilities, they are not sure about the lexis or correct structures to be used, therefore they address to their mother tongue and errors might appear.

After research done by Guzmán and Vargas (2011) with Colombian language students in an English as a foreign language teaching context, the most familiar writing errors the samples showed included syntactic ellipsis, the addition, exclusion or misuse of articles, the selection of the appropriate verb tense, word order, the use of prepositions, plural forms especially of irregular nouns and comparatives construction. To portray the way Spanish speakers learning English produce the aforesaid errors, Guzmán and Vargas (2001) provided some interesting patterns.

While writing, learners tend to avoid the use of some necessary words, for instance, "I *haven't* mathematics" is a clear example of ellipsis which is the omission of structures indispensable to convey meaning. The use of articles is one of the most difficult parts for English learners to grasp. Spanish speakers would tend to say "I like to learn the lyrics of *the* songs" a case of addition or "*A* lion laughed and set it free" misuse. Concerning verb tense a mistake frequently encountered can be "I can't kicked them out" instead of using the past tense form of can. In word order it is common to see pre-intermediate students write "I like *programs TV*", the meaning is not really altered, however the syntactic construction of the sentence confirms that the writer is transferring his/her L1 knowledge to the L2. Another example is the wrong form of irregular plural nouns. "Even mouses can do a lion a big favor." In here the writer obviously applied the general rule to make plural nouns by adding –s which should not be the case since an irregular noun such as mouse has mice as its plural form.

All the examples presented above illustrate Spanish speakers writing mistakes while writing in English. This information can help EFL teachers build a wider understanding of learners' common inaccuracies and their causes. Based on this research educators could select the most appropriate material to develop students' writing skills appropriately and do some remedial work on those parts that require more practice.

Writing activities for ESL/EFL pre-intermediate learners

Writing is an activity that most Ecuadorian English language students do not like to be engaged in, probably because they have not been encouraged to develop their writing skills from an early age in their mother tongue. For that reason, it becomes even more difficult to try to get learners involved in writing tasks in a foreign language. Material producers have worked hard to provide teachers and learners with suitable material that

enhances students' motivation to write. Teachers also play an important role when developing writing material since they know their students' actual needs and are able to adapt, add or even create material that will exploit students' language abilities, imagination and talents. Hadfield and Hadfield (2001) suggest a wide range of activities designed for elementary students that can be adjusted to higher level language learners. Those activities are based on the communicative approach and have as their main aim to make ESL/EFL writing in class a more enjoyable process. The tasks are the following:

The first group of activities is *listen and write* tasks. The traditional dictation can become more engaging if students are asked to fold a piece of paper four times. The product will be a piece of paper with eight spaces to write on. Then the teacher dictates eight sentences to students and afterwards everybody checks on the board. The same activity is available on line. Websites such as http://www.listen-and-write.com/audio and http://www.learner.org/interactives/spelling/ offer students similar type of activities using a computer. Another interesting activity is *story rewriting.* It requires the teacher to read a story out loud or to present it through a recording. Students have to draw pictures on a story board based on what they heard and then write the story using their pictures. *Visualization* is another alternative to get students write. The teacher plays nice background music while describing a scene. Students, with their eyes closed, listen and imagine the scene. After that, they have to put their ideas on paper and share them with the class.

The second group of tasks is *watch and write* activities. Students use a *TV commercial* to have some ideas on how to write one. Then using a different product, learners create a new advertisement. *Short videos* can be used to have students watch and write a response to them. They could be asked to reflect on a specific question prompted by the teacher. This is a good way to make students reflect on what they see and express their opinions. *News* is a form to get students acquainted with what is happening around the world. Based on what students watch, they can write their own news script and present a short news show to their audience. *Travel videos* are also an excellent tool to engage students in the writing process. Students watch a travel video and are asked to select a touristic place they would like to visit. They can either write a report about the most

interesting places to visit and things to do or they can prepare a poster with key information and present it to the class.

The third group of activities is *look and write*. *Pictures* are a stimulating way to involve students into writing. Students can be shown a series of picture and write what they think they are about or they could just look at one picture and use some questions written in advance by the teacher guess the story behind it. *Description* is a simple but nice form to make students write and interact with each other. Students see some pictures and write a short description of them. Then they read what they wrote to their friends and they have to guess which picture is being described. A really attractive way to practice writing in the classroom is using *book making*. Students receive a set of pictures that together could make a story. They look at them and write about each. Then they have to cut up the images, give them a personal touch and paste them in a book in the sequence they consider correct. Underneath each picture, learners have to paste the written text they developed for each and show their books to their classmates.

The fourth category of tasks is called *read and write*. A *reading journal* can be applied after students read a story and are assigned to respond to it. *Rewrite* can be also implemented after reading a text. Students read a story and then the teacher gives it to them with a missing part. Learners have to complete the part as it was originally written or they can create a different part of the story. *Opinion essay* is another task that can be used after reading and discussing an interesting or controversial article. Learners can develop an essay with a formal response to the text and read anonymously to their peers to generate a class debate.

In the same group of read and write strategies *giving advice* can be included. It is a very useful writing technique students find enjoyable. The teacher provides students with some problems that need recommendations from their part. Even the learners themselves could write their own issues and receive suggestion from each other on what to do in a written form. *Running dictation* is a very active way to engage students in the reading and writing process simultaneously. Students work in groups of three or four. The teacher pastes on the board a text and students one by one have to run to the text, read it, try to remember some sentences and dictate them to someone in the group who

is in charge of writing. The writing role has to be switched to every group member to give everybody the opportunity to get to write.

The next group of writing activities is *think and write*. The use of *graphic organizers* and *mind maps* encourages students to put their ideas and thoughts in order before writing them on paper. Students can develop their own or the teacher could provide them with pre-designed models. *Prompts and sentence starters* are another form to get students into the thinking and writing process. The teacher gives students some sentences that are half written and need to be finished. Learners have to come up with as many endings as possible. *Decoding and translating* is a good way to make students think and then write. For higher level students the translation of a paragraph into English could be a challenging but rewarding activity. *Text messaging* using special codes like CU (for see you) can also be a fun way to practice writing. *Forms and applications* are a practical tool to make students become familiar with an activity that could be encountered in real life situations.

Text and write is the category that follows the writing activities suggested for EFL/ESL learners by Hadfield and Hadfield (2001). *Guided writing* is a task that involves a written text with some missing words. The teacher could give a bank of words from which students choose to complete the spaces or students could guess the missing words and complete the paragraph with their own ideas. *Timelines* are also useful and can integrate the teaching of writing and subjects such as history. The teacher draws a timeline on the board and together with students' brainstorm allocate dates that happened at certain point in time. After that, learners have to write a paragraph using the information written. *Notes* consist of providing student with a list of items such as groceries, animals, or clothes. Students have to use all of them to write a short story that includes transition words and the correct use of prepositions. *Grammar poems* are used to practice selected grammar topics. Students receive a poem with some gaps to fill in.

An additional group of activities is *speak and write*. *Surveys and reports* are very popular in this category. Students have a questionnaire or survey related to a selected topic. They walk around the class gathering information that will be presented orally and then in a written form. *Reported speech* is applied after someone has said something and students are asked to report what the person said. *Introducing each other* is a task that

requires students to work in pairs. They ask each other some questions and use the information to write a biography that can be read in class. *In class letter writing* is a way to practice writing with a purpose. Students write each other letters. The teacher uses a box or plastic bag as the post office and students answer back. *Email, messaging, chat and networking* are activities that promote the development of speaking and writing skills. The teacher could use a special chat room, or social network to stimulate students' communication and establish an objective for the task.

The last group of activities is *write and do. Dialogues* can be written by students based on daily situations and then acted out. *Drawing* a picture and then writing a description is another good form of practicing the language. Afterwards students read their drawing description to another friend and he/she has to draw it. *Tableaus and dramas* consist of students writing something that has happened to them. Then another group has to act the situation out or make a tableau of it.

