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# THE LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE ESL WRITING IN STUDENTS OF FIRST GRADE OF SECONDARY AT SAGRADOS CORAZONES SCHOOL

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**THE LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE  
ESL WRITING IN STUDENTS OF FIRST GRADE OF  
SECONDARY AT SAGRADOS CORAZONES SCHOOL**



**UNIVERSIDAD DE PIURA  
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION**

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## **APPROVAL**

The thesis titled “The Language Portfolio as a strategy to improve ESL Writing in students of first grade of secondary at Sagrados Corazones School” presented by Martha Patricia Lira Gonzales de Tejeda in accordance with the requirements of being awarded the Degree of Master in Education with mention in Teaching English as a Second Language, was approved by the thesis director: Dr. Majid Safadaran Mosazadeh and defended on ..... before a Jury with the following members:

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President

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Informant

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Secretary

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## **SUMMARY**

### **THE LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE ESL WRITING IN STUDENTS OF FIRST GRADE OF SECONDARY AT SAGRADOS CORAZONES SCHOOL**

The purpose of this study had as a general objective to improve the writing skill in students from first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio. To pursue this objective, three specific objectives were stated: 1) Include the use of the Language Portfolio in the syllabus of one group of students of first grade of secondary, 2) Train first grade of secondary teachers on the use of the Language Portfolio considering its strengths and capacities, and 3) Assess the writing skill in students of first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio.

Quantitative research methodology was utilized in this study and according to empiric-analytic quantitative investigation from a sample of students from first grade of secondary it was revealed that only 12.9% of students were in a range of a good standard regarding writing skills. This percentage was obtained from the student's grades where the most important methods used for this study were analysis, synthesis, deductive, inductive descriptive and statistics among others. The data was collected from before, during and after the remedy had been applied. The results indicated that the use of the language portfolio improves writing skills and after gathering and analyzing different data, teacher interviews, student questionnaires, classroom observation the answer to the research question: How we can improve the writing skill in the first grade of secondary was answered. The use of the language portfolio is not the only strategy, but it improves writing skills because it contains the material which the students will use, along with any extra material given by the teacher, throughout the course. It stimulates and supports the learning of the English language and its purpose is to help the students reflect on, realise their progress in, and improve their language learning.

Therefore in order to prove the hypothesis that an appropriate use of the Language Portfolio helped to improve writing skills in students from first grade of secondary the sample was divided in two groups: Control group (students who did not use the language portfolio) and sample group (students who used the language portfolio). The results of the analysis after comparing and contrasting were that the students from the sample group who received the remedy had better performance in writing skills than the students from the control group who did not receive the remedy. Moreover, after analyzing the data, it was found that 39.1% of students from the sample group had a good performance and only 13.6% of students from the control group had a good performance in writing skills. In other words, the results obtained from this research implied that there was a steady and continuous improvement of writing skills. In all, the results from the present study support a notion that implementing the language portfolio facilitates the development of second language writing skills and more students can register and pass the PET exam.

The principal conclusion obtained from this research was that the use of the language portfolio as a strategy to improve writing in ESL in students of first grade of secondary had positive feedback. Moreover, the fact that teachers had to deal with large classes, few hours of instruction per week, and the students' pressure to obtain good grades were critical factors contributing to the perception that writing was not too important. There is no one right answer to the question of how to teach writing in ESL classes. There are as many answers as there are teachers and teaching styles, or learners and learning styles. There is not a unique formula to prepare a portfolio; it depends on how the student wants to prepare it and how the teacher monitors the process.

## **Introduction**

During the past years, help our students improve their writing skills in English as a second language (ESL) has been considered essential. In the last years, research on this topic has accelerated to the point that something brand new becomes archaic in a blink. Learning languages implies developing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Learning languages has always been an important issue throughout history. However, there is not a unique method to learn or to teach languages.

It is a big challenge to teach writing to our students. For as long as languages have been taught, teachers have asked students to write things in their notebooks and exercise books. Yet sometimes, over the years, it has seemed that writing has been seen as a support system for learning grammar and vocabulary, rather than as a skill in its own right. Recently, however, trainers and methodologists have looked again at writing in the



foreign language classroom and put forward ways of teaching this skill which acknowledge and emphasize its importance.

Reflecting about the importance of writing for students and how teachers can evaluate it properly, I realized that it could be a matter of training students to write in English more and enjoy what they write so that writing can become a tool for learning,. This is how I decided then that it would be interesting to implement The Language Portfolio as a strategy to improve ESL writing in students of first grade of secondary and this way they could have a better chance to pass the PET examination which is a requirement from the school, make them aware of the importance of developing writing skills, explore the use of portfolios as an assessment tool to develop self-evaluation, and to value the use of their portfolio to foster self-reflection and autonomy in learning.

The general objective of this investigation was to improve the writing skill of students from first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio. Three specific objectives were pursued: (1) To include the use of the Language Portfolio in the syllabus of one group of students of first grade of secondary, (2) to train first grade of secondary teachers on the use of the Language Portfolio considering its strengths and capacities, and (3) to assess the writing skills in students of first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio.

In the following paragraphs, more details about this research will be provided.

In the first chapter, an outline of the investigation is presented. The problem is stated: Students from first grade of secondary have a poor performance in writing skills and the causes and effects were examined. The limits of this study and the methodological preferences were discussed in this chapter, too.

In the second chapter, the theoretical framework is presented the same as the literature review, which covers the main concepts, perspectives, and relevant theoretical bases regarding the development of second language writing.

In the third chapter, the methodology of the study is presented. In this chapter, I detail the research plan that was envisaged in order to meet each of the objectives.

In Chapter Four, the obtained results from the teacher and student questionnaires, class observations, results from the mock of the PET exams and writing grades are presented.

Finally, the recommendations for further research are described and the major conclusion of the investigation is verified: The Language Portfolio as a strategy improves ESL writing in students of first grade of secondary.

## **Chapter I**

### **Investigation outline**

As mentioned before, a group of students who had very little written strategies and had to fulfil the standards of the secondary level was faced. In chapter one the problem, its causes and effects are described. The hypothesis is stated followed by the delimitation of the problem and the limitations faced when doing this investigation. Research about portfolios and how they help students improve their writing skills had been done. For this purpose, three interesting sources giving important background have been included.

#### **1.1. Formulation of the problem**

The general objective of this project is to implement the use of the Language Portfolio as strategy to improve the writing skills in ESL in students of first grade of secondary. The use of the language portfolio helps students learn to effectively integrate varied source material into their writing projects and offers them strategies for showcasing their best work by assembling and

evaluating print writing portfolios. The objective of this research is to improve the writing skills, for this reason it had to be established why the students had so low scores in writing during their learning process in first grade of secondary (Appendix 1) and why students got so low scores in the mocks of writing from PET exams. It is evident that the students have problems in one of the macro linguistic skills (writing) reflected in their exams (the evaluation rubric is attached- Appendix 2). Analyzing data registered in the grade books from the period 2011, the statistics show that (Appendix 3):

32% of students are in level Below average.

55% of students are in level Acceptable.

13% of students are in level Good.

From where we can observe that 87% of the students from first grade of secondary from the sample selected (Appendix 3) are far below the desired level in writing.

Writing skill in students from first grade of secondary is very poor. This situation is reflected in the students' evaluation of the three first terms (Appendix 3). Another important situation to mention is that the students who come from 6th grade of primary to 1st grade of secondary come with a low level of writing skills as is shown in the statistics charts from the results obtained from the placement test administered during March 2011.<sup>1</sup> This fact has been corroborated with the information obtained from the questionnaire applied to the teachers and students (Appendix 4) and with the scores obtained by the students from the PET mock administered during the term 2011<sup>2</sup> where there is a high percentage of students who failed the exam (with very low scores in writing).

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter IV

<sup>2</sup> IBID.

Another component added to the fact that the students from first grade of secondary have a poor command in writing skill is the lack of coordination hours between teachers from both levels. This has been expressed not only by the students,<sup>3</sup> but from their parents, too. In addition, some teachers do not give enough importance to develop better writing skills in their students expressing that correcting written work is time consuming.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of this situation the following question arises:

How can we improve the writing skill in the first grade of secondary?

This situation, the problem, its causes and effects can be presented as follows:

Problem: Students from first grade of secondary have a poor performance in writing skill. Some of the causes and effects are:

Causes:

- A big difference between primary and secondary academic demand.
- There are not enough coordination hours between teachers from primary and secondary.
- Few curricular and extracurricular activities to provide effective input for students.
- Some teachers do not give enough importance to develop writing skill in their students.

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<sup>3</sup> IBID.

<sup>4</sup> IBID.

Effects:

- A high percentage of students from first grade of secondary do not have the pre requisites to pass the international exam PET.
- Few vocabulary words and poor grammar structures used by the students of first grade of secondary.
- Lack of techniques for gathering ideas (prewriting strategies), planning, drafting and revising.
- The students do not use punctuation and mechanics appropriately.
- The students do not have good writing strategies according to the standards of the school.

## **1.2. Hypothesis**

### **1.2.1.General hypothesis**

The appropriate handling of the Language Portfolio will help to raise the level of writing skills in students from first grade of secondary.

### **1.2.2. Specific hypothesis**

1.2.2.1. If the language portfolio is incorporated into the current English curriculum of students of first grade of secondary, the academic objectives will be addressed.

1.2.2.2. If teachers are successfully trained in the use of the language portfolio, their strength and potential will align with the students' needs of improving their writing skills.

- 1.2.2.3. If the implementation of the portfolio improves the students' writing skills then this fact validates the improvement of students' written expression.

### **1.3. Delimitation of the objectives**

#### **1.3.1. General objective**

Improve the writing skills in students from first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio.

#### **1.3.2. Specific objective**

- 1.3.2.1. Include the use of the Language Portfolio in the syllabus of one group of students of first grade of secondary.
- 1.3.2.2. Train first grade of secondary teachers on the use of the Language Portfolio considering its strengths and capacities.
- 1.3.2.3. Assess the writing skill in students of first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio.

### **1.4. Justification of the investigation**

This investigation has been carried out considering the big challenge to help students improve their writing skills. With the use of the language portfolio, writing can be practiced by the students and teachers can assess writing as a process and in the variety of types of writing. For as long as languages have been taught, teachers have asked students to write things in their notebooks and exercise books. Yet sometimes, over the years, it has seemed that writing has been seen as only a support system for learning grammar and vocabulary, rather than as a skill in its own right. Recently, however, trainers and methodologists have looked again at writing in the foreign language classroom and put forward ways of teaching this skill which acknowledge and emphasis its

importance. The general objective of this project was to implement the use of the Language Portfolio as strategy to improve the writing skill in ESL in students of first grade of secondary in order to help them to learn to effectively integrate varied source material into their writing projects and offer them strategies for showcasing their best work by assembling and evaluating print writing portfolios. It was necessary to carry out this investigation because once spotted the causes of the lack of good performance in writing then the students can be better trained in the use of the portfolio and can apply more students to PET exams and have a passing score.

Evidence of the importance of encouraging active student involvement in writing process was provided. It is not so important what students know, but rather what they can do, so we as teachers have a duty to ensure our students practice the sort of skills they will be needing in the future as well as teaching them a language as the Common European Framework for education outlines competences, rather than the knowledge as the aim of education. Therefore, teachers should consider using different models of active involvement in helping students develop writing skills, such as the use of the portfolio. The context of teaching a second language has particular characteristics and therefore particular challenges (e.g., large classes, limited number of hours, and pressure on students to have good grades) that can persuade teachers to avoid teaching writing, especially if they perceive that it is so much time consuming. Once the teacher and the students get familiarized with the use of the portfolio, then they are both going to be motivated to use the portfolio as a strategy to improve writing skills.

### **1.5. Limitations of the investigation**

There were some limitations that are important to mention so that they can be taken into consideration in future research.

A potential limitation is that this investigation was worked with voluntary participants. Voluntary participants have particular psychological characteristics, such as: a desire to please, to know,



and to solve problems. For example, the teacher that was observed is an experienced and very well prepared teacher who knew in advance that improving writing skills using the portfolio was the objective of the investigation. It is possible that her performance could have been influenced by this expectation. The students were also aware of the general objective of this study which might have influenced their behaviour.

With respect to the questionnaire, although important terms to the students were explained and invited them to ask questions for clarification, it is possible that for different reasons (even though the questions were prepared in Spanish for their complete understanding), some students might not have asked for clarification of the terms that they did not understand (taking into consideration that they are between 10 to 13 years old), which could have impacted the reliability of their answers.

In addition, exploratory research based on a case study implies weak generalizability, due to the small sample size (i.e., one teacher); consequently, results might not be transferable to other situations. This study was based on a single case, which is not necessarily representative of all teachers. Certainly, there is no way of knowing, empirically, to what extent the class that was observed is similar or different from other L2 classes in other schools.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study is among the very first to look at strategies to improve student's writing skills. Thus, there are a number of avenues to explore in future research.

## **1.6. Antecedents of the investigation**

### **1.6.1. Field research N° 1**

A proposal for evaluation: the use of the language portfolio in an ESL class.<sup>5</sup> Maria Martinez Lirola. (2008). España.

This research is based on putting into practice methodological experiences based on the philosophy of the European Higher Education such as collaborative learning and autonomous learning and on using new criteria and procedures to evaluate students in such a way that the final exam is not the only grade to base students' learning process but it can also be through the use of the language portfolio. I chose this research because the objective was to emphasize that students are the protagonists of the teaching-learning process and not just passive receivers of the information.

To put into practice this research, students were evaluated using a portfolio in a core subject of the third year of English Studies.

Results obtained: the results show that students learn more and get better results by using the portfolio. The Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, textbooks, etc. it describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allows learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning on a lifelong basis. One of the characteristics of the Common European Framework is based on autonomous learning where

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<sup>5</sup> MARTINEZ, M. (2008). Una propuesta de evaluación en el EES: el uso del portfolio en una clase de idiomas. En línea Internet. 14 de mayo de 2013. Accesible en <http://rua.ua.es/dspace/handle/10045/15657>

the students must be responsible of the organization of their own learning at their own pace. This research is based on the autonomous learning and its relationship with a different tool for evaluation (portfolios) where learning is centered in the student, aligned to competence based skills, metacognitive strategies and personal and social relationship.

In 2005-2006 an evaluation proposal took place. Final exams were considered 50% of the final score and the other grades consisted in: 30% for the portfolio grade and 20% for assistance and class participation. It is outstanding the big percentage given to portfolio because as stated in this research they consider that is an important concept in developing writing skills and in giving teachers a fairer and more perceptive way to evaluate the different writing assignments kept by the student the same as project based learning.

According to Brown<sup>6</sup> portfolios are an excellent tool to teach learners how to self-monitor and evaluate, as well as providing them with provable demonstrations of their learning. As Colen et al<sup>7</sup> says the portfolio improves the way students learn.