TESOL/NCATE standards for the recognition of initial TESOL programs in p–12

ESL teacher education

NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) is an association formed by several American education and public organizations whose most essential interest is to sustain quality teaching. It certifies that colleges have reached national standards preparing teachers for a competent performance in their future workplaces. For NCATE both teachers knowing the subject matter to be taught and how to teach it successfully are its primary goals. TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), an international organization with more than 50 years of working experience in the field of English language teaching and learning, decided to join NCATE in 1999 to elaborate norms for the recognition of P-12 ESL teacher education programs (http://www.tesol.org). In 2001 TESOL and NCATE authorized the standards that nowadays are being used by P-12 ESL teacher programs.

Taking into account new parameters worth to be implemented in the English teaching field, applied by institutions that work with NCATE, an adjustment to modify and update TESOL standards took place in 2005. Nowadays TESOL has become the most important organization in the United States to determine and validate standards for P-12

ESL teacher programs. Those standards are implemented by well known universities as guidelines of excellence in language teaching preparation courses (http://www.tesol.org).

TESOL standards

The standards are divided in five areas, Language, Culture, Instruction, Assessment and Professionalism. Each scope comes with a clear explanation of what it involves, in addition to rubrics that show three different performance levels a candidate could reach. Those levels are *approaches, meets* and *exceeds* and depend on the language knowledge and teaching ability the candidate possesses.

There are eleven standards in total developed to successfully achieve the challenge of teaching students whose linguistic and cultural needs are diverse. Language, culture, assessment and professionalism contemplations are also included in the TESOL/NCATE standard elaboration process to base the norms on extensive research and theory in each of the fields.

Language and language learning, for instance, is seen as having a close relationship with the context in which it is used. Some people might be capable of using language effectively to communicate in an everyday life situation; however, they could not have the same ability to communicate in a business or medical setting (Bailey, 2007). Besides, language should not be taught as a separate entity. It should be included in the academic and social contexts in which people from a young age expand and acquire new knowledge. Language should be taught as an integral part of human development (Genesee, 1993).

In addition, the combination of second language learning and academic content in the curriculum from early instruction stages will give learners not only the motivation they need to learn a language in a meaningful context, but it will also provide them with skills necessary to accomplish specific subject tasks that otherwise would be difficult to acquire later (Kaufman, 2004). Here is when the role of an ESOL teacher is needed. Students who are being implicitly taught the language through content instruction might certainly require at certain point of the second language acquisition process direct instruction on how the language works. The second language teacher will be the

responsible for providing useful explanations concerning language use and usage, developing language skills necessary to accomplish academic tasks and to improve students' communicative proficiency levels.

Culture is another important aspect considered while developing the TESOL/NCATE standards. Students, who come from a different cultural and linguistic background from the one of the prevailing culture they are living in, have to face several changes that need to be addressed by their teachers. If an ESOL educator has the responsibility to learn and understand the various cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds students come from and uses their knowledge and experience to build up the knowledge of a new culture, ESOL students will benefit from an education process in which their roots are valid and encouraged rather than minimized or criticized. Students will be able to adapt and feel part of the new community and therefore learning will come naturally. Starting from their own cultural experiences, families and communities will help learners create a solid foundation from which the understanding of a second culture could become easier.

ESOL teachers working in mainstream schools should reject the idea that ESOL students bring to school deficiencies that need to be corrected to help them successfully integrate in the new academic community. Conversely, all the L1 cultural richness brought by learners should be used by the teacher to help them compare, contrast, analyze and evaluate what they are learning and achieve positive outcomes (August & Shanahan, 2006).

The utilization of useful and suitable assessment tools is also an essential part in the language learning process. They help measure the students' progress, performance, strengths and weaknesses. They also encourage learners to self-evaluate their work and reflect on what could be done better. Assessment should always be connected to the learning goals established for the course, be formative and summative and applicable depending on the learning/student setting. While evaluating ESOL students some considerations need to be made. The knowledge students have of the subject matter is different from the language knowledge they possess. At early stages of second language learning students will have problems trying to express ideas and opinions

because of the limited language skills they present. ESOL teachers should assess learners' academic growth using special techniques that address the learners' capabilities with the language. Later on, when the student has achieved a high proficiency language level, the teacher has to make sure the student has appropriately developed the skills that will be required for academic tasks that are more complex, such as passing a standard test. If there are some abilities that require more practice, a special plan should be executed as to help the learner achieve his/her educational goals.

ESOL teachers should take advantage of their bilingualism to encourage learners the use of L1 language skills to improve their L2 knowledge. Educators should not see this as a threat, but as a tool they could use for their students' language advance (Genesee & Geva, 2006). Moreover, ESOL teachers need to work on the learners' development of social skills in the second language and have to be able to assess students' acquisition of such abilities with the aim of helping learners progress their social interactions with the L2 community or to apply individual techniques in case learners are lacking such aptitude.

Professionalism is at the heart of all the principles regarded in the TESOL/NCATE standards and it is connected to each of the areas that have to be mastered in order to become a successful educator. A teacher whose most important goal is to work for his/her students with all the necessary instruments and considering and respecting their individuality should be one of the primary interests of educator programs (http://www.tesol.org).
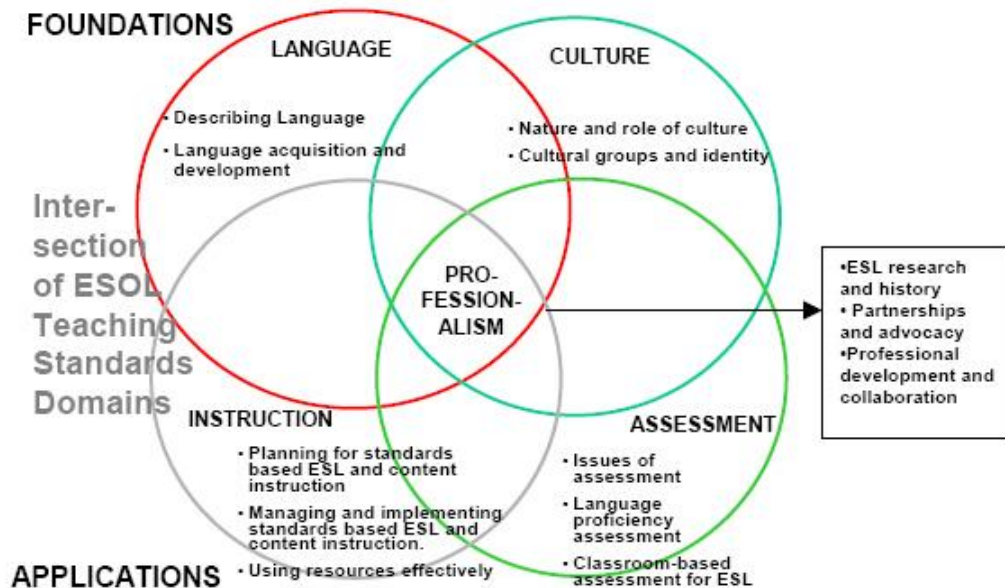
Figure 1. 2003 by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).

According to the Global Education Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, the TESOL/NCATE standards have the following organization:

Domain 1. Language

The future educator should be familiar with the most important approaches and studies concerning language structure and acquisition and should be able to implement them to assist English language learners so they can become effective communicators and succeed in their academic settings. This standard has been divided into language as a system and language acquisition.

Standard 1.a. Language as a system

The aspirant needs to know that phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics are all components of language. They are interconnected and together work as an organism that allows effective communication; consequently, being proficient in the target language is a priority. It is also necessary for the candidate to understand that languages despite of having the same functional goal are different and those differences will determine the extent to which a language learner will succeed or fail while learning a second language.

Standard 1.b. Language acquisition and development

The applicant has to incorporate into his/her teaching repertoire a comprehensible and applicable knowledge of studies of language acquisition and development. Besides, the candidate has to understand that the process of acquiring a second language will depend on several students' variables such as personality, motivation, learning styles, linguistic, education and cultural background, age, and time spent in an English speaking community as to plan lessons to address learners' needs. The future educator has to be able to create a supportive classroom atmosphere where taking risks and making mistakes is a normal part of the learning process.

Domain 2. Culture

The candidate needs to know how cultures and cultural groups vary their way of seeing the world and use all the research and theory to build an encouraging language learning setting for students. This domain consists of culture as it affects student learning.

Standard 2. Culture as it affects student learning

The applicant has to understand, respect and share with his/her students how different cultures differ from one another without diminishing their value and importance. Using the information of cultural thoughts, beliefs, roles in society, and communication principles, the candidate has to plan culturally suitable lessons. Moreover, the teacher has to give each learner the confidence required to show the abilities and knowledge they have as to increase classroom performance and should avoid any type of conflict that involves racial, religious or stereotyping issues in the classroom.

Domain 3. Planning, implementing, and managing instruction

The aspirant should have the knowledge and skills required to plan, implement and manage content instruction in a standard-based form and to select and apply material, activities and techniques that combine the development of the four language abilities. The candidate should also be able to incorporate technology and the use of available devices in his/her lessons. This domain is divided in planning for standards-based ESL and content instruction, implementing and managing standards-based ESL and content

instruction, and using resources and technology effectively in ESL and content instruction.

Standard 3.a. Planning for standards-based ESL and content instruction

The candidate needs to plan lessons in which the students' language as well as their cognitive and social needs are being fulfilled. To achieve this goal the applicant has to use various teaching techniques and material appropriate to the language learning setting. The development of language skills and the content and the standards required in the learners' formal education process have to go hand in hand. In addition, the candidate has to be able to generate a classroom setting where values, good practices and an encouraging atmosphere are always present.

Standard 3.b. Implementing and managing standards-based ESL and content instruction

The future teacher has to be able to apply content and standards-based teaching in such a way that the students' four language skills and their academic knowledge develop simultaneously. Further, the applicant needs to prepare material and activities that suit his/her students' interests, educational needs and personal experiences as to create a meaningful context to use the language communicatively.

Standard 3.c. Using resources and technology effectively in ESL and content instruction

The aspirant has to choose among all the material and resources nowadays available to teach a language the ones that will help him/her enhance the language learning process. The material has to be content, age and culturally relevant and has to prove the teacher's ability and creativity to adapt ready-made activities to specific learners' needs.

Domain 4. Assessment

The candidate knows the theory and possible problems that evaluating students' knowledge and performance involve. This domain is divided in issues of assessment for

English language learners, language proficiency assessment, and classroom-based assessment for ESL.

Standard 4.a. Issues of assessment for English language learners

The applicant needs to identify the different assessment purposes and use them effectively while evaluating English language learners. The teacher has to be able to develop assessment tools that accurately and consistently estimate what it is intended to evaluate. Any type of issues concerning bias, students with special needs or language proficiency weaknesses have to be addressed in advance to give learners the same opportunity while being examined. Moreover, the candidate has to remember that evaluation is a formative and summative process and that the assessment tasks selected have to be standard-based.

Standard 4.b. Language proficiency assessment

The candidate has to be able to use national and state expertise assessment tools to determine whether a student has achieved a certain language level required in a program or not. Based on the results the teacher has to determine the level of development of the students' four language skills over a period of time, in addition to the ability to use the language in a communicative way. Furthermore, the teacher should be able to use examination feedback to reinforce his/her teaching practices.

Standard 4.c. Classroom-based assessment for ESL

The applicant has to be able to teach and evaluate learners based on the content and standards required by national programs. The candidate needs to know that there are diverse ways to assess students inside and outside the classroom and that selecting the most relevant could benefit students' progress. For instance, the use of portfolios to measure the learners' improvement is a valid tool to assess their language skills. Self and per-assessment are forms to give students some responsibility and freedom to reflect on their own performance in the classroom. Besides, the teacher has to design assessment tasks that measure the four language skills accurately integrated to literacy abilities required in any academic contexts.

Domain 5. Professionalism

The candidate has to use the information related to new trends, studies, technologies and language teaching and learning issues to improve his/her teaching. The applicant also needs to work cooperatively with co-workers, administration staff and community members to create a positive environment that fosters education progress.

Standard 5.a. ESL research and history

The applicant has a wide understanding of ESL theories, methods and techniques that are used to teach the language. They are also familiar with new studies that have a positive impact on teaching and use them in his/her lessons. Moreover, the candidate is conscious of all the national and state policies that have been established to provide students with the same quality of education and uses them to benefit society.

Standard 5.b. Professional development, partnerships, and advocacy

The applicant, using his/her knowledge acquired, has to contribute to the development and improvement of language teaching practices at his/her place of work and also to the community in general. Through the support and encouragement given to ESOL students with diverse cultural, educational and social backgrounds, the applicant needs to create a resourceful learning population that advocates for equal education opportunities.

CHAPTER I: CASE STUDY OF A WRITING STUDENT

Student and setting description

English learners at a low-intermediate level start using the language productively, either orally or in written form. The writing skill is an ability that needs to be given a lot of emphasis in Ecuador due to the poor writing background students have when they leave school. Some of the most common errors low-intermediate learners present while writing in English are related to sentence structure, limited use of vocabulary, spelling and punctuation mistakes. That is the case of the student subject of study in this portfolio.

Paúl is a young adult in his early thirties. He is married and has one child. He belongs to the Ecuadorian middle class. He is a systems engineer who works in a secondary school as an IT teacher and he is also a discipline monitor there. He found in teaching a way to live, therefore a need to get qualified as a teacher arose. He decided to study a master's program in education to fulfill his goals. As he is about to finish his studies, he wants to complete his education program adding a second language to it.

He has had an English learning background since his school days. However, a really positive experience with the language was seven years ago when he started studying English in a private institution. He reached a pre-intermediate level with a good performance. Nevertheless, his need to work to support his family forced him to stop learning. Nowadays, he wants to retake his English lessons. It has been a lot of time without practicing the language, consequently he needs some private classes to take a placement test that will allow him to skip the first two levels and start again the pre-intermediate level he already passed some years ago.

Paúl is a motivated learner who has an innate capacity for foreign languages. He is really friendly and is not afraid of making mistakes, which is not common in adults because they tend to be too conscious about their own learning. He is a visual and kinesthetic learner. His knowledge of the language previously acquired is still there; nevertheless, he needs some practice and reinforcement to use it in a communicative way.

The English lessons took place at the English teacher's house three times a week for six weeks. Each session lasted one hour and thirty minutes. During that time Paúl had the opportunity to revise and update his knowledge of the language he learned some years ago. The standards used by the teacher to help the student reach his goals were the levels A1 and A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The reason to base the language practice on them was because the institution the learner is aiming to take the placement test at works with the aforementioned parameters.

The four skills were reinforced along with vocabulary and grammar; however, a closer attention was given to writing as to gather representative samples to assemble a writing portfolio. It allowed both the teacher and the student to assess his writing performance. Using the information of the learner's pieces of writing, the teacher could work on some aspects that needed to be strengthened. Moreover, the learner had the satisfaction to evidence his improvement and the things he was capable of doing while writing in a foreign language.

Pre-test and post-test

Pre-test

A test to collect information on how much the learner remembered was prepared and administered. The main points covered by the test were sentence structure, vocabulary practice and a few grammar points based on the topics of describing people, free time activities, daily routine and last vacations. The themes were selected taking into account the most important topics that are usually taught at an A1 and A2 level of CEFR.

In the first question Paúl had to describe four people in terms of age and physical appearance after looking at a picture. He did not follow the instruction probably because there was a lack of understanding that he did not let the teacher know; yet, he used in his sentences prepositions of place, jobs and he even found a connection between the people being described. Those sentences contained some spelling and punctuation errors common in students with a low-intermediate language level.