In order to assess the language portfolios and help the students from the sample create and maintain their portfolio during their learning process they followed Escobar's<sup>8</sup> contribution: teachers had to define the evaluation criteria properly, they had to design a self-evaluation rubric so that students can do the assignment and then assess their results, when the students were called to an individual tutoring session they should bring with them their best assignments and say why they chose that assignment, teachers had to do

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<sup>6</sup> BROWN, H. (2001). Citado por MARTINEZ, M. (2008)

<sup>7</sup> COLEN, M., GINE, N. AND IMBERNON, F. (2006). Citado por MARTINEZ, M. (2008)

<sup>8</sup> ESCOBAR, C. (2001). Citado por MARTINEZ, M. (2008)

the follow up and give feedback sessions. This kind of assessment was given to all the students from group B enrolled in English Grammar III in the second term. It was a total of 68 students, where 30 decided to be evaluated following the previous criteria. The other students were evaluated following the traditional way (having one unique grade obtained from the final exam). The only reason why this experience was not developed during the first term was that the teacher had 246 students of different majors therefore she had a lot of work. This is why she decided to have a piloting experience in the university when she had fewer students.

Through the use of the portfolio they intended that the students who enrolled the course of English Grammar III of third grade of English Philosophy achieved the following objectives: Use research strategies, outline, proofread their assignment before giving it to the teacher, plan and organize their ideas before writing, systematize information.

The 30 students who were evaluated considering the portfolio as 30% of their final score passed the course and 60% of these students had a high average score. On the contrary, among the students who did not use the portfolio and who were assessed only by the final exam 15% failed and only 30% of this group got an average score. In conclusion, this data evidences that using the language portfolio the students learn more and better even though they might feel that it is more work to be done.

According to this research all the students who worked with the portfolio think that they have learnt more and could identify the difference between theory and practice. It is relevant to mention that a negative thing about portfolios is that it can be time consuming and that sometimes students did not have their portfolios updated. In the other hand teachers thought that it was also time consuming when they had to evaluate and prepare the activities.

In conclusion according to this research the portfolio is an excellent tool for teachers to assess the students' acquisition of the language where they learn how to work in groups, choose sources and develop critical thinking. It helps students to reflect and be more autonomous, it provides teachers a tool to assess objectively and understand writing as a process and not only as a final product.

### **1.6.2. Field research N° 2**

Study of the impact of the language portfolio for development of strategic competence in foreign language learning in a university context: how the students perceive it.<sup>9</sup> Lucrecia Keim Cubas. (2012). España.

During the last ten years it has been written and thought a lot on the use of portfolios in language classes. However, according to this research, it has not yet been adequately studied how students perceive the use of these portfolios. This research presents some of the results of the project design and study of the impact of tools for the development of strategic competence in foreign language learning in a university context.

Specifically the research focuses on the perceptions of students regarding the use of portfolios. This research was done during 2005-2008. The objective was the analysis, design and use of this tool to improve learning as a second language in a university scenario. It focused in the study and application in the meta cognitive component. The research team had previous experience with metacognitive strategies<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> KEIM, L. (2012). El portafolios en el marco de asignaturas de lenguas extranjeras en la universidad: la percepción de los estudiantes. En línea Internet. 14 de mayo de 2013. Accesible en <http://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/DIDA/article/view/40692>

<sup>10</sup> ARUMI, M. (2006). Citado por KEIM, L. (2012)

and the use of the portfolio by the student.<sup>11</sup> The results of the analysis of the students' perception regarding the portfolio and how it helps to their autonomy were presented.

This research was done in six university EFL classrooms of an intermediate proficiency level. The sample of the research was university teachers and non-university teachers. Three of the four teachers were part of the investigation group. Therefore for one part of the investigation sample, recollecting data was part of an investigation and action issue. The methodology used was of intervention, observation, reflection and transformation of the teaching process itself. The hypothesis presented was that the sample group that used the portfolio, where the teacher had a facilitator role, the students were more autonomous, reflective and developed critical thinking better.

All the teachers knew about the use of the portfolio but not all of them had used them systematically as an evaluation tool. Data considered for this research purpose was obtained from two English classrooms that used the portfolio as a reflection and assessment tool. This data was provided by three sources: investigator, students and teachers. The instruments used were classroom videos and tapes, typescripts, interviews, questionnaires (presented before, during and after the research), etc.

Most of the students from the sample mentioned that it was a positive experience so their perception towards the use of the portfolio for EFL was positive. They said that they learned to be autonomous and helped them organize their work and time. They like the methodology because it makes them work daily and this helps them to internalize and learn better. Learning from their mistakes was another positive thing they mentioned. There was only one student out of the

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<sup>11</sup> ESTEVE and ARUMI, M. (2005). Citado por KEIM, L. (2012)

33 that refers that working his portfolio trained him in self-evaluation.

One of the results provided was that 75% to 80% of the students consider themselves as 'not autonomous' and the majority of them does not have experience in self-assessment issues. A global reading of the data allows seeing that three classes think that working portfolios increases the load of work and they do not have enough time. Another valuable appreciation from students from the sample group was when they answered the question that if by the end of the term and after having worked on their portfolios for the whole period, they considered that they can handle better their own learning process, out of 28 students, 53% gave an affirmative answer, 35% answered more or less and 7% gave a negative answer.

There were also some negative comments from the students. For example some of them think that portfolios give too much work and they are time consuming. Some of them thought that it should be optional for those students who do not know how to organize their time and themselves. In all the groups a sense of insecurity was observed regarding self-regulation. Metacognitive strategies were poor among the students; self-evaluation was also poor according to this research. Students tended to think that assessment is just the teachers' role and not the students' role. As a conclusion regarding this aspect, the use of the portfolio does not increase the student's autonomy and self-regulation.

In my opinion, I consider these results valuable because they make me reflect that the central finding of the research was that an understanding of the language portfolio goals and principles is pre requisite for promoting student ownership of their learning.

### 1.6.3. Field research N° 3

The use of the language portfolio in the Teaching of Foreign Language.<sup>12</sup> Chacon, C. and Chacon – Corzo, M. (2011). Venezuela.

This research refers to the language portfolio as a facilitating strategy to learn and teach foreign languages. This study had as objectives to make a group of students from Los Andes University be aware that the portfolio is an assessment tool to train them to develop self-evaluation skills, and its use can foster self-reflection and autonomy in learning a foreign language. Participants were students of Education majoring in English and Journalism at the University of Los Andes, Dr. Pedro Rincón Gutierrez in the state of San Cristobal in Venezuela.

Interviews, a questionnaire and self-evaluations were used to gather data. The results of this research show that the portfolio is a valuable tool to foster critical reflection, metacognitive processes and autonomy in learning a foreign language.

The author of this research mentions that one of the reasons for working this investigation was that in class observation of English II and French from Social Communication major from Los Andes University in the state of Tachira, the students had very low performance in reading and writing in their mother tongue. This situation was reflected in the target language too. In French the students used a dictionary at all moment and translated word by word so reading became a hard task for them and demotivating activity to practice. The same thing happened in writing skill in English. The students here were used to write under the

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<sup>12</sup> CHACON, C. and CHACON – CORZO, M. (2011). El uso del Portafolio en la Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras. En línea Internet. 14 de mayo de 2013. Accesible en [www.saber.ula.ve/dspace/bitstream/123456789/34324/1/articulo3.pdf](http://www.saber.ula.ve/dspace/bitstream/123456789/34324/1/articulo3.pdf)



traditional way: writing essays through grammar, writing sentence by sentence,<sup>13</sup> where the final product was the important thing and not the process (outlining-drafting-revising-editing).

This is the reason why the idea of using a portfolio to improve reading and writing in TFL was the objective of this research. The use of the portfolio according to this research was a useful tool in order to train teachers and students to reflect<sup>14</sup> and improve learning strategies and promote autonomy.

The sample group was: 18 students from French, 30 students from English II, French II were 18 students, English III were 9 students which makes 75 students out of 150 students. The mother tongue of these students is Spanish and I considered interesting to write some of their testimonies regarding the use of the portfolio in their mother tongue so the essence of what they really want to communicate is not unconsciously modified. Here are some of them:

*La realización de este portafolio fue significativa porque me encontré con mis errores.*

*Este proceso me ayudó a auto conocerme y reflexionar sobre mis debilidades en el idioma.*

*Es una estrategia excelente que ayuda a revisar todo nuestro progreso en la asignatura, hacer una visión retrospectiva de las actividades evaluadas y comentadas por nosotros mismos.*

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<sup>13</sup> FERRIS, D. and HEDGCOCK, J. (1998). Citado por CHACON, C. and CHACON – CORZO, M. (2011)

<sup>14</sup> VILLALOBOS, J. (2002). Citado por CHACON, C. and CHACON – CORZO, M. (2011)

*Fue muy provechoso porque me permitió autoevaluarme y ver cuáles eran mis errores para mejorarlos; creo que se tiene que valorar el esfuerzo durante las clases para el progreso del alumno mediante esta estrategia.*

*Al observar mi portafolio pude reflexionar acerca de todos los objetivos vistos y los logros obtenidos durante el proceso. Pude hacer una auto reflexión muy importante sobre mis debilidades y fortalezas en el idioma.*

*Uno puede valorar por sí mismo su proceso de aprendizaje, así como también saber cuáles son sus debilidades o puntos a fortalecer.*

*Con la elaboración del portafolio me di cuenta de qué errores tenía y lo más importante, tener la oportunidad de mejorar.*

*Me parece que realmente constituye una herramienta de mucha utilidad tanto para el alumno como para el profesor ya que les permite observar el progreso o las fallas que tenemos los alumnos.*

*Darme cuenta que la escritura en inglés es un proceso que amerita tiempo y dedicación. Tomar consciencia de los errores gramaticales que poseo, pero entender a la vez que si trabajamos bastante y somos constantes podemos mejorar significativamente.*

*Vi mis primeros borradores y los comparé con los finales y pude notar la gran diferencia entre ellos.*

After reading all these testimonies I agree with the results the author mention, that the use of the portfolio improved reading and writing skills through metacognitive strategies, students were motivated, they could learn from their mistakes and self-regulate their own learning, students improved learning strategies.



## **Chapter II**

### **Theoretical Framework**

In chapter II the theoretical framework is considered and for the conceptual references I chose the following six key definitions because their meaning is very important for my research purpose.

#### **2.1. Conceptual References**

##### **2.1.1. Writing**

"Writing" is the process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation and spaces) to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form. To write clearly it is essential to understand the basic system of a language. In English this includes knowledge of grammar, punctuation and sentence structure. Vocabulary is also necessary, as is correct spelling

and formatting. Writing is a complex process of decision making, of selecting, deleting and rearranging material.

### **2.1.2. The writing Process**

The writing process is like the vehicle that takes the students to a good final writing product. If the student includes the following stages in their writing process they will improve: Planning, (consider the purpose, audience and tone, choose the topic, and discover ideas to write about). Shaping, (decide how to organize material). Drafting, (write a first draft). Revising, (see what has been written, write additional drafts). Editing, (check grammar, spelling, punctuation and mechanics). Proofreading, (reread every word, checking for any remaining errors).<sup>1</sup>

### **2.1.3. Motivation**

When a student wants and enjoys what he or she is told to do at school, then his or her learning process improves. Motivation is a broad concept dealing with attitudes, aspirations, interests, and effort. Motivation affects behavior and learning in academic and nonacademic domains, and in almost all phases of human growth and development. The need to be good at something, to achieve, is a driving force for most people. Because of the motivational factor, students of low ability can achieve academic success (good grades) and students of high ability can achieve minimal success (low grades).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> KIRSZNER and MANDELL. (2009). The Brief Wadsworth Handbook. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. p. 337

<sup>2</sup> ORNSTEIN, A. (1995). Strategies for Effective Teaching. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. USA: Brown E Benchmark.

#### 2.1.4. Student Portfolios

When a student is motivated and enjoys working on his portfolio this becomes a good strategy in his or her learning process. Therefore, it is important to be clear on what a Language Student Portfolio is. Student portfolios can be used to demonstrate a sample of the students' work-to show a range of performance or the "best" pieces of work. With most portfolios, students are expected to show a variety of skills and the ability to improve performance. Portfolios tell an in-depth story, especially if they are maintained for the entire year and cut across subjects. They may consist of a written autobiography, a statement about work, an essay on a particular subject, or a series of essays. A special project or an experiment, a series of photographs, drawings, videos developed by the student can be stored.

Portfolios are becoming increasingly popular because they are considered an excellent way for the teacher to get to know the student. They help students see the "big" picture about themselves, heightening their awareness of their own learning.<sup>3</sup> The language portfolio helps students to become better writers and to learn how to write in various genres using different registers to perform better.

Through the use of the Language Portfolio the students are going to be effectively motivated because in the process of implementing their own portfolio it will provide a fun way to review language and it will help them to reflect on their own objectives, ways of learning and success.

In the other hand the teacher may examine the progress of one student or a group of their students along a continuum of development. The teacher is going to be able to track the

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<sup>3</sup> IBID.

progress of the group, looking for ways to enhance instruction.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, one of the most powerful aspects of portfolios is that the students' work is collected in one place, where they can actually see it all together and review it. Students whose work usually is returned to them in a piece meal fashion are often astonished at its quantity and increasing quality when it is gathered into a portfolio over a period of time. In the other hand, the use of The Language Portfolio is an excellent tool for the teacher in terms of assessment because all effective writing portfolios should be comprehensive, well-organized, attractively presented, and consistent. It gives the teacher much more information-rich source than a grade or even a grade point average.<sup>5</sup>

### **2.1.5. Reflection<sup>6</sup>**

Motivation and reflection are two very important terms to be included in this research on the side of a student. The terms "reflection" and "reflective practice" are partially based on the works of Carl Rogers and David Schon,<sup>7</sup> studying the actions and thoughts of workers in a variety of fields who learn to analyze and interpret events in ways that guide their own development and day to day practice. According to these authors, each person is capable of examining questions and answers needed to improve their own professional performance. Through open-mindedness and maturity, and with the help of colleagues, individuals can discover new ideas and illuminate what they already understand and know how to do. Such reflection, in effect, combines the essentials of self-evaluation and peer evaluation.

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<sup>4</sup> LUNAR, L. (2007). *El portafolio: Estrategia para evaluar la producción escrita en inglés por parte de estudiantes universitarios*. NÚCLEO. 24,66-97.

<sup>5</sup> KIRSZNER and MANDELL. (2009). LOC.CIT.

<sup>6</sup> ORNSTEIN, A. (1995). LOC.CIT.

<sup>7</sup> ROGERS, C. and SCHON, D. (s.f.). Citado por ORNSTEIN, A. (1995).



### **2.1.6. Types of learning styles**

Over the years, teachers have noticed that some of their students learn by listening to new information. Some other students prefer to read about it, whereas others need to do something with the new information. These are different learning styles as different people learn in different ways. Consequently, as teachers, we should offer a variety of exercises and material which stimulates all types of learning styles in order to help the student learn according to their personal learning styles.

**Visual/Spatial Learners:** These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of the lesson. They think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including diagrams, illustrations, transparencies, videos and hand-outs.

**Auditory Learners:** These learners learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. They often benefit from reading a text aloud and using a tape recorder.

**Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners:** Tactile/Kinesthetic people learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration. These learners express themselves through movement. They have a good sense of balance and eye-hand coordination. They have to do things on their own to be able to learn the new language.

## 2.2. Theoretical Bases

### 2.2.1 The zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding writing<sup>8</sup>

Theoretical basis to study the development of second language writing were based on Vygotsky's<sup>9</sup> sociocultural framework of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding writing by Bodrova and Leong.<sup>10</sup>

The basic idea behind the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is that a more knowledgeable learner or expert facilitates the learning development of a novice learner within the appropriate zone of his/her aptitude. According to Vygotsky,<sup>11</sup> the ZPD is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers. The notion underpinning the ZPD was originally put forth to argue against the use of standardized testing as a way to measure students' abilities. In fact, the idea of the ZPD fueled the hypothesis that it is more viable to estimate such skills through a conceptual framework which focuses on the differences between learners' abilities to problem solve independently through assisted learning.

Scaffolding writing within the ZPD: Scaffolding writing techniques make up the process in which experts help novice learners to develop a higher level of writing skills.

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<sup>8</sup>SCHWIERTER, J. and LAURIER, W. (2010). *Developing Second Language Writing through scaffolding in the ZPD: A Magazine project for an authentic audience*. En línea Internet. 6 de octubre de 2012. Accesible en [https://www.wlu.ca/.../Developing\\_second\\_language\\_writing.pdf](https://www.wlu.ca/.../Developing_second_language_writing.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>VYGOTSKY, L. (1986). Citado por SCHWIERTER, J. and LAURIER, W. (2010).

<sup>10</sup>BODOVRA, E. and LEONG, D. (1996). Citado por SCHWIERTER, J. and LAURIER, W. (2010).

<sup>11</sup>VYGOTSKY, L. (1978). Citado por SCHWIERTER, J. and LAURIER, W. (2010).

Wood<sup>12</sup> hypothesizes that successful scaffolding techniques consist of the following six actions: 1. Maintaining the novice learners' attention, 2. Reducing variability within the task, 3. Realizing goals within the task, 4. Highlighting critical learning characteristics, 5. Minimizing frustration during learning development, 6. Providing solutions to problems.

### **2.2.2 Other theories related to ESL writing**

Regarding some other theories related to ESL writing in the study of ESL writing history, Silva<sup>13</sup> roughly divided ESL writing instruction into four stages marked by the four most influential approaches: the controlled approach, the current-traditional rhetoric approach, the process approach and the social approach. The first stage was dominated by the controlled or guided approach which was influenced by structural linguistic and behaviorist psychology. This approach saw learning to write as an exercise in habit formation. Students were trained to practice sentences patterns and vocabulary by means of writing.

The mayor approach in the second stage of ESL writing instruction was the current traditional rhetoric approach with the influence of Kaplan's theory of Contrastive Rhetoric. It regards learning to write as identifying and internalizing patterns.

The major approach in the third stage of writing teaching was the process approach. According to this approach, learning to write was developing efficient and effective writing strategies.

The social approach in the fourth stage viewed that learning to write was part of becoming socialized to the

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<sup>12</sup> WOOD (1976). Citado por SCHWIERTER, J. and LAURIER, W. (2010).

<sup>13</sup> SILVA (1990). Citado por SCHWIERTER, J. and LAURIER, W. (2010).

discourse community finding out what is expected and trying to approximate it.

In fact, the four approaches in these four stages of ESL writing instruction are supported by four important theories related to ESL writing: They are Contrastive Rhetoric Theory, Cognitive Development Theory, Communication theory and Social Constructionist Theory.

#### **2.2.2.1 Contrastive Rhetoric Theory<sup>14</sup>**

This theory is proposed by Kaplan.<sup>15</sup> Examines the formal differences between texts written by native and non-native speakers of English and these textual differences have been related to cultural differences in rhetorical expectations and conventions. Connor<sup>16</sup> has reviewed and identified four domains:

- Contrastive text linguistic studies: Examine compares and contrast how texts are formed and interpreted in different languages or cultures.
- Studies of writing as cultural and educational activity: investigate literacy development on L1 language and culture and examine effects on the development of L2 literacy.
- Classroom based Contrastive studies: examine cross cultural patterns in process writing, collaborative revisions and student teacher conference.

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<sup>14</sup>CONNOR, U. (2012). *New Directions in Contrastive Rhetoric*. En línea Internet. 8 de octubre de 2012. Accesible en: <https://crossculturalrhetoricsdwr1.pbworks.com/f/connor-new.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> KAPLAN, R. (1966). Citado por CONNOR, U. (2012).

<sup>16</sup> CONNOR, U. (2012). LOC.CIT.

- Genre Specific investigation applied to academic and professional writing.

The new developments in contrastive rhetoric to teaching in ESL and EFL have become the target of criticism. Some authors criticized contrastive rhetoric for an alleged insensitivity to cultural differences. For example Spack<sup>17</sup> was concerned about the practice of labeling students by their L1 backgrounds, Zamel<sup>18</sup> criticized contrastive rhetoric to view cultures as “discrete, discontinuous, and predictable”, Scollon<sup>19</sup> criticized contrastive rhetoric research for being too focused on texts and for neglecting oral influences on literacy.

The major changes taking place in the goals and research methods of contrastive rhetoric are affecting the scope of its impact on other areas of applied linguistics and beyond. The influence of contrastive rhetoric theories has expanded beyond the teaching of basic ESL and EFL writing. The growing influence of contrastive rhetoric in the teaching of such skills as business and technical writing is not only in L2 situations.

In regards to methods there has been a call to study how writing in given cultures is tied to the intellectual history and social structures. However, although contrastive rhetoric has often defined national cultures in the received mode, researchers in contrastive rhetoric have certainly not interpreted.

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<sup>17</sup>SPACK, R. (1997). Citado por CONNOR, U. (2012).

<sup>18</sup>ZAMEL, v. (1997). Citado por CONNOR, U. (2012).

<sup>19</sup>SCOLLON, R. (1997). Citado por CONNOR, U. (2012).

#### 2.2.2.2 Cognitive Development Theory<sup>20</sup>

Emerged in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was concerned with the nature of knowledge and with the structures and processing by which it is acquired. Its contribution is the research direction leading to study of writing as a process: planning, generation, translation and editing. Metacognitive and cognitive knowledge are defined as strategies that writers use to control writing.

Flower and Hayes<sup>21</sup> viewed English writing as a recursive process in which planning, generating, translating, and editing need to be “juggled”. However some authors have critiqued this model with regard to its methodology because it has been found to be rather limited in its relying only in protocol data. Hayes and Flower’s model assumes there is a single writing process for all writers. According to it skilled writers do the same things as less proficient writers. This model has not been able to account for the differences between good and poor writers.

Bereiter and Scardamalia<sup>22</sup> propose two models of writing: knowledge telling model for novice writers and knowledge transformation model for expert writers. The knowledge-telling model is a task execution model and does not involve any complex problem-solving activities. In contrast, the knowledge transforming model is a problem-solving model that requires the writers to engage in constant reflective processes between the content problem

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<sup>20</sup>A Taxonomy of ESL Writing Strategies. En línea Internet. 8 de octubre de 2012. Accesible en: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/64/1/64.pdf>

<sup>21</sup>FLOWER and HAYES (1981). Citado en A Taxonomy.(2012).

<sup>22</sup>BEREITER and SCARDAMALIA (1987). Citado en A Taxonomy. (2012).

space and the rhetorical problem space. Bereiter and Scardamalia<sup>23</sup> found that novice writers who employed the knowledge-telling model of writing revised usually at local level while mature writers did global revisions that involved transformation of information. This theory has also limitations.

### **2.2.2.3 Communication theory<sup>24</sup>**

Writing occurs in many different forms. Cooper and Odell<sup>25</sup> have identified many styles of written discourses such as dramatic writing, personal writing, reporting, research, academic writing, fiction, poetry, business writing and technical writing were strategies are intended for both experienced and novice writers and both need to combine “structural sentences units into a more-or-less unique, cohesive and coherent larger structure. The primary goal of foreign language teaching is to create a communicative environment in which learners express themselves in the target language. Inferred from communication theory, communicative strategies conceptualized in ESL writing instruction, Cohen<sup>26</sup> defines communication strategies as means writers use to express their ideas in a most effective way. The writing process is a very complex development influenced by many factors such as culture, politics, education, economy, social, environment, community and language.

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<sup>23</sup> IBID.

<sup>24</sup>A Taxonomy of ESL Writing Strategies. (2012). LOC.CIT.

<sup>25</sup>COOPER and ODELL. (1977). Citado en A Taxonomy. (2012).

<sup>26</sup>COHEN. (1998). Citado en A Taxonomy. (2012).

#### 2.2.2.4 Social Constructionist Theory<sup>27</sup>

Believes that we do not find or discover concepts, models and knowledge as much as we construct or make them. In fact social constructions have been used extensively in the area of writing and composition. Writing constitutes a mode of communication in an academic or discourse community. Considers both a process approach and some aspects of a product approach to teaching writing.

#### 2.2.3 Theory of Multiple Intelligences<sup>28</sup>

Incorporating the theory of Multiple Intelligences in the daily work as language teachers through the use of portfolios is an important issue in teaching English as a second language. A lot has been said about Multiple Intelligences theory and its use in the classrooms; however many times this use is reduced to solving Multiple Intelligences tests or allowing students self-expression in a few tasks but the application of the Multiple Intelligences theory in language classrooms can transcend these activities or tasks and enrich language teaching and language learning processes through the use of portfolios.

The Multiple Intelligences theory proposed by Howard Gardner in 1983 claims that human beings possess different intelligences and in ways of demonstrating learning.

Originally Gardner proposed seven intelligences, but in later work he added an eighth. Gardner defines intelligence as

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<sup>27</sup>A Taxonomy of ESL Writing Strategies. (2012). LOC.CIT

<sup>28</sup>CARDENAS, R. (Dec, 2007). *Incorporating the Multiple Intelligences theory in language teaching: portfolios, projects and team teaching*. En línea Internet. 13 de octubre de 2012. Accesible en <http://revistalenguaje.univalle.edu.co/index.php?seccion=REVISTA&revista=35-2&articulo=315>



“the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings’-Gardner and Hatch.<sup>29</sup> If one accepts this definition it follows that culture plays a very important role in the development and manifestation of these intelligences.

Intelligences are manifested in skills and in abilities to solve problems, to create and invent, and to overcome difficulties. These elements make them part of the personal touch that characterizes individuality. According to the current MI model (although Gardener keeps on exploring for possible additions) the eight intelligences are as follows:

- Linguistic intelligence includes the ability to use language effectively both orally and in writing. It is one of the traditionally recognized intelligences.
- Logical/Mathematical intelligence deals with the ability to use numbers effectively and reason well. It is the second of the traditionally recognized intelligences.
- Visual/ Spatial intelligence is the ability to recognize form, space, color, line and shape and to graphically represent visual and spatial ideas.
- Bodily/kinesthetic intelligence is the ability to use the body to express ideas and feelings and to solve problems.
- Musical intelligence is the ability to recognize rhythm, pitch, and melody.
- Naturalist intelligence deals with the ability to recognize and classify plants, minerals, and animals.

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<sup>29</sup>GARDNER and HATCH. (1989). Citado por CARDENAS, R (Dec, 2007)

- Interpersonal intelligence, one of the personal intelligences, includes the ability to understand another person's feelings, motivations, and intentions and to respond effectively.
- Intrapersonal intelligence, the second of the personal intelligences, deals with the ability to know about and understand oneself and recognize one's similarities to and differences from others.

The value of the Multiple Intelligence theory is of paramount importance if we consider that the knowledge of oneself and others and respect for differences are crucial in everyday life. As Gardner puts it, it is of the utmost importance that we recognize and nurture all of the varied human intelligences, and all of the combinations of intelligences. We are all so different largely because we all have different combinations of intelligences. If we recognize this, we will have at least a better chance of dealing appropriately with the many problems we face in the world.<sup>30</sup>

Portfolios are a way of keeping record of learning processes, evaluation and exercising written self-expression, they are excellent tools in language classes because they are more than files to gather samples of academic performance. Although many of the references to portfolios stress their value as an alternative assessment look,<sup>31</sup> they can and should be used as a pedagogic tool, to collect and display samples of students' work, either in progress or completed, that show their typical and best work as part of or in response to class assignments. They can contain their creativity, the product of their ability, the best work as part of or in response to class work and extra class assignments. They should also contain their reflections, justification for the selection of pieces of

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<sup>30</sup>GARDNER (1993). Citado por CARDENAS, R (Dec, 2007)

<sup>31</sup>BAILEY (1998), Common European Framework (2001), FREEMAN and FREEMAN (1991), among others. Citado por CARDENAS, R (Dec, 2007)

work they put in. In the environment of freedom, choice, participation, responsibility, autonomy and right to be different of student-centered approaches, portfolios are an invaluable tool for self-expression, monitoring, communication and assessment.

Portfolios have been proposed as ways to vary and enrich our student' learning processes and to include and manifest multiple intelligences in language learning and teaching processes. Because of their student-centered, integrative and self-expressive nature, portfolios allow the discovery, unfolding and exposure of personal ways to learn, interact and show learning. These facts make them first-rate elements in allowing the use of multiple intelligences.



## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology of the investigation**

In chapter III the methodology of my investigation is described as follows:

#### **3.1. Investigation type**

This investigation has been organized around a quantitative investigation and according to empiric-analytic quantitative investigation oriented to non-experimental. This investigation is limited to describe the phenomenon that has taken place (students with writing skills problem) and the way how it is mentioned is why it's descriptive. It provides with facts and data for new theories and investigations therefore the fact that the students from first grade of secondary have low performance in writing skill in ESL is the purpose of this investigation which is also co-relational

because it embraces the studies which have made intents to discover or to clarify the relationships through the application of coefficient correlations. The correlation/relationship consists in numerically specifying the degree of relationship that exists between two or more variable or characters.

The most important methods used for this research are: analysis, synthesis, deductive, inductive, descriptive and statistics among others.

### 3.2. Design of the investigation

For purpose of the investigation, a research according the objectives will be used following this pattern:

GO	SO1	.....	PC1	FC
	SO2	.....	PC2	
	SO3	.....	PC3	
	SO4	.....	PC4	
	SO5	.....	PC5	

Where:

GO	=	General Objective
SO	=	Specific Objective
PC	=	Partial Conclusion
FC	=	Final Conclusion

### 3.3. Population and study sample

#### 3.3.1. Population and sample to identify the problem

Since it was necessary to get field information, it was important to identify the population and how this research

was done. The following information is about the population and sample of the research.

- **Population**

The population consists in the totality of the students from first grade of secondary.

To name the population two stratum were considered: N° 1: Teachers from first grade of secondary and N° 2: students.

N°	Stratum	Population
1	Teachers	3
2	Students	136

Table N° 1. Study population

Source: My research

- **Sample**

First grade of secondary teachers and students are the sample. Because of the relevant opinion from the teachers, the 100% of the population and the sample from the students had been considered.