Name: Paul Fiallos B   Date: 09/03/2012

A) Describing people
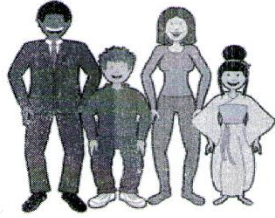
Describe the people in the picture. How old are they? What do they look like? Write one sentence about each person.

1. The man on the left is the father, he works in a factory.

2. In the midle the boy is the son he studies at the school.

3. She is the mother, she's a house wife, she takes her family. *looks after / takes care of*

4. And she is the daughter

B) Write a list of eight free time activities you enjoy

I like playing football   I like playing volleyball

I like riding my cycle or bike   I enjoy dancing in the disco

I enjoy meeting with my friends I enjoy staying with my family

I enjoy playing with my family   I like working in my job

C) Daily routine
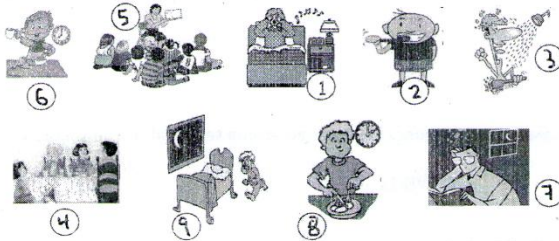
Correct the mistakes in the following sentences. Use the pictures to guide you.

1. She get up very early. _She gets up very early._

3. He takes a shower hot. _He takes a hot shower._

4. They breakfast together. _They have breakfast together._ ✓

5. She don't teach teenagers. _She teaches children. She doesn't teach ....._

8. He eats lunch in your house. _He have lunch at home. / He eats in his house._

D) Fill in the gaps with the words in the box

am resting	am	jogging
want	always	am watching

I _always_ work from Mondays to Fridays, but today I _am_ at home because I have a bad cold and need to stay in. I often go _jogging_ early in the morning. After I take a shower and get ready to work. Now that I _am resting_ sick I cannot do any of those things so I _am watching_ TV and drinking some hot lemonade. I am feeling terrible. I _want_ to get better so tomorrow I can do the things I like.

E) Unscramble the sentences

What did Paola do last summer?

1. with /the /went /family. /she /beach /summer, /last/her /to

She went to the beach (last summer) with her family.

2. hotel / for / in / She / week. / one/ a / stayed

She stayed in a hotel for one week

3. delicious / and /the /in /seafood. /She /ate / sea /swam

She ate delicious seafood and swam in the sea / She swam in the sea and ate delicious seafood.

4. and / time / a / She/ there. /great/ had/ relaxed

She had a great time and relaxed there.

In the second question the student was asked to list eight free time activities he enjoyed. Pául knew the vocabulary he was being tested on. He wrote the activities in sentences using the verbs *like* and *enjoy* and a second verb afterwards. The sentences showed some grammar problems that needed to be checked.

In question three Paúl, using pictures one more time, had to correct mistakes in daily routine sentences. The mistakes chosen for the activity were the most frequent English learners with a Spanish L1 make. For instance, the verb form of the third person singular

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in present simple, the position of an adjective in relation to a noun, the omission of verbs or the incorrect use of possessive pronouns. The learner found this question a little difficult; still he managed to find some of the errors.

The fourth question consisted of a close reading activity from which the verbs in present simple, present progressive and frequency adverbs were removed. There were two words that Paúl found confusing. He did not use the time expressions, employed as hints, included in the text to help him complete the exercise accurately. Even so, his performance in this section was good.

In the last question some scrambled sentences in the past tense had to be organized. Some punctuation indicators were given to prompt the correct sentence structure; nonetheless, there were two mistakes that demonstrated the learner needed some extra practice on sentence structure.

After the implementation of the pre-test, the teacher had a better idea of the things that required practice and reinforcement to help the student improve his writing skills. A writing program was developed and applied during the following weeks to achieve positive outcomes.

Post-test

A post-test was given to the student after six weeks practicing the language. He was asked to go through his portfolio in advance to notice all the things he had to take into consideration while writing. The test consisted of a composition about his life. Some information that needed to be included was specified in the instructions as to guide the learner with his writing piece. He had thirty minutes to complete his task. During that time he worked developing his ideas without difficulty. His spelling and punctuation improved; however, there were a few mistakes with capitalization. He has learned to write short sentences and separate them with periods instead of commas to avoid run-on sentences. The way he structured sentences is also better than when he took the pre-test.

Name: Paúl Fiallos .... Date: 16/04/2012 ......

Write a paragraph about your life that includes the following information

Details about you:

Where were you born? When were you born? What languages do you speak? etc.

Your Family: parents, brothers or sisters, husband or wife, children, etc.

Important events in your life: studies, trips, friends, work, etc.

Additional information: e.g. likes/dislikes /plans, etc.

My Auto-biography

My name is Paul Fiallos. I was born in Ambato on April 26th in 1981. I am thirty years old. I speak Spanish. I am married since 2006. We have a son. His name is Sebastián. He is five years old. My mother is Tania. She is a housewife and my father is Gustavo. He is a referee. I have a sister. Her name is Giovanna and she is married too. I studied at Centro Escolar Ecuador school. After I studied at San Alfonso high school, and finally I studied at Indoamerica University. I am a Systems Engineer. Now I work teaching IT at Murialdo school. I also work supervising teachers and students.

On weekends I like to play volleyball with my friends. On Saturdays I stay with my son because my wife works. I like to go to the park with my son to play football. On Sundays I like to stay at home with my family.

> We like to watch tv or movies. Some weekends we go to the summing pool, and have lunch at a restaurant because I dislike washing dishes, but I like eating.
> My future plans are to travel to Brazil to watch the football world cup because I like the Brazilian soccer team. Another plan is to finish my master's program and improve my English.

Comments:

Now, it is evident that he knows how to form a well constructed utterance. His vocabulary use has expanded. He revised several units with different topics during his lessons which helped him refresh his knowledge concerning the use of new words. He also used connectors to make sentences more complex. In addition, he demonstrated a writing coherence evolution. On the other hand, his fluency while writing still needs to improve. He requires more contact with the language to make his ideas flow smoothly.

Writing samples

Writing exercise 1

For this assignment a lesson about introducing oneself and a friend was revised together with physical appearance descriptions. Sentence structured was checked for the first time. Some common errors while constructing a sentence were written on purpose for the student to notice and correct them. The vocabulary was previously practiced using pictures to describe different people. Moreover, a guess who am I game was used to practice the language in a fun way. The writing activity consisted of describing a person in the family. It included a description of age, nationality, personal information and appearance. The first task in the exercise was to fill in gaps and select the correct words to describe a person previously chosen by the student. After selecting the most appropriate words, the learner had to use that information to develop a short paragraph. In his first paragraph the student presented several spelling mistakes and a few preposition and punctuation errors that received the necessary feedback.

Describing Someone

Writing Exercise 1

Name: Paul Fiallos   Date: 12/03/2012

Describe a person in your family

(He)/she.........

is ...23....years old

is...Ecuadorian...(Nationality)

speaks...Spanish and English...(languages)

lives in ...Quito...(city)

is....single...(single/married/divorced)

has...—...children (daughter/son)

likes...listening to music, reading...(-ing)

doesn't like....playing basketball...(-ing)

What does he/she look like?

(He)/she...

is tall / short.

is fat / thin.

has long / short hair.

has black / brown / red / blond / gray hair.

is bald.

has brown / blue / green eyes.

wears glasses / contacts / braces.

has a mustache / a beard.

has a piercing / a tattoo.

Use the information above to write a paragraph about the person you chose

He is Juan Pablo, he lives in Quito, he studies at Politecnica University
Electronics Engineering. He speaks Spanish and English (languages)
he likes listening to music and reading. He is tall and thin, he has
short black hair, he has brown eyes. He is single.
In his free time he likes sleeping or surfing in internet. On holidays
he travels to Ambato to visit his family, he has a brother and
a sister. his girlfriend's name is Paulina.