In order to obtain the sample the following formula<sup>1</sup> was considered:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p q N}{NE^2 + Z^2 p q}$$

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<sup>1</sup> Teoría de muestreo. En línea Internet. 6 de octubre de 2012. Accesible en: <http://www.uaq.mx/matematicas/estadisticas/xu5.html>

Where:

n the size of the sample;  
 Z reliability, 1.96 (95% of reliability);  
 p positive variable;  
 q negative variable;  
 N population;  
 E error, (0.05).

In order to determine the sample, the percentage of acceptance is 92%.

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 * (0.92 * 0.08) * 136}{136 * 0.05^2 + 1.96^2 * (0.92 * 0.08)}$$

$$n \cong 62$$

Taking into consideration that the population stratum has been identified, it is convenient to get a stratum from the sample of the teachers taking into consideration the 100% of them as shown in the following chart:

Nº	Stratum	Population	Sample
1	Teachers	3	3
2	Students	136	62
<b>Total</b>		<b>139</b>	<b>65</b>

Table N° 2. Size of the simple by stratus - 2011

Source: Own elaboration

### 3.3.2. Population and sample to assess the investigation

The investigation has been worked with students from first grade of secondary (period 2011) and students from first grade of secondary (period 2012) where two groups have



been chosen: a control group and sample group in which one uses the portfolio as strategy to improve their writing skill, and the other group does not use the portfolio. This research pretends to give an alternative of solution to develop the writing skill in ESL in the students.

The criterion chosen to select the informers was because of: the many complaints from the students, from the teachers and from the parents regarding the academic level of First grade of secondary. There has been a different methodology and academic demands between primary and secondary. Analyzing the causes and effects it was noticed that one of the causes is the lack of articulation between primary and secondary. This is why students from first grade of secondary were the informers of this investigation.

Secondly, after establishing that students had very low writing skill in academic purposes in ESL and in the PET examination, a remedy for this problem was stated: the use of the portfolio. The sample was chosen and divided in two groups: the sample group used the portfolio and the control group did not (period 2012).

The informers were divided in two groups:

N°	Stratum	Population Sample 2011		Population Sample 2012	
1	Teachers	3	3	3	1
2	Students	136	62	123	<b>Control group</b>
					<b>Sample group</b>
					22      23
<b>Total</b>		<b>139</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>46</b>

Table N° 3. Size of the simple by stratus by group – 2011 - 2012

Source: Own elaboration

### **3.4. Variables**

#### **3.4.1.Independent**

Students from first grade of secondary.

#### **3.4.2.Dependent**

- English curriculum (Annual planning).
- First grade of secondary English teachers.
- First grade students using the language portfolio.

### **3.5. Techniques and instruments for gathering data**

The techniques and instruments used in order to obtain valuable data for this research were:

#### **3.5.1.Gathering documents**

In order to obtain relevant information, written texts were analyzed as for example magazines, reports, announcements and internet information.

#### **3.5.2.Questionnaires**

Two questionnaires were prepared, one for the teachers and the other for the students, (Appendix 4).

The questionnaire prepared for the students was elaborated using as model the Likert scale. The answers provided by the students were graded in a scale of five items. Each item was given a numerical value and only one answer can be chosen. The answers are shown in Table N° 4:

Score	Description
4	Totally agree
3	Agree
2	Not agree and not disagree
1	disagree
0	Totally disagree

Tablet N° 4.- Measuring scale

Source: Own elaboration

### 3.5.3. Training workshop for English teachers

The purpose of this workshop, (Appendix 9), was to train the teachers in the use of the Language Portfolio. If the teachers know what a portfolio is, how to use it, its advantages, how to assess writing skills, they will feel motivated. Therefore the objectives of the workshop were:

- Identify and analyze the advantages in using the portfolio to improve writing skills in our students.
- Train the teachers in the use of the portfolio in ESL (parts of the portfolio, assessment using rubrics, meta cognitive rubrics (Appendix 6), feedback)
- Train teachers so that they can identify and use different strategies to help their students improve writing skill.
- Help teachers to learn about the writing process.
- Train teachers in the use of the writing symbol codes for assessing written work.

The participation in the workshop was mandatory for first grade teachers but interested primary and secondary teachers could attend, too.

The workshop had 10 hours a week, two hours each day from Monday to Friday.

### **3.5.3.1. The program was as followed**

#### **First Session. Topics: Writing as a process**

- 1) The four main elements of the process:
  - a) Planning.
  - b) Drafting.
  - c) Editing (reflecting and revising).
  - d) Final version.
- 2) Implications for learning and teaching:
  - a) The way we get students to plan.
  - b) The way we encourage them to draft, reflect and revise / collaborative writing.
  - c) The way we respond to our students' writing.
  - d) The process trap.

#### **Second Session. Topics**

- 1) Describing written text.
- 2) The task of the teacher in writing.

#### **Third Session. Topics**

- 1) Ways of correcting student's work.

- a) Reformulation.
  - b) Referring students to a dictionary or a grammar book.
  - c) Ask me.
  - d) Remedial teaching.
- 2) Ways of responding to students' work.
- a) Responding to work-in-progress.
  - b) Responding by written comment.
  - c) Post task statements.
  - d) Electronic comments.
  - e) Evaluation rubrics.
- 3) Training students to self-edit and self-correct.
- a) Finding mistakes
  - b) Understanding correction symbols
  - c) Making corrections
  - d) Error checklist

**Fourth session. Topic: the language portfolio**

- 1) Presentation of a sample. Testimonies and examples of other schools using portfolios as a tool to help improve writing.

2) Students' language portfolios instructions for teachers at the workshop.

a) First Steps.

b) How to approach each section.

(1) Language Passport.

(2) Language Biography.

(3) Dossier.

3) Motivation.

4) Advantages of portfolios for teachers and students.

5) How to use the portfolio.

6) Steps to teach students how to work a portfolio.

7) How to evaluate using portfolios.

8) Writing rubrics.

### **Fifth Session**

Conclusions.

### **3.6. Supporting Matrix**

I prepared this chart because it is a useful tool to assess the coherence and connection between the title, the problem, the

objectives, the hypothesis, variables and the methodology, as it is stated by Marroquin<sup>2</sup> and Guillen<sup>3</sup>.

It is important to mention that the information included in the chart had been validated by three professors from Cayetano Heredia University, teachers who were my mentors during my teaching training. They are Professor Emilio Hipolito Morillo Miranda from UPCH, Mag. Gladys Guerra professor at UPCH and Psychologist Angela Lopez.

The following steps have been followed in order to establish the coherence and connection:

- 3.6.1. There should be consistence and connection between the problem, the objective and the general hypothesis of the research.
- 3.6.2. Coherence and connection between the components of the problem, the object and the hypothesis.
- 3.6.3 The number of the components of the problem, the object and the hypothesis.
- 3.6.4. Connection between the variable and the elements of the problem, object and hypothesis.
- 3.6.5. Coherence between the research title and the methodology.
- 3.6.6. Coherence between the methods and strategies chosen to analyze the research problem, population and sample.

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<sup>2</sup>MARROQUIN, R. (2012) Matriz operacional de la variable y matriz de consistencia (diapositivas). Lima: Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle. 2012. 32 diapositivas. En Línea Internet. 20 de febrero de 2013. Accesible en: [www.une.edu.pe/diapositivas3-matriz-de-consistencia-19-08-12.pdf](http://www.une.edu.pe/diapositivas3-matriz-de-consistencia-19-08-12.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>GUILEN, O. (s.f.). Asesoría de Plan de tesis y Tesis para Maestría y Doctorado (diapositivas). Lima. 208 diapositivas. En Línea Internet. 20 de febrero de 2013. Accesible en: [api.ning.com/files/aqPjOJ\\*S32d.../TipsPlandeTesisv2.0.ppt](http://api.ning.com/files/aqPjOJ*S32d.../TipsPlandeTesisv2.0.ppt)

To sum up, the information given in chart 4 shows coherence and cohesion between the problems, the objectives, the hypothesis, the variables, strategies and procedures used to collect the data.



	Problems	Objectives	Hypothesis	Operationalization		Method
				Variables	Indicators	
General	How can writing skill be improved in students from first grade of secondary?	Improve the writing skills in students from first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio.	The appropriate handling of the Language Portfolio will help to raise the level of writing skills in students from first grade of secondary.	Students from first grade of secondary	Number of students.	Gather information analyzing documents.
Specifics	What does implementing the language portfolio consist of?	Include the use of the Language Portfolio in the syllabus of one group of students of first grade of secondary.	If the language portfolio is incorporated into the current English curriculum of students of first grade of secondary, the academic objectives will be addressed.	English curriculum (Annual planning)	Final version of the English curriculum.	Gather information analyzing documents.
	Are first grade of secondary teachers efficiently trained in the use of the language portfolio?	Train first grade of secondary teachers on the use of the Language Portfolio considering its strengths and capacities.	If teachers are successfully trained in the use of the language portfolio, their strength and potential will align with the students' needs of improving their writing skills.	First grade of secondary English teachers	Number of kits of materials developed	Collection of information through documentary analysis
					Number of teachers invited to participate in the training.	
					% of teachers' attendance to the training.	
					Number of workshop sessions conducted on schedule.	
	To what extend has the written skill been improved in the students of first grade of secondary by using the Language Portfolio ?	Assess the writing skill in students of first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio.	If the implementation of the portfolio improves the students' writing skills then this fact validates the improvement of students' written expression.	First grade students using the language portfolio	% Satisfaction of teachers in relation to the workshop.	Collection of information through documentary analysis
					Teachers' evaluation of the workshop.	
					Number of workshops	
					% Of scheduled workshops on the syllabus	
					Number of workshops done	
					% of workshops done regarding the syllabus	
					% of students according to grades	

Table N° 5. Supporting Matrix  
Source: Own elaboration



## **Chapter IV**

### **Discussion of results**

In chapter IV, in order to present the data analysis and the interpretation of the results from the application of the instruments, two moments were stated: 1.the problem and 2. the validation of the research.

#### **4.1. Tabulation - Analysis and interpretation of the results**

##### **4.1.1.Regarding the problem**

##### **4.1.1.1. Regarding the diagnostic test 2011**

While placement tests are designed to show how good a student's English is in relation to a previously agreed system of levels, diagnostic tests can be used to expose learners' difficulties, gaps in

their knowledge, and skill deficiencies during a course. Thus, when we know what the problems are, we can do something about them.

Starting 2011, since I started working in my practicum, a diagnostic test was administered, having the following results:

Standards	Grade	Frequency	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	4	6.5%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4	1	1.6%	1.6%		
	5		0.0%	1.6%		
	6	2	3.2%	4.8%		
	7	1	1.6%	6.5%		
Below average	8	16	25.8%	32.3%	35	56.5%
	9	14	22.6%	54.8%		
	10	5	8.1%	62.9%		
Acceptable	11	2	3.2%	66.1%	19	30.6%
	12	3	4.8%	71.0%		
	13	14	22.6%	93.5%		
Good	14	1	1.6%	95.2%	4	6.5%
	15	2	3.2%	98.4%		
	16	0	0.0%	98.4%		
	17	1	1.6%	100.0%		
Excellent	18		0.0%	100.0%	0	0.0%
	19		0.0%	100.0%		
	20		0.0%	100.0%		
		62	100%		62	100%

Table N° 6. Diagnostic test scores - 2011

Source: Own elaboration

These results have provided information in order to state that:

- **Regarding basic descriptors as for example frequency, percentage and accumulated percentage**

The highest percentage in the distribution is 25.8% corresponding to the grade 08, out of 16 students.

The grades obtained from the sample has been grouped and colors have been assigned taking into consideration the following standards:

Unacceptable	0 to 7	red
Below average	8 to 10	pink
Acceptable	11 to 13	yellow
Good	14 to 17	green
Excellent	18 to 20	blue

We can see that:

- 6.5% is in standard “Unacceptable”.
- 56.5% is in standard “Below average”.
- 30.6% is in standard “Acceptable”.
- 6.5% is in standard “Good”.
- 0.0% is in standard “Excellent”.

We can see that 93.5% is below the expected standard in writing.

- **Regarding Tendency (central) and distribution**

Statistical	Parameters obtained
Media	10
Mode	08
Maximum	17
Minimum	04

Table N° 7. Diagnostic test: Statistics - 2011

Source: Own elaboration

It is important to mention that the average from the diagnostic test is 10 over 20 points. This fact places the sample “Below average”.

- **To sum up**

The average English level that students have when they come to secondary is low. The average is 10 where 56.5% of the students failed the entrance exam.

#### **4.1.1.2. Regarding the student’s sample evaluations 2011**

The results obtained from the grades of the students from the sample are mentioned in the Appendix 3.

It is necessary to mention that the students name has not been mentioned because of confidentiality purposes.

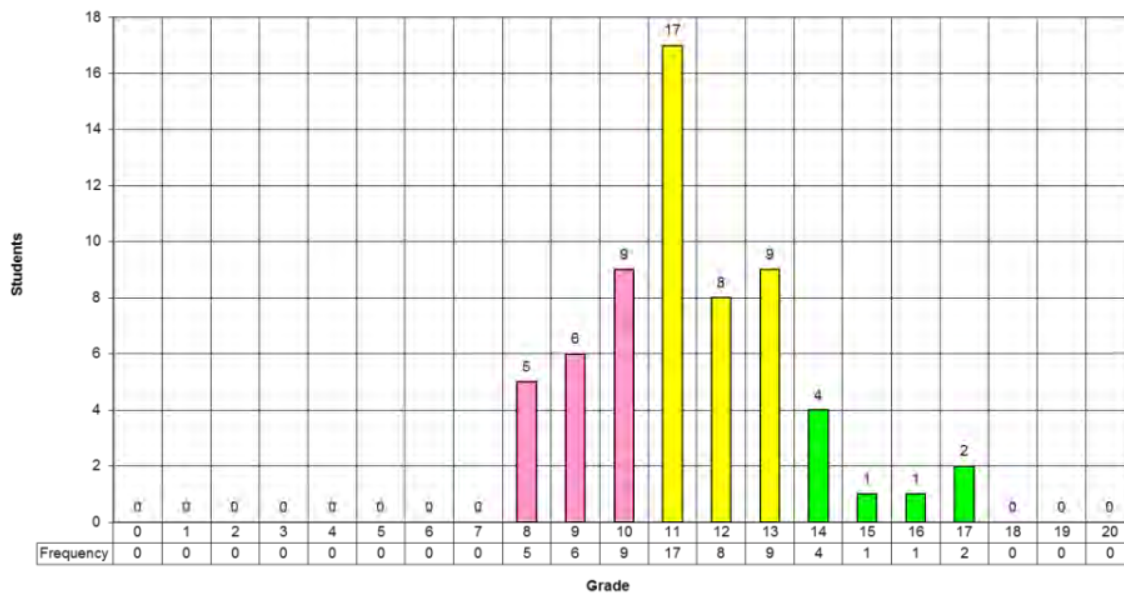
Taking into consideration the grades and the raw scores from the three first terms, the following parameters have been obtained for distribution statistics purposes:

- **Basic descriptors as frequency and percentage:**

The grades obtained from the sample have been grouped and colors have been assigned taking into consideration the following standards:

Unacceptable	0 to 7	red
Below average	8 to 10	pink
Acceptable	11 to 13	yellow
Good	14 to 17	green
Excellent	18 to 20	blue

**Distribution of scores for the selected sample**



**Chart N° 1**

Sample: Distribution of scores - 2011

Source: Own laboration



Grade	Frequency	%	Cumulative %	Grade	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
0	0	0.0%	0.0%	11	17	27.4%	59.7%
1	0	0.0%	0.0%	12	8	12.9%	72.6%
2	0	0.0%	0.0%	13	9	14.5%	87.1%
3	0	0.0%	0.0%	14	4	6.5%	93.5%
4	0	0.0%	0.0%	15	1	1.6%	95.2%
5	0	0.0%	0.0%	16	1	1.6%	96.8%
6	0	0.0%	0.0%	17	2	3.2%	100.0%
7	0	0.0%	0.0%	18	0	0.0%	100.0%
8	5	8.1%	8.1%	19	0	0.0%	100.0%
9	6	9.7%	17.7%	20	0	0.0%	100.0%
10	9	14.5%	32.3%	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62</b>		

Table N° 8. Sample scores - 2011  
Source: Own elaboration

In chart N° 1 and table N° 5 we can observe that the highest percentage in the sample distribution is the 27.4% that corresponds to the grade 11 obtained by 17 students out of 62.

It is possible to appreciate that:

- 32.3% of students failed.
- 59.7% of the students have a score of 11 or less.

#### Standards achieved by students in the sample

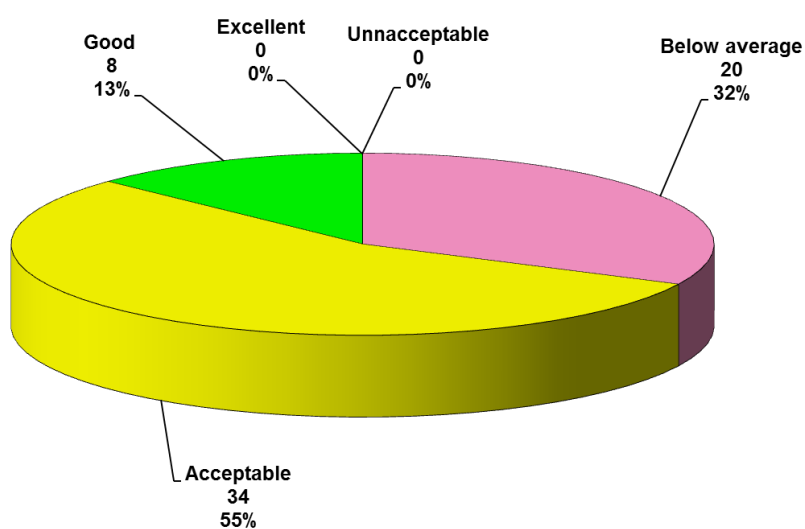


Chart N° 2  
Sample: Distribution of standards - 2011  
Source: Own elaboration

Standars	Grade	Frequency	Total by standard	% by standard
<b>Unacceptable</b>	0	0	0	0.0%
	1	0		
	2	0		
	3	0		
	4	0		
	5	0		
	6	0		
	7	0		
<b>Below average</b>	8	5	20	32.3%
	9	6		
	10	9		
<b>Acceptable</b>	11	17	34	54.8%
	12	8		
	13	9		
<b>Good</b>	14	4	8	12.9%
	15	1		
	16	1		
	17	2		
<b>Excellent</b>	18	0	0	0.0%
	19	0		
	20	0		
		<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table N° 9. Sample: Standards - 2011  
Source: Own elaboration

Chart N° 2 and table N° 9 s shows that the students from the sample are in the following groups:

0.0% is “Unacceptable”

32.3% is “Below average”

54.8% is “Acceptable”

12.9% is “Good”

0.0% is “Excellent”

It is important to mention that only 8 students have a good level. This quantity represents the 12.9% of the sample and that 32.3% (20 students) have low average.

- **Tendency (central) and distribution Statistics**

Statistical	Parameters obtained
Media	11
Standard deviation	2.06
Variance	4.23
Mode	11
Maximum	18
Minimum	08

Table N° 10. Sample: Statistics - 2011

Source: Own elaboration

It is important to mention that the average from the sample is 11 over 20 points, this means that the sample group has an acceptable standard.

- **To sum up**

The sample reflected that at the end of the third term in 2011, the students ranked an acceptable standard. The students grade was 11 and 32.3% failed.

#### **4.1.1.3. Regarding the PET MOCK 2011**

During 2011, three Mock exams were administered and the following chart shows the results

Regarding frequency, percentage and accumulated percentage we can observe that the Students' results:

- **PET Mock 1**, the highest percentage in the distribution is of 14.5% that corresponds to 08 obtained by 9 students.

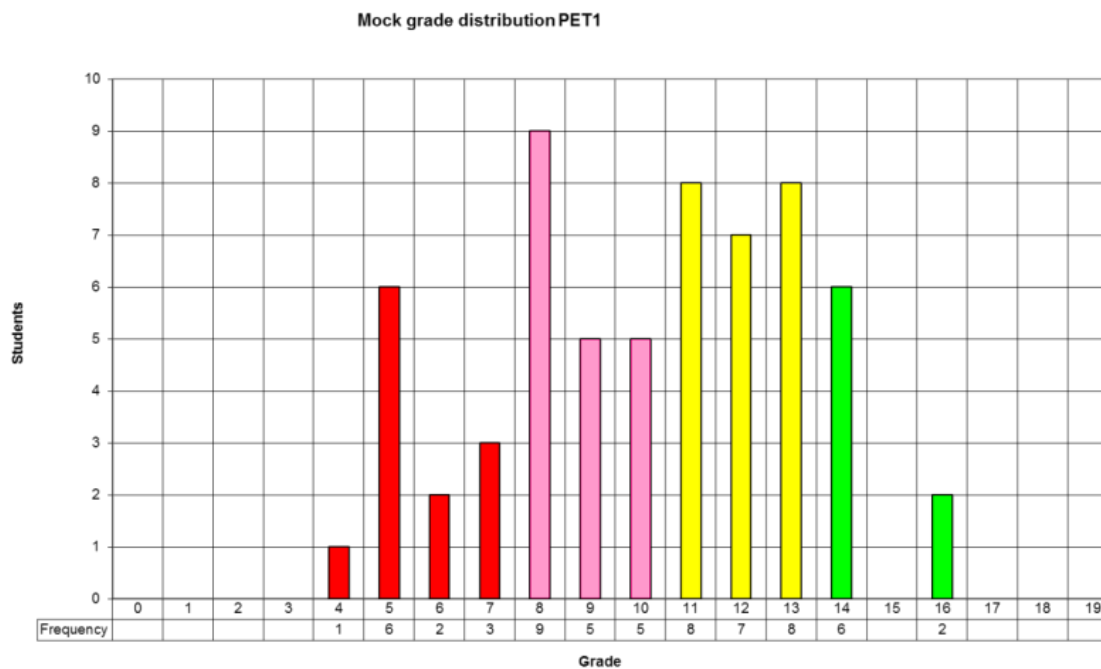


Chart N° 3  
 PET MOCK 1: Distribution of scores - 2011  
 Source: Own elaboration

Standars	Grade	Frequency PET 1	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	12	19.4%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4	1	1.6%	1.6%		
	5	6	9.7%	11.3%		
	6	2	3.2%	14.5%		
Below average	7	3	4.8%	19.4%	19	30.6%
	8	9	14.5%	33.9%		
	9	5	8.1%	41.9%		
Acceptable	10	5	8.1%	50.0%	23	37.1%
	11	8	12.9%	62.9%		
	12	7	11.3%	74.2%		
Good	13	8	12.9%	87.1%	8	12.9%
	14	6	9.7%	96.8%		
	15		0.0%	96.8%		
	16	2	3.2%	100%		
Excellent	17		0.0%	100%	0	0.0%
	18		0.0%	100%		
	19		0.0%	100%		
	20		0.0%	100%		
		62	100%		62	100%

Table N° 11. PET Mock 1: Standards - 2011

Source: Own elaboration

Chart N° 3 and table N° 11 shows that the highest percentage in the sample distribution is the 14.5% that corresponds to the grade 8 obtained by 9 students out of 62.

It is possible to appreciate that:

- 50% of the students failed
- 62.9% of the students got 11 and less.

- **PET Mock 2**, the highest percentage in the distribution is of 25.8% that corresponds to 09 obtained by 16 students.

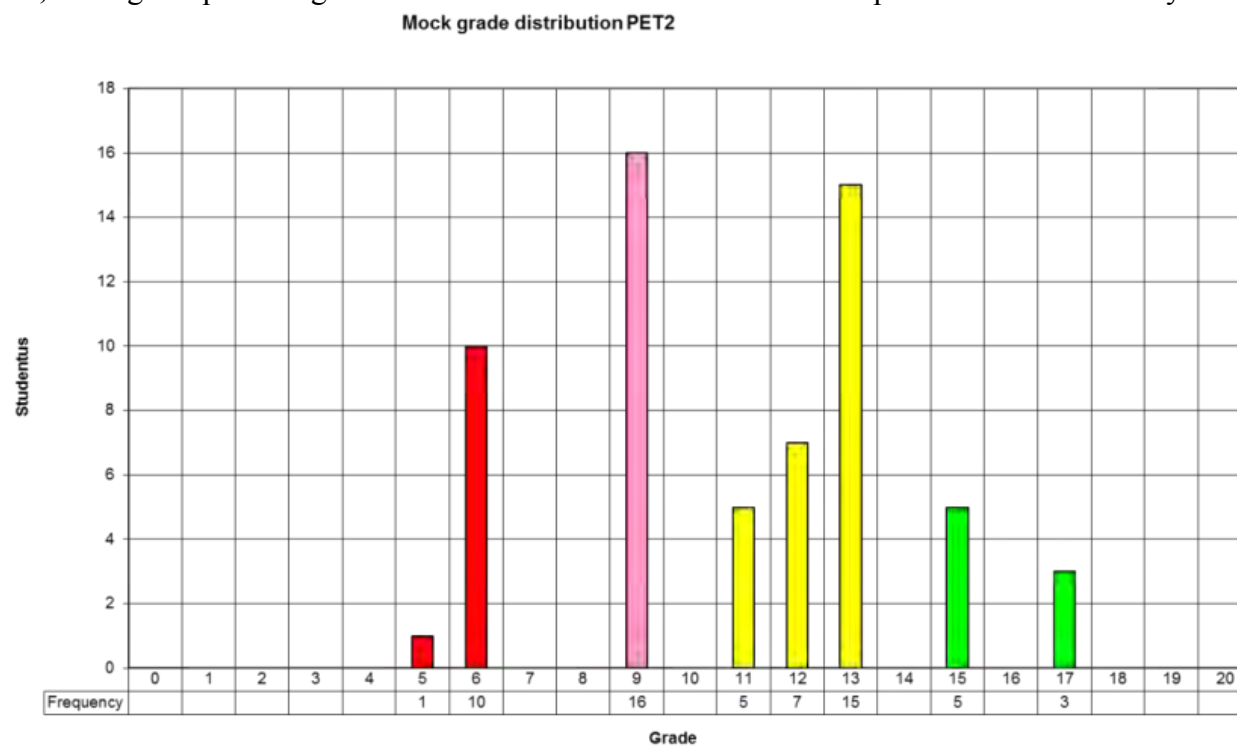


Chart N° 4  
 PET MOCK 2: Distribution of scores - 2011  
 Source: Own elaboration



Standars	Grade	Frequency PET 1	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	11	17.7%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4		0.0%	0.0%		
	5	1	1.6%	1.6%		
	6	10	16.1%	17.7%		
	7		0.0%	17.7%		
Below average	8		0.0%	17.7%	16	25.8%
	9	16	25.8%	43.5%		
	10		0.0%	43.5%		
Acceptable	11	5	8.1%	51.6%	27	43.5%
	12	7	11.3%	62.9%		
	13	15	24.2%	87.1%		
Good	14		0.0%	87.1%	8	12.9%
	15	5	8.1%	95.2%		
	16		0.0%	95.2%		
	17	3	4.8%	100.0%		
Excellent	18		0.0%	100.0%	0	0.0%
	19		0.0%	100.0%		
	20		0.0%	100.0%		
		62	100%		62	100%

Table N° 12. PET Mock 2: Standards - 2011  
Source: Own elaboration

Chart N° 4 and table N° 12 shows the highest percentage in the sample distribution is the 25.8% that corresponds to the grade 9 obtained by 16 students out of 62.

We can see that:

- 43% of the students failed.
- 51% of the students got 11 or less.

- **PET Mock 3**, the highest percentage in the distribution is of 35.5% that corresponds to 13 obtained by 13 students.

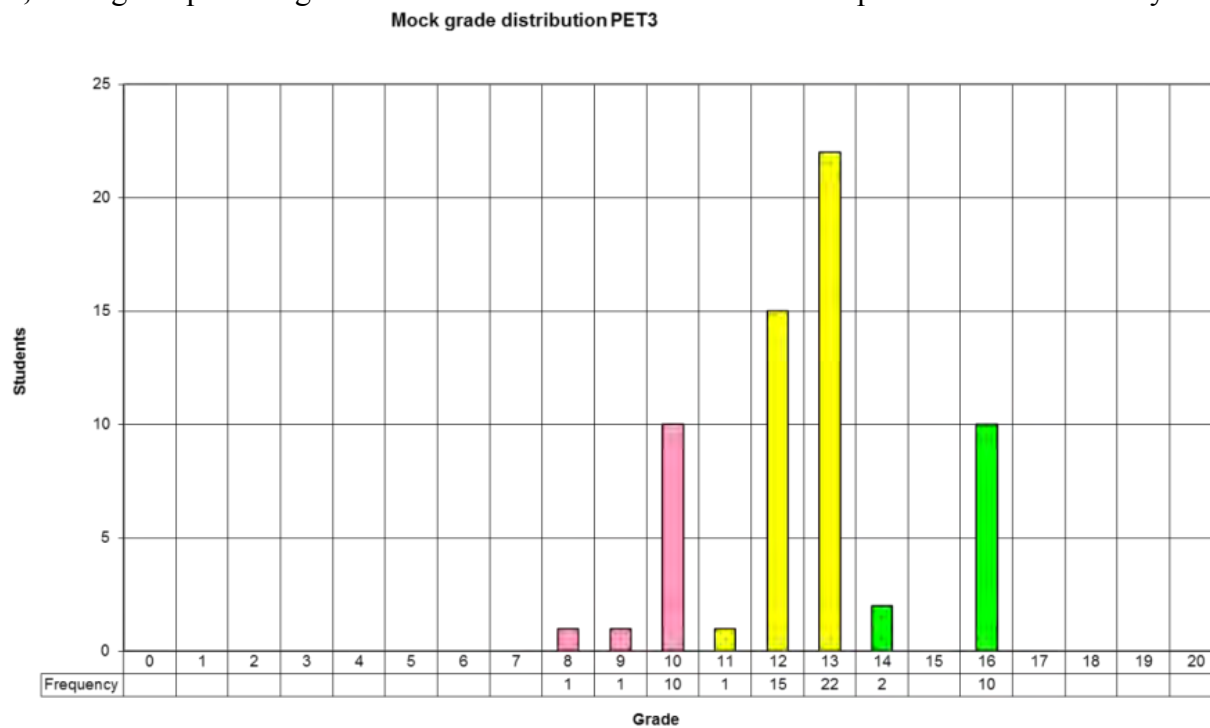


Chart N° 5  
 PET MOCK 3: Distribution of scores - 2011  
 Source: Own elaboration

Standars	Grade	Frequency PET 1	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	8	12.9%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4		0.0%	0.0%		
	5		0.0%	0.0%		
	6	3	4.8%	4.8%		
	7	5	8.1%	12.9%		
Below average	8	2	3.2%	16.1%	13	21.0%
	9	1	1.6%	17.7%		
	10	10	16.1%	33.9%		
Acceptable	11	1	1.6%	35.5%	29	46.8%
	12	13	21.0%	56.5%		
	13	15	24.2%	80.6%		
Good	14	2	3.2%	83.9%	12	19.4%
	15		0.0%	83.9%		
	16	10	16.1%	100.0%		
	17		0.0%	100.0%		
Excellent	18		0.0%	100.0%	0	0.0%
	19		0.0%	100.0%		
	20		0.0%	100.0%		
		62	100%		62	100%

Table N° 13. PET Mock 3: Standards - 2011

Source: Own elaboration

Chart N° 5 and table N° 13 shows that the highest percentage in the sample distribution is the 24.2% that corresponds to the grade 13 obtained by 15 students out of 62.