Comments:

You have written a good paragraph. Do not
forget to use 'periods' to separate sentences.
Keep up with the good work ☺

Writing exercise 2

Before working on the second assignment, the teacher and student had already worked on the topics of likes and dislikes and daily routine to reinforce the use of the present simple and also relevant vocabulary. The teacher used cardboards with words that together formed a simple present sentence to continue practicing sentence structure. The learner had to put words in order to make sentences and worked on the activity accordingly. He enjoyed the opportunity to move while practicing the language. Moreover, pictionary was used to revise words related to likes and dislikes and daily routine. The writing assignment involved errors correction to encourage the student to continue noticing common mistakes that should be avoided. He did well on the activity, except for one mistake in a sentence that he was not able to recognize. There was also a close reading activity about someone's favourite sport to strengthen the learner's ability with sentence construction, coherence and punctuation.

My Favourite Sport

Writing Exercise 2

Name: *Paul Fiallos*   Date: *16/03/2012*

Correct the mistakes in the following sentences

I like swim in summer.   *I like swimming in summer*

Soccer is very funny.   *Soccer is fun.*

I go cycling wich Juan.   *I like to go cycling with Juan*

You can to play football in the stadium.   *You can play football in the stadium*

I not very good at it.   *I am not very good at it.*

Complete the paragraph with the words from the table

beat	do	favourite	racket
because	don't	four	rude
center	every	is	with

My Favourite Sport

My favourite sport is tennis. I have tennis lesson *every* Saturday morning at a local sports *center*. In the summer I play tennis with my friends everyday. I like tennis *because* it is great fun and you *do* exercise at the same time. You need a *racket* and special balls to play. There are two players or *four* players. I sometimes play *with* my dad. He is terrible and I always *beat* him.

My *favourite* tennis player is Rafa Nadal from Spain. He *is* very young and very strong. I *don't* like Lleyton Hewitt because he is very *rude* and ugly.

good!

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Write about your favourite sport

My favourite sport is volleyball. I play volleyball every Saturday afternoon with my friends. I like volleyball because it is funny.
and a ball
You can play volleyball only with your hands ^ there are three people
in
(for) each team. In Ecuador volleyball is different because you can
play it in different places.
↳ *for example?*

Comments: You did a great job in general. You need to be more careful with spelling and the use of capital letters. ☺

His performance was excellent. Finally, a short paragraph about the student's favourite sport was the last task in this exercise. He had to use the ideas in the paragraph he had previously completed to write his own. Many spelling errors were found, hence a little more time was dedicated to them for the next assignment.

Writing exercise 3

For this assignment the vocabulary and grammar structures earlier revised were recycled and used as a tool to make the learner practice spelling and punctuation. In the first activity Paúl had to write the missing letters in a word to spell it correctly. The words selected were the ones that usually cause confusion for learners. The student performed the activity correctly. The second part was a short paragraph written with some punctuation and capitalization mistakes. There were five errors that needed to be corrected. This time it was difficult for Paúl to recognize when to capitalize or use a period. He found three of the five mistakes and thought some punctuation needed to be changed. This activity showed the learner had to work more on when to use capital

letters and the correct punctuation marks. The teacher allocated some extra time to reinforce the aforesaid problems.

Spelling and Punctuation
Writing Exercise 3

Name : Paul Fiallos .... Date: 19/03/2012 ....

Write the missing words in the gaps

1. There are seven *classrooms* upstairs.
2. My father works as an *electrician.*
3. I like to ride my *bycicle.*
4. Daniela had an *accid ent* last Friday. She broke her leg.
5. Could you give me Mario's *address s*? I only know his phone number.
6. Amy often borrows books and CDs from the *library.*
7. I always go on *holiday* to the beach.
8. *Volleyball* is one of my favorite sports.
9. On *Wednesday* I usually go to the cinema.
10. Last week I went *swimming g* in the river. It was really nice.

Correct the punctuation and capitalization mistakes in the following paragraph. There are five errors in total.

My hobby is collecting stamps. I started doing it when I was five years old. my grandfather

sent me a letter from canada, and I really liked the stamp on it. I began collecting more and

more, and soon I had more than 100! Last friday, I read a book about collecting stamps, and

I saw a picture of a beautiful one that was worth over $100! this hobby is very interesting,

so I don't think I will ever quit it.
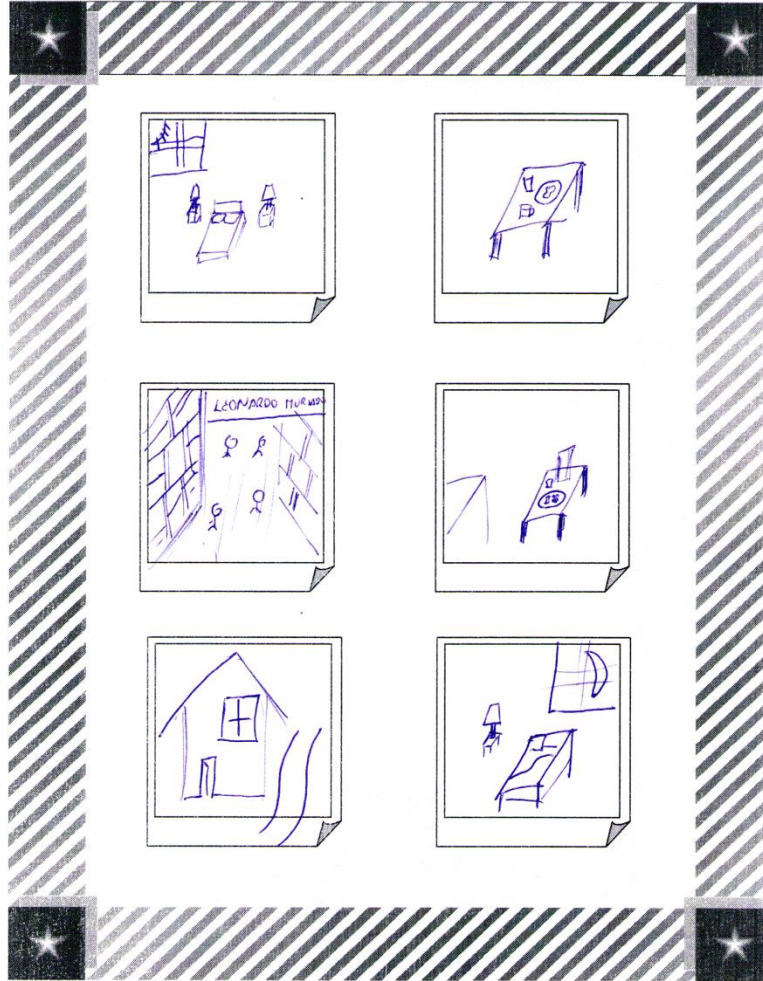
Comments:

Your spelling is improving! Congratulations.
You need to work a little more with
capitalization. ☺
Days, months, countries, nationalities have to be written
with a capital letter.

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Writing exercise 4

My Daily Routine
Writing Exercise 4

Name: Paul Fiallos   Date: 23/03/2012

Use the graphic organizer to describe the activities you do during the week

The topic of daily routine was selected to practice the simple present one more time in conjunction with frequency adverbs. The teacher presented a series of pictures that contained the most important daily activities someone does. Using the pictures a short paragraph was assembled to give the learner an example of what he had to do. Once sentence structured was revised for several occasions, the use of a graphic organizer to stimulate the learner to put in order his ideas before writing was introduced for the first time. Paúl decided to draw pictures instead of writing words in the organizer because he

wanted to use his creativity before getting into writing. Using the ideas in the graphic organizer, he had to write a short paragraph. He was not really concentrated that day. He was a little tired but agreed to write.