It shows that:

- 33.9% of the students failed.
- 35.5% of the students got 11 or less.

Regarding frequency, percentage and accumulated percentage we can.

We can see that:

Standars	PET 1		PET 2		PET 3	
	Students	%	Students	%	Students	%
Unacceptable	12	19.4%	11	17.7%	8	12.9%
Below average	19	30.6%	16	25.8%	13	21.0%
Acceptable	23	37.1%	27	43.5%	29	46.8%
Good	8	12.9%	8	12.9%	12	19.4%
Excellent	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	62	100.0%	62	100.0%	62	100.0%

Table N° 14. Frequency and PET Mock: Consolidation - 2011

Source: Own elaboration

We can observe that the tendency is to improve the grades, but still, the grades are down below to what it is being expected according to the requirement of writing skills.

Regarding statistics of tendency (central) and distribution:

Statistical	PET 1	PET 2	PET 3
Media	10.1	10.8	11.7
Standard deviation	3.01	3.12	2.82
Variance	9.06	9.71	7.97
Mode	08	09	13
Maximum	16	17	16
Minimum	04	05	06

Table N° 15. Sample: Statistics - 2011

Source: Own elaboration

Table 15 shows the tendency to improve the PET results. Their grades increased from 10.1 to

11.7, this means that the results went up from “Below average” to “Acceptable”.

- **To sum up**

The average standard that reached the sample at the end of the third mock in 2011 showed that the students reached an acceptable standard. The students got 11.7. It is relevant to notice that in the third mock, 33.9% students failed versus the 50% of students who failed in the first exam.

#### **4.1.1.4. Questionnaires to teachers from first grade of secondary**

For validity purposes from the questionnaires, the instruments were shared with other teachers who validated the items of the questionnaire. The conclusions are the following:

- **Question 1**

The teachers agreed that the students come from primary with little vocabulary, poor grammar and lots of problems in order to communicate their ideas in written and oral production.

- **Question 2**

Teachers mentioned that the lack of articulation between primary and secondary is because there are no coordination meetings, no scope and sequence plan and no achievement indicators.

- **Question 3**

Teachers mentioned that one of the reasons they do not give emphasis to written work is because giving feedback is time consuming, it is very demanding to grade many papers and because of the many duties they have they do not have enough time.

- **Question 4**

Teachers mentioned that they understand writing as a skill where you have to grade the final product and not the process.

- **Question 5**

Teachers believe that students do not have writing strategies.

- **Question 6**

Teachers mentioned that the input that the students were exposed (curricular and extracurricular) was not enough. They suggested CLIL could be a good option.

- **Question 7**

Teachers answered that they know about the language portfolio but not in detail.

- **Question 8**

They agreed that assembling language portfolios can help students not only improve their writing skills but their English level in general but it was

important to train the teachers first in the use of the language portfolio.

- **Question 9**

Teachers recommended that in order to help students improve their writing skill, primary and secondary teachers should standardize methodology: establish the number of writings students have to do during the week, give constant feedback to students, and monitor closely the use of the portfolio.

- **Question 10**

Teachers agreed that students do not have the pre requisites to pass the PET exam with the scores the school requires.

- **To sum up**

The most relevant deficiencies observed are:

- Students come to secondary with very little vocabulary, poor grammar; poor strategies to communicate written ideas, organize them and support their point of view.
- Another important conclusion is the disarticulation between primary and secondary regarding methodology and exigencies. This disarticulation is due to the lack of coordination meetings between both levels and there is not any scope and sequence chart between both levels.

- One of the reasons why writing isn't a priority is because its grading is too much time consuming for the teacher.
- Another conclusion is that teachers understand writing only as a final product and not as a process.
- Most students do not know writing strategies.
- The English input that the students are exposed at school and outside school is not enough.
- Some teachers do not know about the language portfolio, how it works, its advantages and how it can become a great strategy to help students improve English acquisition.
- The language portfolio could be included in the English program and standardized for all the students. For this purpose all teachers should standardize its use and monitor properly its use with all the students.
- Students have to improve their English level in order to pass the international PET exam.

#### **4.1.1.5. Questionnaires to students from first grade of secondary**

- **Regarding the first grade students questionnaires**

In order to validate the students' questionnaire, two criteria were established:



- **Reliability**

The questionnaire gave consistent results. Reliability is enhanced by making the questionnaire questions absolutely clear, this is why I tried to prepare very good questions, restricting the scope for variety in the answers, and making sure that the conditions remain constant. It also depends on the people who process the results. In order to determine reliability the half method was used.<sup>1</sup>

This method requires just one application: After grading the questionnaire, the items are put in the scores rubric, then they are divided in two and the correlation coefficient is calculated between the two halves. If the instrument is reliable, both scores should be highly related.

This process is shown in the following chart:

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<sup>1</sup> HERNANDEZ, R. (1996). Metodología de la Investigación. México. Editorial Mc. Graw-Hill. pp. 1-72, 242-243.

Question	Scale					Total	Half 1	Half 2
	0	1	2	3	4			
1		25	25	10	2	62	37	25
2		4	7	37	14	62	58	4
3	62					62	0	62
4		2	5	10	45	62	60	2
5			2	25	35	62	62	0
6	57			5		62	5	57
7			50	10	2	62	62	0
8		2	20	30	10	62	60	2
9				25	37	62	62	0
Total	119	33	109	152	145		406	152

Correlation between halves: -1.00

Observation:

Half 1 = Sum Frequency Rating 3 and 4

Half 2 = Sum Frequency Rating 0, 1 y 2

Table N° 16. Sample: Students' questionnaire

Source: Own elaboration

The questionnaire has a negative correlation, the mark indicates the direction of the correlation and its magnitude, therefore the questionnaire is highly reliable.

#### ○ Validity

The questionnaire is valid if it tests what it is supposed to. Thus it is not valid, for example, to test writing ability with an essay question that requires specialist knowledge of history or biology- unless it is known that all students share this knowledge before they do the questionnaire. The questionnaire has been proofread by other teachers, too.

Taking into consideration the perceptual distribution of the grades the following chart is presented:

Question	Scale					Total
	0	1	2	3	4	
1	0.0%	40.3%	40.3%	16.1%	3.2%	100%
2	0.0%	6.5%	11.3%	59.7%	22.6%	100%
3	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
4	0.0%	3.2%	8.1%	16.1%	72.6%	100%
5	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%	40.3%	56.5%	100%
6	91.9%	0.0%	0.0%	8.1%	0.0%	100%
7	0.0%	0.0%	80.6%	16.1%	3.2%	100%
8	0.0%	3.2%	32.3%	48.4%	16.1%	100%
9	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.3%	59.7%	100%

Table N° 17. Sample: % Students' questionnaire  
Source: Own elaboration

- **To sum up**

- 80.6% of the students from first grade of secondary do not like to write in English.
- 82.7% of the students from first grade of secondary consider that writing in secondary is very difficult.
- 100% of the students from first grade of secondary were not trained in any international exams during their primary studies.
- 88.7% of the students from first grade of secondary express that Writing exercises help them improve English.
- 96.8% of the students from first grade of secondary think that writing texts regularly help them become better in writing.

- 91.9% of the students from first grade of secondary stated that they do not use English in class in order to communicate with each other.
- Only 19.3% of the students from first grade of secondary consider that storing their writing exercises and exams is important for their learning process.
- 64.5% of the students from first grade of secondary think that the teachers' feedback is good.
- 100% of the students from first grade of secondary think that secondary grading is harder and they scores are lower than in primary.

#### **4.1.2. Regarding to the second moment: proposal validity - 2012**

##### **Analysis and Interpretation: Control Group and Sample Group**

It is necessary to mention that the students name has not been mentioned because of confidentiality purposes.

##### **4.1.2.1. Regarding the student's Control Group**

The results obtained from the grades of the students from the Control Group.

**FIRST GRADE**
**WRITING**
**Control Group**

Nº	Student	Term I	Term II	Term III	Average	Observations
1	CG01	17	15	16	16	
2	CG02	12	13	13	13	
3	CG03	9	10	11	10	
4	CG04	14	12	12	13	
5	CG05	16	13	15	15	
6	CG06	7	9	11	9	
7	CG07	12	11	10	11	
8	CG08	11	12	9	11	
9	CG09	6	7	8	7	
10	CG10	13	11	12	12	
11	CG11	12	13	11	12	
12	CG12	11	12	13	12	
13	CG13	10	9	11	10	
14	CG14	8	11	12	10	
15	CG15	12	12	13	12	
16	CG16	14	11	12	12	
17	CG17	17	14	15	15	
18	CG18	11	12	11	11	
19	CG19	13	11	12	12	
20	CG20	10	11	12	11	
21	CG21	9	8	9	9	
22	CG22	8	11	10	10	

Table N° 18. Control Group: Grades -2012

Source: Own elaboration

Taking into consideration the grades and the raw scores from the three first terms, the following parameters have been obtained for distribution statistics purposes:

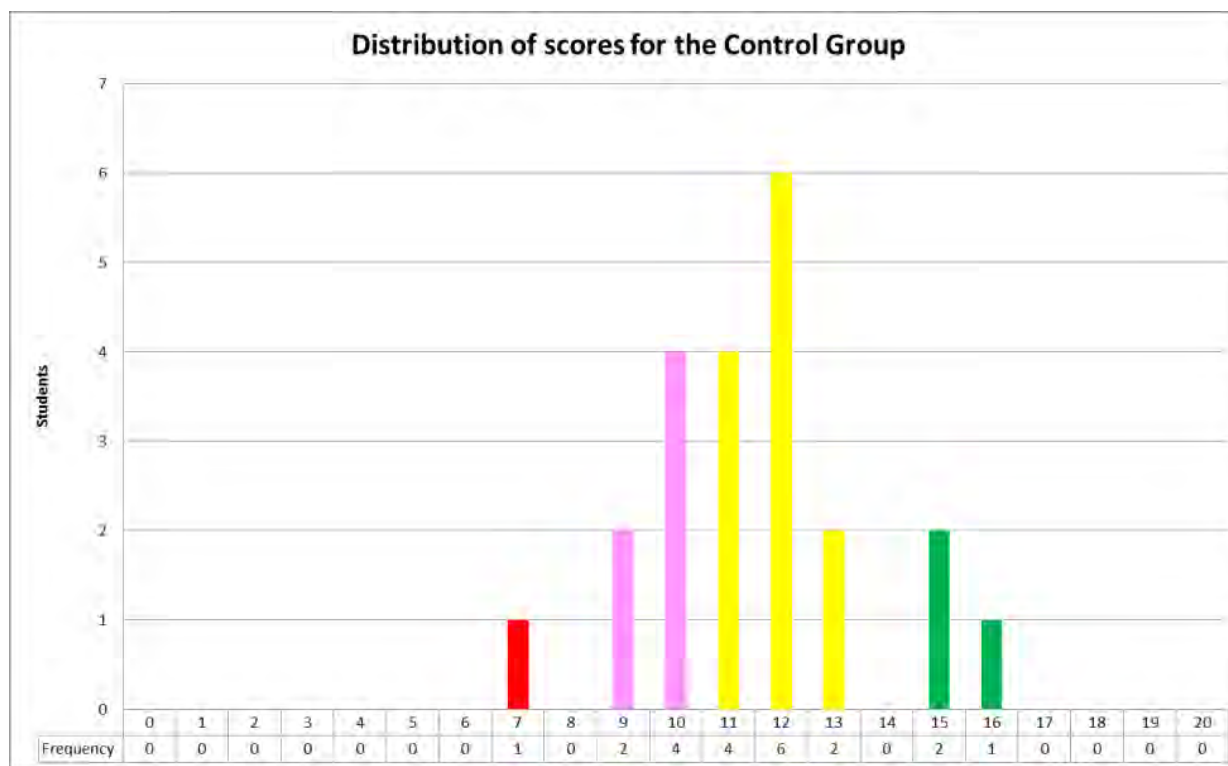


Figure N° 6  
Control Group: Distribution of scores - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

Grade	Frequency	%	Cumulative %	Grade	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
0	0	0.0%	0.0%	11	4	18.2%	50.0%
1	0	0.0%	0.0%	12	6	27.3%	77.3%
2	0	0.0%	0.0%	13	2	9.1%	86.4%
3	0	0.0%	0.0%	14	0	0.0%	86.4%
4	0	0.0%	0.0%	15	2	9.1%	95.5%
5	0	0.0%	0.0%	16	1	4.5%	100.0%
6	0	0.0%	0.0%	17	0	0.0%	100.0%
7	1	4.5%	4.5%	18	0	0.0%	100.0%
8	0	0.0%	4.5%	19	0	0.0%	100.0%
9	2	9.1%	13.6%	20	0	0.0%	100.0%
10	4	18.2%	31.8%	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>		

Table N° 19. Control Group: Scores - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

The highest percentage in the sample distribution is the 27.3 % that corresponds to the grade 12 obtained by 6 students out of 22

Taking into consideration the assessment standards, that were already mentioned we can observe that:

Standars	Grade	Frequency	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0	0	1	4.5%
	1	0		
	2	0		
	3	0		
	4	0		
	5	0		
	6	0		
	7	1		
Below average	8	0	6	27.3%
	9	2		
	10	4		
Acceptable	11	4	12	54.5%
	12	6		
	13	2		
Good	14	0	3	13.6%
	15	2		
	16	1		
	17	0		
Excellent	18	0	0	0.0%
	19	0		
	20	0		
			<b>22</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table N° 20. Control Group: Standards - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

We can observe that the 4.5% have an unacceptable level and that the 27.3% are in a lower level than the average.



Only 54.4% of the students have an acceptable level and only 13.6% have a good level in the control group.