His writing showed spelling and punctuation errors that had already been talked about in the former lessons; nevertheless, his writing displayed a better order of ideas. Having ideas prepared before getting into writing was a useful technique for him. He acknowledged that he hardly ever used it while writing in his mother tongue. He said he would be using this strategy more often to give his writing more coherence.

Writing exercise 5

Describing the Picture
Writing Exercise 5

Name: Paul Fiallos   Date: 26/03/2012

Look at the picture and answer the questions
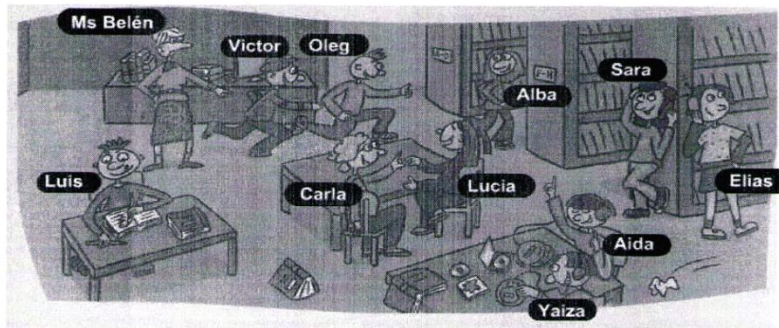
1 What does Ms Belen do? She is a librarian.

2. What is she doing now? She is telling the boys that this place isn't for playing

3. What is Aida doing right now? She is listening to music. ✔

4. Where does Aida go every morning? She goes to the library. ✔

5. Are Victor and Oleg studying? No, they aren't studying.

Write questions for the following answers

What is Elias doing right now ✔? Elias is talking on her phone.

Is Elias running at the library ✔? No, Luis isn't running.

What does Luis like doing ✔? Luis likes reading books.

Comments:
Good job! Remember to use articles with jobs.

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A lesson about present progressive for actions that happen at the moment of speaking and its contrast with the simple present tense preceded this writing assignment. In the lesson a video to prompt what people were doing and the things they usually do was used. The teacher began writing a few sentences to show the difference between tenses and the learner had to continue doing it based on what he was watching. The way verbs change to form the gerund was also explained. The writing activity consisted of two parts. In the first section Paúl had to look at a picture of some kids at a library and answer present progressive and simple present questions. There were two spelling mistakes and some forgotten full stops; apart from that, the answers were all correct.

In the second part the student had some answers written based on the same picture and he needed to write the missing questions for each. The purpose of this activity was to give the learner some training on how to write questions since it is one of the areas in which pre-intermediate learners present more difficulties with. Paúl demonstrated a strong knowledge of how to structure a question and performed the task accurately.

Writing exercise 6

A lesson on the use of connectors followed the previous classes because the learner needed to know how to form more complex structures linking ideas. The target joining words were *and, but, because* and *so*. Some sentences written on paper and cut in halves were given to the student. He was asked to match them and after revising if they were correctly matched, he tried to figure out the appropriate use of each connector. Subsequently, some examples provided by the learner reinforced the difference among the words. The writing assignment was about reading seven sentences in which the connector was missing. Paúl had to select the correct word and write it in the space. There was one mistake with the use of *because* and *but*, the rest of the sentences were all right. In the next task the students had to complete writing sentences whose beginning was already given and use a connector to add extra ideas. He worked really well despite the few punctuation errors he continued making.

Name: Paul Fiallos .... Date: ...30/03/2012......

Complete the sentences with AND, BUT, BECAUSE or SO

1. I love trees, grass, flowers ....and....rivers.

2. Joseph likes comedies ..because✗.he hates science fiction. but

3. I go to the gym every week ......~~so~~ because....I like to be healthy. ✓

4. I didn't feel very well .....~~and~~ so....I stayed at home. ✓

5. Susan finished work ...and....then she phoned a friend to go out. ✓

6. I studied really hard because..I had an exam the next day. ✓

7. Mary and Ann are good friends .....so....they go out for lunch together every day. ✓

Use the prompts to write sentences about you include AND, BECAUSE, SO or BUT

I enjoy....listening to music and watching tv. ✓

Last weekend I didn't .....stay at home but I like to be with my family. ✓

I am really happy....and healthy. ✓

I watch soccer on TV.....because I can't (stay) ~~go to~~ at the stadium.

I'm studying a master's....so I'm going to improve my life ✓

Comments:

You used connectors very well. Don't forget to use a full stop at the end of each sentence.

Writing exercise 7

A lesson about the simple past tense came before this assignment. The teacher and learner worked together on the differences between regular and irregular verbs and practiced the way to form affirmative and negative sentences as well as questions. Some emphasis was given to the verb *to be* because learners usually treat this verb as if it was an action verb and use an auxiliary when it is not needed. An activity where Paúl had to recognize some famous people's faces and match them with their names and things for which they became famous was the next step in the lesson. The verbs were written in the infinitive and so the student had to put them in the correct past tense form.

After that, a reading comprehension task about celebrities' holidays was the introduction to Paúl's next writing exercise. It only had one task this time. Using some questions to help the learner organize his ideas before writing, the teacher asked him to write a paragraph about his last vacations. His paragraph presented a good organization, the use of connectors to link ideas, well-structured sentences and there were almost no spelling or punctuation mistakes. He also used new words in a correct way. His writing has definitely improved.

Your last vacation
Writing Exercise 7

Name: Paúl Fiallos   Date: 02/04/2012

Use these questions to guide you and write a holidays description

1. Where did you go for your last summer vacation?
2. How did you travel?
3. Who went with you? Did you go alone or with someone?
4. What did you do during your last summer holiday?
5. What interesting things did you see during your last summer vacation?
6. What did you like about your last summer vacation?
7. What did you dislike about your last holiday?
8. Where would you like to go next summer?

My Last Vacation

On my last summer vacations I went to the beach with my family and friends. We traveled to Atacames city because it is really nice.

At the beach we stayed in a hotel near the sea, so all mornings we could see the sunrise. Some days we stayed at the hotel's pool swimming and playing. We enjoyed the sea food specially the ceviche because at the coast it has a different flavor. There were somethings that I didn't like. People threw trash in the street. Next summer I would like to travel to Galapagos city because It's very interesting and I'd like to know new places of Ecuador.

Comments:

Your piece of writing is excellent!
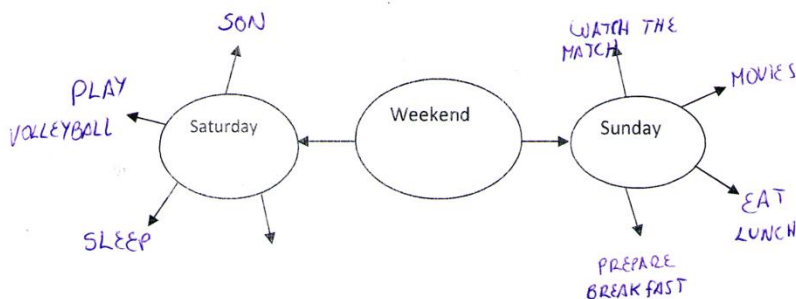You covered almost all the questions to guide your writing.
                good job ☺

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Writing exercise 8

Weekend Plans
Writing exercise 8

Name: *Paul Fiallos* .... Date: ..*06/04/2012*......

Use the mind map to brainstorm some ideas before you write your paragraph

SON

PLAY
VOLLEYBALL

SLEEP

Saturday

Weekend

WATCH THE
MATCH

MOVIES

Sunday

EAT
LUNCH

PREPARE
BREAKFAST

Your weekend plans

This weekend I'm going to do a lot of things. On Saturday
I'm going to sleep until 9 am. Then I'm going to make breakfast
to eat with my family. In the afternoon, I'm going to play volleyball
with my friends.
On Sunday I'm going to stay with family, at 11 am my son and I
we are going to go to the stadium to see our favorite soccer team,
After that, we are going to have lunch at a restuarant. At night
I'm going to prepare my clothes to go to work on Monday
and I'm going to sleep at 8 pm to get up early next day.