Regarding statistics of tendency (central) and distribution of the Control Group:

Statistical	Parameters obtained
Media	11.5
Mode	12
Maximum	17
Minimum	08

Table N° 21. Control Group: Statistics - 2012

Source: Own elaboration

The average of the control group is 11.5

Regarding PET (Appendix 5) the student's Control Group.

Standards	Grade	Frequency PET 1	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	4	18.2%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4		0.0%	0.0%		
	5	1	4.5%	4.5%		
	6	1	4.5%	9.1%		
	7	2	9.1%	18.2%		
Below average	8	4	18.2%	36.4%	8	36.4%
	9	2	9.1%	45.5%		
	10	2	9.1%	54.5%		
Acceptable	11	2	9.1%	63.6%	7	31.8%
	12	3	13.6%	77.3%		
	13	2	9.1%	86.4%		
Good	14	2	9.1%	95.5%	3	13.6%
	15		0.0%	95.5%		
	16	1	4.5%	100%		
	17		0.0%	100%		
Excellent	18		0.0%	100%	0	0.0%
	19		0.0%	100%		
	20		0.0%	100%		
		22	100%		22	100%

Table N° 22. Control Group: PET 1 Mock results - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

PET Mock 1, the highest percentage in the distribution is of 18.2% that corresponds to 08 obtained by 4 students out of 22.

Standards	Grade	Frequency PET 2	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	3	13.6%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4		0.0%	0.0%		
	5		0.0%	0.0%		
	6	1	4.5%	4.5%		
	7	2	9.1%	13.6%		
Below average	8	1	4.5%	18.2%	4	18.2%
	9	2	9.1%	27.3%		
	10	1	4.5%	31.8%		
Acceptable	11	4	18.2%	50.0%	12	54.5%
	12	5	22.7%	72.7%		
	13	3	13.6%	86.4%		
Good	14	1	4.5%	90.9%	3	13.6%
	15	1	4.5%	95.5%		
	16		0.0%	95.5%		
	17	1	4.5%	100.0%		
Excellent	18		0.0%	100.0%	0	0.0%
	19		0.0%	100.0%		
	20		0.0%	100.0%		
		22	100%		22	100%

Table N° 23. Control Group: PET 2 Mock results - 2012

Source: Own elaboration

PET Mock 2, the highest percentage in the distribution is of 22.7% that corresponds to 12 obtained by 5 students out of 22.

Standards	Grade	Frequency PET 3	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	2	9.1%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4		0.0%	0.0%		
	5		0.0%	0.0%		
	6		0.0%	0.0%		
	7	2	9.1%	9.1%		
Below average	8	1	4.5%	13.6%	4	18.2%
	9	2	9.1%	22.7%		
	10	1	4.5%	27.3%		
Acceptable	11	3	13.6%	40.9%	12	54.5%
	12	5	22.7%	63.6%		
	13	4	18.2%	81.8%		
Good	14	2	9.1%	90.9%	4	18.2%
	15	1	4.5%	95.5%		
	16	1	4.5%	100.0%		
	17		0.0%	100.0%		
Excellent	18		0.0%	100.0%	0	0.0%
	19		0.0%	100.0%		
	20		0.0%	100.0%		
		22	100%		22	100%

Table N° 24. Control Group: PET 3 Mock results - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

PET Mock 3, the highest percentage in the distribution is of 22.7% that corresponds to 5 obtained by 5 students out of 22.

Taking into consideration the assessment standards, which had been already mentioned we can appreciate that:

Standars	PET 1		PET 2		PET 3	
	Students	%	Students	%	Students	%
Unacceptable	4	18.2%	3	13.6%	2	9.1%
Below average	8	36.4%	4	18.2%	4	18.2%
Acceptable	7	31.8%	12	54.5%	12	54.5%
Good	3	13.6%	3	13.6%	4	18.2%
Excellent	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	22	100.0%	22	100.0%	22	100.0%

Table N° 25. Control Group: PET Mock standards - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

We can observe that the tendency is to improve the grades, but still, the grades are down below to what it is being expected according to the requirement of writing skills.

Statistics of tendency (central) and distribution:

Statistical	PET 1	PET 2	PET 3
Media	10.1	11.1	11.5
Mode	08	12	12
Maximum	16	17	16
Minimum	05	06	07

Table N° 26. Control Group: Statistics PET Mock - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

As it is represented in this chart, the tendency is to improve the average of mock, from 10.1 to 11.5, this means that they went up from a low average to acceptable average. This result is similar to the one obtained in 2011.

- **To sum up**

The following data had been obtained from the Control Group (2012):

- 31.8% of students from the control group failed at the end of the third term.
- Their average is 11.5 at the end of the third term.
- At the end of the third term, students from the control group reached an acceptable level.
- The average standard that the control group achieved in the third mock in 2012 went up to an acceptable standard (11.5). It is important to mention that in the third exam 27.3% of the students failed versus 54.5% from the first exam.

#### **4.1.2.2. Regarding the student's Sample Group**

The results obtained from the grades of the students from the Sample Group are as follows:

Nº	Student	Term I	Term II	Term III	Average	Observations
1	SG01	12	13	13	13	
2	SG02	15	14	15	15	
3	SG03	14	16	15	15	
4	SG04	18	19	18	18	
5	SG05	14	15	15	15	
6	SG06	13	12	15	13	
7	SG07	16	15	16	16	
8	SG08	13	14	13	13	
9	SG09	13	14	14	14	
10	SG10	11	12	14	12	
11	SG11	16	17	17	17	
12	SG12	12	14	13	13	
13	SG13	17	16	17	17	
14	SG14	18	18	19	18	
15	SG15	14	15	16	15	
16	SG16	12	14	15	14	
17	SG17	12	13	14	13	
18	SG18	12	13	15	13	
19	SG19	8	10	12	10	
20	SG20	12	13	15	13	
21	SG21	13	13	14	13	
22	SG22	11	12	14	12	
23	SG23	12	13	13	13	

Table N° 27. Sample Group: Grades - 2012

Source: Own elaboration

Taking into consideration the grades and the raw scores from the three first terms, the following parameters have been obtained for distribution statistics purposes:

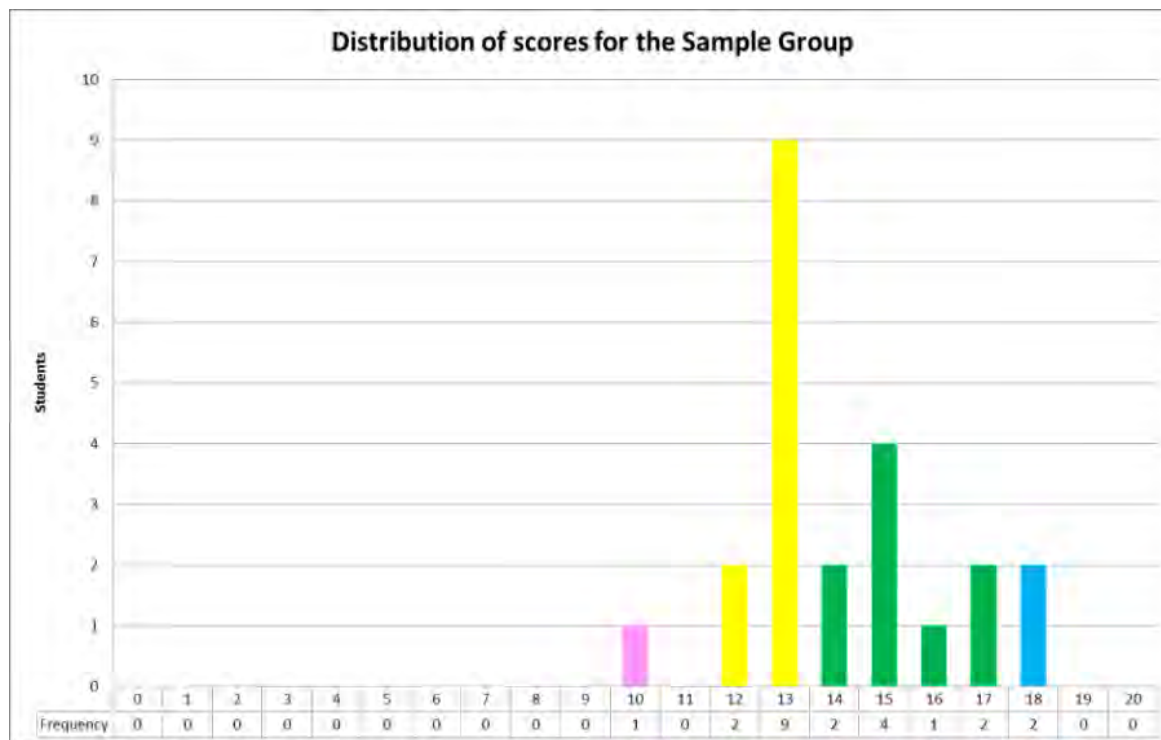


Figure N° 7  
Sample Group: Distribution of scores - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration



Grade	Frequency	%	Cumulative %	Grade	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
0	0	0.0%	0.0%	11	0	0.0%	4.3%
1	0	0.0%	0.0%	12	2	8.7%	13.0%
2	0	0.0%	0.0%	13	9	39.1%	52.2%
3	0	0.0%	0.0%	14	2	8.7%	60.9%
4	0	0.0%	0.0%	15	4	17.4%	78.3%
5	0	0.0%	0.0%	16	1	4.3%	82.6%
6	0	0.0%	0.0%	17	2	8.7%	91.3%
7	0	0.0%	0.0%	18	2	8.7%	100.0%
8	0	0.0%	0.0%	19	0	0.0%	100.0%
9	0	0.0%	0.0%	20	0	0.0%	100.0%
10	1	4.3%	4.3%	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>		

Table N° 28. Sample Group: Scores - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

The highest percentage in the sample distribution is the 36.1% that corresponds to the grade 13 obtained by 9 students out of 23.

Taking into consideration the assessment standards, already mentioned we can observe that:

Standars	Grade	Frequency	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0	0	0	0.0%
	1	0		
	2	0		
	3	0		
	4	0		
	5	0		
	6	0		
Below average	7	0	1	4.3%
	8	0		
	9	0		
Acceptable	10	1	11	47.8%
	11	0		
	12	2		
Good	13	9	9	39.1%
	14	2		
	15	4		
	16	1		
Excellent	17	2	2	8.7%
	18	2		
	19	0		
	20	0		
			<b>23</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table N° 29. Sample Group: Standards - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

We can observe that only 4.3% has a low level under the average.

Only 47.85% of the students have an acceptable level, 39.1% have a good level and 8.7% have achieved an excellent level in the sample group.

Regarding statistics of tendency (central) and distribution of the Sample Group:

Statistical	Parameters obtained
Media	14.13
Mode	13
Maximum	18
Minimum	10

Table N° 30. Sample Group: PET Mock statistics - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

The average from the control group is 14.3

Regarding PET (Appendix 5) the student's Sample Group.

Standards	Grade	Frequency PET 1	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4		0.0%	0.0%		
	5		0.0%	0.0%		
	6		0.0%	0.0%		
	7		0.0%	0.0%		
Below average	8	1	4.3%	4.3%	4	17.4%
	9	1	4.3%	8.7%		
	10	2	8.7%	17.4%		
Acceptable	11	4	17.4%	34.8%	16	69.6%
	12	5	21.7%	56.5%		
	13	7	30.4%	87.0%		
Good	14		0.0%	87.0%	2	8.7%
	15	1	4.3%	91.3%		
	16	1	4.3%	96%		
	17		0.0%	96%		
Excellent	18	1	4.3%	100%	1	4.3%
	19		0.0%	100%		
	20		0.0%	100%		
		23	100%		23	100%

Table N° 31. Sample Group: PET 1 Mock results - 2012

Source: Own elaboration

PET Mock 1, the highest percentage in the distribution is of 30.4% that corresponds to 7 obtained by 7 students out of 23.

Standards	Grade	Frequency PET 2	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4		0.0%	0.0%		
	5		0.0%	0.0%		
	6		0.0%	0.0%		
	7		0.0%	0.0%		
Below average	8		0.0%	0.0%	2	8.7%
	9	1	4.3%	4.3%		
	10	1	4.3%	8.7%		
Acceptable	11	3	13.0%	21.7%	12	52.2%
	12	5	21.7%	43.5%		
	13	4	17.4%	60.9%		
Good	14	3	13.0%	73.9%	7	30.4%
	15	2	8.7%	82.6%		
	16	1	4.3%	87.0%		
	17	1	4.3%	91.3%		
Excellent	18	2	8.7%	100.0%	2	8.7%
	19		0.0%	100.0%		
	20		0.0%	100.0%		
		23	100%		23	100%

Table N° 32. Sample Group: PET 2 Mock results - 2012  
Source: Own elaboration

PET Mock 2, the highest percentage in the distribution is of 21.7% that corresponds to 12 obtained by 5 students out of 23

Standards	Grade	Frequency PET 3	%	Cumulative %	Total by standard	% by standard
Unacceptable	0		0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%
	1		0.0%	0.0%		
	2		0.0%	0.0%		
	3		0.0%	0.0%		
	4		0.0%	0.0%		
	5		0.0%	0.0%		
	6		0.0%	0.0%		
	7		0.0%	0.0%		
Below average	8		0.0%	0.0%	1	4.3%
	9		0.0%	0.0%		
	10	1	4.3%	4.3%		
Acceptable	11	4	17.4%	21.7%	12	52.2%
	12	3	13.0%	34.8%		
	13	5	21.7%	56.5%		
Good	14	4	17.4%	73.9%	9	39.1%
	15	2	8.7%	82.6%		
	16	1	4.3%	87.0%		
	17	2	8.7%	95.7%		
Excellent	18	1	4.3%	100.0%	1	4.3%
	19		0.0%	100.0%		
	20		0.0%	100.0%		
		23	100%		23	100%

Table N° 33. Sample Group: PET 3 Mock results - 2012

Source: Own elaboration

PET Mock 3, the highest percentage in the distribution is of 21.7% that corresponds to 5 obtained by 5 students out of 23.

We can see that:

Standars	PET 1		PET 2		PET 3	
	Students	%	Students	%	Students	%
Unacceptable	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Below average	4	17.4%	2	8.7%	1	4.3%
Acceptable	16	69.6%	12	52.2%	12	52.2%
Good	2	8.7%	7	30.4%	9	39.1%
Excellent	1	4.3%	2	8.7%	1	4.3%
	23	100.0%	23	100.0%	23	100.0%

Table N° 34. Sample Group: Mock PET standards - 2012

Source: Own elaboration

We can observe that the tendency is to improve the writing skill in the sample group.

Statistics of tendency (central) and distribution:

Statistical	PET 1	PET 2	PET 3
Media	12.2	13.3	13.4
Mode	13	12	13
Maximum	18	18	18
Minimum	08	09	10

Table N° 35. Sample Group: Mock PET statistics - 2012

Source: Own elaboration

This chart shows the tendency to improve the scores from the mock exam. It goes up from 12.2 to 13.4, this means that the results are in an acceptable level.

#### • Partial Conclusions

The following conclusions have been obtained from the data of the sample group (2012).