Comments: It's a good paragraph!
Don't forget to make shorter sentences.
Use punctuation when necessary.

The topic of future plans using *be + going to + verb* was the next lesson studied. Students at a low-intermediate level tend to forget the verb *to be* in the structure and also to use the infinitive form of the verb after *to*. An error correction exercise was used to work on that. After that, the teacher established the topic of the lesson and wrote on the board four sentences about her weekend plans, two of which were true and the other two false. The learner had to figure out which ones were true or false and after it was his turn to do the same. Then, using the topic of weekend plans the student was asked to use a mind map to outline his ideas before writing. He said it was not the first time he had used it, for this reason he was comfortable while working with it.

Planning his ideas before writing continues being encouraged. If he gets used to doing it, the steps for a good writing process will come naturally for him. The final paragraph showed a good use of the target grammar; however, some run-on sentences appeared again, together with punctuation and spelling mistakes. Another important thing to work on was the overuse of the article *the.* The teacher explained and provided the learner with some extra practice on how to use articles.

Writing exercise 9

Writing an email of apology
Writing Exercise 9

Name: Paul Fiallos   Date: 13/04/2012

Read the invitation below and write a response apologizing for not going. You have other things to do that day.

To: Paúl
From: Peter

Hi Paúl,

How are things at work? Everything's OK here but we are a little busy. Ann and I are organizing a barbecue to celebrate our tenth wedding anniversary. It will be on the 21st at our house. We have invited all our relatives and closest friends. We would like you and your wife to come.

I'll be waiting for your response.

See you soon,

Peter

To: Peter
From: Paúl

Hi Peter,
Work here is fine I'm working at Murialdo's School. Thanks for the invitation but I can't go because my wife is pregnant and she can't travel a lot, I have to take care of her. I hope to meet you another date to celebrate your anniversary.
My best wishes for you.
See you soon.
Paúl.

Comments:
Very good email. Remember to use periods instead of commas to make your sentences shorter. ☺

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The last exercise that was collected from Paúl was an email apologizing in response to an invitation. This is one of the tasks students at an A2 level have to be able to perform. The task was executed correctly. A pluralized adjective, which is also a common mistake students make at this level, was found. He was reminded that in his L1 adjectives are pluralized depending on the subject being used, which is not the case in English. His ideas were well written and connected.

Student self-evaluation

CEF self-assessment statements: Writing

A1

I can write simple notes to friends. ☑ Yes ☐ No

I can describe where I live. ☑ Yes ☐ no

I can fill in forms with personal details. ☑ Yes ☐ no

I can write simple isolated phrases and sentences. ☑ Yes ☐ no

I can write a short simple postcard. ☑ Yes ☐ no

I can write short letters and messages with the help of a dictionary.

☑ Yes ☐ no

A2

I can give short, basic descriptions of events and activities. ☑ Yes ☐ no

I can write very simple personal letters expressing thanks and apology.

☑ Yes ☐ no

I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters of everyday life.

☑ Yes ☐ no

I can describe plans and arrangements. ☐ Yes ☑ no

I can explain what I like or dislike about something. ☑ Yes ☐ no

I can describe my family, living conditions, schooling, present or most recent job.

☑ Yes ☐ no

I can describe past activities and personal experiences. ☑ Yes ☐ no

Taken from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

At the end of his writing assignments and having his portfolio as an evidence of how much his writing skills had progressed, the learner was given a self-assessment sheet containing CAN DO writing statements that correspond to an A1 and A2 level of CEF. The learner had to reflect on the activities he was able to perform and mentioned he was able to do all the tasks required at an A1 level, which included writing short sentences, simple notes, filling in forms with personal information and writing short messages.

The next part of the self - assessment sheet contained all the statements that were required at an A2 level. In this section the learner stated that he was able to write short descriptions, personal emails, describe plans, express likes and dislikes and describe personal experiences and past activities. Nevertheless, there was one task he had not worked on. Describing future arrangements in a written form was not practiced during the six weeks the lessons lasted. The self-evaluation process served as a tool to know what the leaner was confident of doing while writing and also to reinforce those things he felt he needed more practice on. In a more informal way, he mentioned to be happy for the results obtained after being disconnected to the language for so long.

CHAPTER II: TEFL PROGRAM PORTFOLIO

The TESOL/NCATE standards have been developed as a response to the need of qualification guidelines by teachers' education programs in the United States. The objective of working with these types of conventions is to improve the competence of teachers of English as a second language. In that way students will benefit from a high-quality learning environment (http://www.ncate.org). These standards could be used as a good guide to language teachers in Ecuador because they cover the most important aspects of good teaching performance such as the knowledge of the language as a system, language acquisition and development, culture and language learning, lesson planning and implementation, technology in the language classroom, assessment, ESL research and history, as well as professional development.

Five of the TESOL/NCATE standards aforementioned have been chosen to write this work. They were selected based on the master's assignments that helped the writer improve her teaching practices. Those standards are:

Standard 1.a. Language as a system

1.a.2. Apply knowledge of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics to help ELLs develop oral, reading, and writing skills (including mechanics) in English.

English as any other language requires of all its components to be used as a means of communication. The knowledge of grammar (rules that govern a language in which morphology - word formation - and syntax - rules that determine the formation of phrases, clauses and sentences - are its main components), lexis (a description of words and word elements), phonology (the sound system of a language), discourse (speech patterns and usage of language), pragmatics (choice of language in social interaction) and semantics (meaning of language) is essential to fully achieve language learning (Harmer, 2007).

A power point presentation developed at the Technology class is a good example of the accomplishment of the aforementioned standard. It was designed with the purpose of

introducing and practicing the use of the present perfect for giving news. The topic of music was chosen to increase students' motivation and therefore their class involvement (Dornyei, 2001).

The slides contain music, a podcast recorded by the teacher with information of famous artists. There is also a listening comprehension activity based on the podcast and some grammar hints for students to remember. In the last two slides a short digital movie and a karaoke were incorporated through links to show students the use of the grammar tense in context. The karaoke song "We are the Champions" by Queen was selected to encourage students to use the present perfect with music. The teacher's knowledge of English as a system was put into practice while constructing the power point presentation for students. Some extra material was needed to accomplish the objective of developing the learners' four language skills; however, the content of the slides proved to be useful to reach positive language learning outcomes.

Standard 2. Culture as it affects student learning

 2.b. Understand and apply knowledge about the effects of racism, stereotyping, and discrimination to teaching and learning.

Stereotypes (exaggerated opinion about a person or group), prejudice (preconception about a group or its members), discrimination (actions that treat people unequally because of the group they belong to) and racism (hate of one person by another) are all categories that have been created by humans on their desire to socially fit (http://www.tolerance.org). Unfortunately, this phenomenon seems to begin from early ages and reinforce with the years. The result of such negative conducts are usually catastrophic since they lead to transgressions that otherwise could be prevented. Educators have an enormous responsibility at school to try to avoid any type of harm among students and to create an atmosphere in which tolerance and respect for differences prevails. Learners, parents and school authorities also play an important role in the search of a more equal treatment and social acceptance for their community members.

One of the assignments that strengthened my knowledge of social issues at school and provided me with a guide on how to fight inequality in the classroom was a reaction paper done in the Academic Writing class. The topic of research was bullying, which is

an abusive behavior towards others by people whose self-esteem is low and try to disguise their problem by causing either physical or emotional harm. After finding out information about bullying causes and consequences, its influence in the Ecuadorian society and possible ways to fight and prevent it, a more in depth investigation of facts to be shared in the classroom to avoid bullying took place.

Once the paper was written, it was learned that bullying was not only physical harm, but also psychological damage. It also made me more sensitive about the reality families who have lost a loved one as a victim of bullying have been through. Until that day, I realized I had been a victim of it several times in my school years and did not know at the time. The most surprising thing to discover was that teachers were also playing the role of bullies and were causing even more hurt than students. This paper enlightened my view of community problems and supplied me with the tools necessary to guide my pupils and myself to a more tolerant way of living.

Standard 3.a. Planning for standards-based ESL and content instruction

3.a.1. Plan standards-based ESL and content instruction.

In a standards-based and content instruction model there are some aspects that require special attention. First, it is necessary to select and analyze the standards to be achieved. Then, it is essential to determine the performance levels students will need to reach. After that, lessons need to be planned and implemented as to give all students the opportunity to learn and practice the indispensable skills. Moreover, the development of assessment tools that will allow students to demonstrate the standards they have accomplished is crucial. Finally, assessing students and examining the results obtained are activities to be used to improve future teaching practices as well as to provide support to pupils (Education Development Center, 1998).

Planning a standards-focused project was a challenging task that was the main assignment for the Teaching to Adolescents and Adults class. This plan was developed based on the topic of news for teens. Nowadays, adolescents do not watch news on TV, read them on internet/newspapers or listen to them because the issues that are covered are probably not of their interest. Therefore, giving teenagers the opportunity to create a

news show for them is something that apart from being motivating, encourages pupils to be aware of what is happening around the world.

The project starts with a complete description of the learners and the learning environment which gives the teacher a clear idea of the students' language and social background and their needs and goals. In addition, the type of institution the project will be implemented at and the resources available are also mentioned. A description of the content to be learned, the skills to be developed and the strategies to be applied during the project are determined. The statement of the problem that encourages the elaboration of the project is written to justify its implementation. Areas in which students will show interest to research about are proposed and validated. The assessment procedures that will maximize students' performance and evaluation rubrics are described in detail. The students' knowledge and skills needed before, during and after the project application are delimited. Besides, a schedule that contains the dates in which the activities will take place is included. At the end of the process, a list of the possible activities that have to be prepared to address students with different learning styles or differentiated needs is described together with techniques that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program by students and teacher.

The elaboration of this project using standards-based and content instruction required of all the knowledge acquired before and during the master's program since it covers all the teaching aspects that have to be taken into consideration while planning meaningful and productive lessons.

Standard 3.c. Using resources and technology effectively in ESL and content instruction

3.c.4. Use technological resources (e.g., Web, software, computers, and related devices) to enhance language and content-area instruction for ELLs.

Technology in education plays a more important role these days not only because of the wide range of resources it provides, but also because it offers people the opportunity to become autonomous learners. Language learners can benefit from the immediate access they have to useful supporting learning material inside and outside the classroom environment. Direct technology accessibility allows people to spend more

time practicing the language on their own and the idea of independent learning is becoming more appreciated (Reinders & White, 2011). It is now the teachers' duty to update their knowledge on how to use technology to enhance the language learning process and make it more practical. Students with the teacher's guidance can develop or reinforce the abilities necessary to navigate diverse learning settings and make the most of them.

To design a suitable learning environment for English learners through iGoogle was an assignment of the Technology class. Since I mostly work with teenagers, I aimed my work to satisfy young learners' language needs and interests. The page is divided in three tabs: welcome, language practice and class work. The welcome tab is meant to introduce learners to English in a friendly way by using relevant information such as technology for teens, teens' music, gossip and interviews, news for adolescents and health and teenagers.

It also contains some gadgets like facebook, twitter and YouTube videos access, Google maps, the weather forecast, a clock and game to make it practical and entertaining. The second tab, called language practice, has as its main purpose to help learners with the language by giving them a few useful resources from which they can receive assistance. English pronunciation, vocabulary, podcasts, EFL/ESL material to improve their language skills, grammar tests as well as the link to a blog created to work with my students outside the classroom are included. The third tab, class work consists of a complete dictionary with synonyms and antonyms, Google docs to send and receive work and a Skype link to have online sessions with the class.

To produce an English learning environment that fulfils the students' needs was a demanding activity because it was necessary for the teacher to discover how to manage the iGoogle page to make it look attractive, functional and appropriate for students. Yet, the biggest challenge was to share it with students, who know more about technology than teachers, so they can create their own and use it to practice the language in a more interdependent way.

Standard 5.a. ESL research and history

5.a.3. Demonstrate ability to read and conduct classroom research.

Educational research should be an area of interest to all educators since it is concerned with the education process, programs and its participants. The most important goal of this type of research is to understand how the different teaching practices have an effect on students as to develop appropriate strategies to help them learn. Moreover, educational research highlights the importance of parents, authorities and stakeholders' participation in the teaching/learning course of action to develop a supportive learning environment (Mertler & Charles, 2008).

Educational research in Ecuador is still not given the importance it deserves because our educational system is going through a transition from a traditional model where the teacher was the center of everything and was the truth owner to a more student - centered approach that will require several years to be appropriately implemented. A step forward to a more interactive learning process is an investigation project carried out in the Educational Research for Practitioners subject. It is about how the implementation of active learning strategies can improve the students' speaking performance at a beginner's level.

The research took place at a public university where the traditional way of teaching continues being used. Four beginner levels were selected to conduct the research with. A needs assessment procedure was required to confirm the students' weaknesses with the language, their possible origins and what could be done to assist them. Some empirical studies done in different parts of the world to improve students' speaking ability through the use of active learning strategies were revised and taken as examples of how students' involvement in the learning process increases their performance. After collecting the necessary data, a six-week plan was developed to implement participative strategies in the English classroom.

Assessment procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of the project were determined and a report with the results obtained after the observation period will be addressed to the university authorities to propose teacher training and seminars on how to use an active learning approach to improve the students' language performance. Unfortunately,

due to the limit time assigned to the project, the study could not be applied; nevertheless, my interest has always been students' involvement in class to increase their motivation, so I apply all the ideas suggested in this project to help my students communicate from the very beginning levels without any fear.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Case study of a writing student

Regarding the case study of a writing student it is possible to conclude that Paúl, the subject of study, has demonstrated during the private lessons, a positive attitude towards learning and has also worked hard to do well in his placement test. Despite his age, he will be a successful language learner. He is willing to take risks and learn from his mistakes. He declared that writing is the language skill he preferred the least because he thought sometimes it could get a little boring. However, he needs to continue practicing and advancing in the writing process. By now he is able to structure sentences accurately, use punctuation almost precisely and his spelling is improving. He has also reinforced the strategy to plan his ideas before writing as to give his pieces of writing a better organization. He is also able to connect ideas, which increases his fluency while writing.

The following step that is waiting for him is to start structuring a paragraph. The idea of including a topic sentence, supporting ideas and a conclusion while writing is what he needs to practice and strengthen at this point of the writing process. Besides, his spelling and punctuation abilities have to constantly be reinforced since it is one of his weaknesses.

TEFL program portfolio

On the subject of the TEFL program portfolio it is important to assert that after becoming familiar with the TESOL/NCATE standards, being a teacher is not a profession people should be encouraged to pursue unless you have all the requirements that make of someone a qualified educator. Being proficient with the language to be taught and knowing that it has to be seen as an entity that varies depending on the context where it is applied, using all the theory and research of language acquisition and learning to promote better teaching practices, understanding and respecting differences among cultures and taking advantage of their richness to improve students' learning, planning and implementing lessons that exploit learners' abilities and talents based on their individual characteristics such as personality, interests, age, learning styles and mother tongue, incorporating technology and varied resources to make the language classes

more motivating and meaningful,   assessing students' in a valid and reliable way, and sharing all the acquired knowledge to help students, colleagues, administrators and community members improve education in general are the components necessary to work in the language teaching field.

Ecuadorian universities that prepare future educators should revise, adapt and implement similar standards to improve the qualification teachers have once they leave college. Competent teachers will prepare competent students for the future and will be an example of how a professional should work. If teachers are better prepared, the Ecuadorian educational system will take a huge step towards a more significant and constructive change.

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