- 4.3% of the students failed at the end of the third term.
- The average obtained at the end of the third term was 14.3.
- At the end of the third term students reached a good standard.
- The students from the sample group reached an acceptable average in the third mock exam in 2012. The average obtained was 13.4. It is important to mention that in the third exam only 4.3% of students failed versus 17.4% from the first exam.

#### **4.2. Regarding Specific Objective N° 1, “Include the use of the Language Portfolio in the syllabus of one group of students of first grade of secondary”**

The English syllabus prepared for the sample group (Appendix 8) included the use of the language portfolio as a strategy to improve writing skills through activities to motivate them to write more in the target language. For example:

##### **4.2.1. Portfolio:**

- Speaking activities
- Readings & Speaking exercises
- Writing exercises
- Writing personal opinions.
- Outlining / first draft / final copy



- Using writing strategies

#### **4.2.2. Keep record of:**

- Written texts
- Writing reports.
- Describing.
- Written exercises
- Written exams
- Final exam
- Meta cognition

#### **To sum up**

- The content and activities considered in the syllabus were aligned to achieve the goal for the students from the sample group.
- The activities programmed in the syllabus allowed the students to achieve the academic objectives.

#### **4.3. Regarding Specific Objective N° 2, “Train first grade of secondary teachers on the use of the Language Portfolio considering its strengths and capacities”**

A survey (Appendix 7) was administered to the teachers in order to evaluate the training workshop (Appendix 9). The information was analyzed question by question:

#### **4.3.1.Regarding question one**

If the workshop helped her to know more about the use of the language portfolio, the teacher answered “yes” because before the workshop she did not understand exactly how it worked, what the parts of the portfolio were and she thought that using the portfolio would be very time consuming and lots of work to assess.

#### **4.3.2.Regarding question two**

The teacher mentioned two ways how the students can improve their writing skills using the portfolio. She wrote:

- a. If a student likes what he or she is doing, then she/he is going to do the best he can because motivation is a very important part in learning process.
- b. Since it is something new, all the students are going to be involved, their parents will also take part of their children’s learning process and since they are taking track of their writings they can be aware of their progress.

#### **4.3.3.Regarding question three:**

The teacher mentioned two advantages for an English teacher when his/her students use the portfolio in their learning process.

- a. Teachers can share all the information as evidence of the student’s work.
- b. They do not have to grade every text because the portfolio is a process and not a final product.

#### **4.3.4. Regarding question four**

The teacher mentioned some advantages and disadvantages in the use of the language portfolio.

##### **Advantages:**

- Helps the students to improve their writing skill
- The workshop helped teachers to understand better what a portfolio is.

##### **Disadvantages:**

- Some teachers might not like to change the notebook for the portfolio thinking that it is going to be more work.
- Some students' won't follow instructions and might lose their writing texts.

#### **4.3.5. Regarding question five**

The teacher answered that she thought that the student would enjoy creating a portfolio because students like to color, to paste, to draw, to reflect and she mentioned again that students like new things.

#### **4.3.6. Regarding question six**

The teacher replied that the language portfolio could be used in other grades at school as primary and secondary because after attending the workshop, many teachers understood better what a portfolio is.

#### **4.3.7.Regarding question seven**

She answered that yes, she thought that parents would like their children create their portfolio because in first grade of secondary, students still follow the teachers' instructions and they obey the teacher.

#### **4.3.8.Regarding question eight**

She said that at the beginning maybe it is going to be difficult for students to work on their portfolio until they get used to, until they understand what a portfolio really is but it depends in the teachers' ability to motivate their students and do the follow up.

#### **4.3.9.Regarding question nine**

She said that the objectives of the workshop were achieved and she felt very glad to attend the workshop. She was very grateful, too.

#### **4.3.10. Regarding question ten**

She said that she does not work with writing symbol codes for assessing written because she was not used to.

#### **4.3.11. Regarding question eleven**

She mentioned that after attending the workshop, she agreed that symbol codes when assessing portfolios (written works) were useful for teachers because using the rubrics and the symbol codes, then grading could be more objective and fair for the students.

- **To sum up**

Regarding the teachers' training:

- Teachers learned more about the language portfolio identifying its advantages.
- Through the use of the portfolio students take an active role during their learning process.
- The language portfolio helps students improve writing skills.
- The language portfolio can be standardized in every English level.
- Teachers had the wrong idea that using the portfolio will increase their duties because of assessing and time consuming.
- Motivate students to work their language portfolio is essential.
- Using rubrics and symbols codes allow the teacher a better assessment of the portfolio.

#### **4.4. Regarding Specific Objective N° 3, “Assess writing skills in students of first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio”**

As it was mentioned in the previous chapters, this research had been worked with two groups of students that we have named the sample group and a control group. The sample group was the group of students who were using the language portfolio and their writing activities were stored in a regularly basis. They were asked to write short texts reflecting on different topics and give the reasons of why they had chosen that specific writing, how and why the student got that score, if he or she liked it and give his or her

opinion in written form. The second group was the control group. This group worked writing as other years without any change in the syllabus, no reflective activities, no metacognition. It is important to mention that metacognition is a very important word when talking about portfolios because it involves monitoring understanding, being aware of and reflecting on strategies used for learning, and directing thinking. It also refers to the ability to recognize when learning goals have been met. Metacognition focuses on the process of learning more than the product. It encourages students to develop self-appraisal and self-management skills that enhance self-directed learning. Students learn how and when to request feedback.

Assessing writing skill in the students meanwhile they use the Language Portfolio had the following data:

4.4.1. During 2012 the control group had the following results in the bimestrial exams:

4.4.1.1. Control group: During the first three terms (in writing skill) 13.6% of students were located in good and excellent standards.

4.4.1.2. Sample group: During the first three terms (in writing skill) 47.8% of students were in good and excellent standards.

4.4.2. The average of the control group is 11.5 and the average of the sample group is 14.13. The highest grade in the control group is 17 and the lowest 08. The highest grade in the sample group is 18 and the lowest 10.

The mode in the control group is 12 and in the sample group is 13. As a result we can observe that writing is improving.

#### 4.4.3. Regarding the Mock exams:

4.4.3.1. In the control group: Mock exams 1 and 2, 13.6% of the students were in the good and excellent standard, in exam 3 it raised to 18.2%.

4.4.3.2. In the sample group: Mock exam 1, 13% of students were in the good and excellent standard, Mock exam 2 the results got much better, 39.1% of the students and in Mock exam 3 it was even better: 43.4% of the students were in the excellent and good standards.

- **To sum up**

- The control group in 2012 and the sample group in 2011 had similar results.
- The sample group in 2012 improved their writing skills in comparison to the control group in 2012 as it was evidenced in the given results.





## **Conclusions**

In this research, I investigated how the language portfolio as a strategy can improve ESL writing in students of first grade of secondary.

Using information compiled from teacher interviews, student questionnaires, classroom observations, portfolios, and by comparing and contrasting results of writing of the PET mock exams, I was able to confirm the general hypothesis presented in this research: The appropriate handling of the language portfolio can help to raise the level of writing skills in students of first grade of secondary.

Looking back at the description of the research setting, I could see a clear split between primary and secondary levels. There was no scope and sequence objective and language was not articulated between sixth grade of primary and first grade of secondary. This is why it would be convenient to articulate both levels. The initial problem was that the students got stuck when they had to write a text in English. This issue was verified by an instrument I created in order to gather information

about the problem mentioned by both: students and teachers. Students were not used to writing at the primary level. When students came to the first grade of secondary, they struggled with unknown words and they also lacked the skills to cope with writing strategies.

This research helped me to conceptualize the need for teachers to emphasize the fact that they need to encourage students to be autonomous in their learning process. Through the use of the language portfolio, students are trained to be more autonomous. The result of the present study has confirmed that writing can be developed through systematic instruction via the use of portfolios. EFL teachers should broaden their views of writing instruction and, furthermore, should provide enriched learning environment and practice opportunities for students to make personal and meaningful connections through using the language portfolio.

Throughout the development of each writing session, students that had never participated before started writing better texts, having higher scores in PET mock exams and many of these written works were stored and presented in their portfolios. Students gained confidence and felt more motivated because their portfolios were presented and shared with other students, teachers praised their work. These practices in turn helped students gain confidence, a non-threatening environment was created and students started to produce better writing.

An enlightening reflection came to my mind while carrying out my research about the importance of taking notes of relevant things when motivating students to store their writing assignments in their portfolios. In this way other teachers can improve their methodology of how to teach students to create their portfolios and personalize it according to the students' needs and characteristics. When I started my research, I had only one example of a language portfolio. This was because this was the first time I had required students to use it. But as time went by, and after finishing the year, I have reconsidered my only model because after seeing all the different models and styles presented by the students, I realized the great degree of creativity that students have and that there is not a unique formula for creating a portfolio.

To conclude: the objectives of this research were accomplished and the hypothesis verified:

## **1. In conclusion**

### **1.1. Regarding the problem**

#### **1.1.1. Regarding the diagnostic test 2011**

The students came to the secondary level with a low command of English: below average. They obtained an average of 10 and 56.5% of the students failed the entrance exam.

#### **1.1.2. Regarding the student's sample evaluations 2011**

The sample group achieved an acceptable standard at the end of the third term in 2011. They had as grade 11 and 32.3% of the students failed.

#### **1.1.3. Regarding the PET MOCK 2011**

The average standard that reached the sample group in the third mock exam in 2011 was located in an acceptable level. The average was 11.7. In the third exam, 33.9% of students failed versus 50.0% from the first exam.

#### **1.1.4. Questionnaires to teachers from first grade of secondary**

- The most remarkable needs were: poor vocabulary and grammar structures that the students have when they finish primary level and those students do not know how to communicate and support ideas, organize them in written texts.

- The main reasons of the lack of articulation between primary and secondary level are the different methodology and requirements when teaching English, no coordination hours, no scope and sequence charts.
- Teachers think that assessing and evaluation written work is demanding and time consuming, students do not read all the observations teachers write when correcting their work.
- Writing is assessed according to final product and not the process.
- Students do not have writing strategies.
- The English input that students are exposed is not enough.
- Not all teachers know about the language portfolio.
- Portfolios can be standardized in all the levels and teachers should be trained on its use.
- Methodology and techniques to teach writing should be standardized among the teachers.
- Students should improve their English level to have a better performance in international exams.

#### 1.1.5. Regarding the first grade students questionnaires

- 80.6% of the students from first grade of secondary do not like to write in English.
- 82.7% of the students from first grade of secondary consider that writing in secondary is very difficult.

- 100% of the students from first grade of secondary were not trained in any international exams during their primary studies.
- 88.7% of the students from first grade of secondary express that writing exercises help them improve English.
- 96.8% of the students from first grade of secondary think that writing texts regularly help them become better in writing.
- 91.9% of the students from first grade of secondary stated that they do not use English in class in order to communicate with each other.
- Only 19.3% of the students from first grade of secondary consider that storing their writing exercises and exams is important for their learning process.
- 64.5% of the students from first grade of secondary think that the teachers' feedback is good.
- 100% of the students from first grade of secondary think that secondary grading is harder and they scores are lower than in primary.

## **1.2. Regarding the second moment: proposal validity - 2012**

### **1.2.1. Regarding the student's Control Group**

- 31.8% of students failed during the third term.
- At the end of the third term, the average achieved was 11.5.

- The level achieved by the end of the third term was acceptable.
- The average that the sample group achieved in the third exam in 2012 was acceptable. They got 11.5. In the third exam 27.3% of the students failed versus 54.5% of students from the first exam.

#### 1.2.2. Regarding the student's Sample Group

- 4.3% of students failed by the end of the third term.
- The average is 14.3 by the end of the third term.
- By the end of the third term the standard is good.
- The average that the sample group achieved in the third mock exam in 2012 was acceptable. They achieved 13.4. In the third exam 4.3% of the students failed versus 17.4 of students in the first exam.

#### **1.3. Regarding Specific Objective N° 1, "Include the use of the Language Portfolio in the syllabus of one group of students of first grade of secondary"**

- The content and activities considered in the syllabus were aligned to achieve the goal for the students from the sample group.
- The activities programmed in the syllabus allowed the students to achieve the academic objectives.

**1.4. Regarding Specific Objective N° 2, “Train first grade of secondary teachers on the use of the Language Portfolio considering its strengths and capacities”**

- The training workshop gave the teachers a better knowledge regarding the language portfolio. It guided the teachers on how to teach students to organize their work, keep records, access their own information, etc.
- Implementing the language portfolio develop the learners' autonomy; give them more responsibility and freedom in their learning process.
- The language portfolio can improve writing skills in the students because it includes projects or other examples of their written work so that they can keep as evidence of what they are learning through the medium of the English language. The main emphasis is on the process of learning.
- The language portfolio could be used in other levels.
- Motivation is important; it is the students' property. It is a tool to accompany the students' language learning.
- Rubrics and symbols codes are instruments for evaluation. Evaluation is an essential part of the learning process, it helps the learners become aware of their progress in the target language, how much they have achieved and what areas need further practice. In the other hand, evaluation through rubrics and symbols codes allows teachers to grade with objectivity.

**1.5. Regarding Specific Objective N° 3, “Assess the writing skill in students of first grade of secondary using the Language Portfolio”**

- Regarding both groups, the control group in 2012 and the sample group in 2011 had similar results.

- The sample group in 2012 improved their writing skills better than the students from the control group.

## **2. Final conclusion**

- 2.1. The use of the language portfolio improved writing skills in students from first grade of secondary.
- 2.2. Therefore, the results obtained from this research imply that there was steady, continuous improvement of writing skills. In all, data and the results from the present study support a notion that implementing the language portfolio facilitated the development of second language writing skills and more students could register and pass the PET exam.
- 2.3. The use of the language portfolio as a strategy to improve writing in ESL in students of first grade of secondary had positive answer.
- 2.4. The students' motivation and a good guidance from the teacher lead to success in improving their writing skill.



## **Recommendations**

As a result of the research and its conclusions the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The use of the language portfolio is recommended (Appendix 10) in order to improve writing skills in students from first grade of secondary. In the absence of a well-established or widely recognized model of writing, teachers tend to have very varying ideas about the role of writing in the classroom, what writing involves, and the possible roles of teachers and students in developing writing activities, therefore the use of the writing portfolio will help students and teachers during the learning process.
2. Future studies are needed to continue exploring how writing development is facilitated and the best possible pedagogical considerations that help lead to such development. Another direction for future research can do with the extent to which the teacher and her students' perceptions differ or converge concerning the use of the

language portfolio. Although this was not one of the main focuses of my study, this is a critical question, one worth examining in further research. For example, it would be relevant to explore the impact of the agreement and disagreement of teachers' perceptions regarding the use of the language portfolio in students learning.

3. Additionally, attention should be given to investigate the extent to which this innovative teaching methodology contributes to the development of other skills in language learning.

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## **Appendices**

1. Institution general description and group profile description.
2. The Evaluation Rubric.
3. Sample to identify the problem: Scores from the first three terms during 2011 from the students from first grade of secondary
4. Questionnaires.
5. Pet mock tests.
6. Meta-cognition Rubric
7. Survey.