IMPROVING ORGANIZATION OF ESSAY WRITING IN A MASTER COURSE IN TEFL

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Improving Organization of Essay Writing in a Master course in TEFL

Tesis para optar el Grado de Magister en Educación con Mención en Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

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APPROVAL

The thesis entitled "Improving organization of Essay writing in a Master course in TEFL at Universidad de Piura Language Centre" presented by Maria Luisa Mu Hoyos, in accordance with the requirements of being awarded the Degree of Master in Education with mention in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, was approved by the thesis director Dr. Majid Safadaran, and defended on ……………… before a jury with the following members

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My deepest gratitude goes to all the people who have helped me become who I am: my family, friends, colleagues and students. All of you, in many different ways allowed me to fulfill this goal.

SUMMARY

Title: Improving Organization of Essay Writing in a Master Course in TEFL

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Degree: Thesis to obtain the degree of Master in Education with mention in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

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Key Words: Essay Writing, Peer editing, Rubrics for Writing

Description: Thesis based on the results of research conducted between 2011-2016 on the effects of introducing guidelines for Essay writing to improve the effectiveness of the students´ text production.

Content: The research has three sections: Primary Action Research where information is collected on the effect of the guidelines for Academic Writing on the MTEFL students´production. Secondary Research where the guidelines are presented before students produce texts. Exploratory research on institutions that offer MTEFL courses to verify if they use this kind of guidelines.

Methodology: Action research and Exploratory research Conclusions: The introduction of guidelines to organize students´ ideas according to the type of academic texts improve their performance.

 Sources: Surveys, Kit with guidelines and rubrics and Portfolios with students´ samples.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is a very important part of any academic course development. Students will write assignments of varied types that may range from one paragraph to several pages long.
However, most students find writing difficult and even some students whose first language is not English report that their difficulties continue even years after their confidence in other academic skills such as speaking, listening, and reading has grown (Zhang, 2010).

Most writing specialists agree that writing difficulties are due to the 'specialized nature of academic discourse' (Schmitt, 2005, p.65) and to the complexity of the writing activity itself. The task is even harder when students have to choose vocabulary, create sentences, link paragraphs and develop evidence, all of which are more difficult in a foreign language.

Academic writing in a foreign language, on the other hand, has been considered for a long time as a way of measuring students´ proficiency in this language and writing academic pieces has helped scholars measure the articulation of thoughts and supported opinions of students (Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, 2011). Thus, academic writing is frequently seen as a means of promoting and demonstrating understanding of knowledge on the part of students and communicating it to a specific audience.

Academic writing in English may also be different not only from academic writing in our own language but even from other types of

writing in English. For instance, the kind of writing that students may develop when replying to a post in a blog or writing an e-mail.

All of this gave shape to this Exploratory Research which started with Action research that originated as the observation of my own students reading for a Master degree in TEFL and their struggles to deal with the academic obligations of their subjects -an issue of immediate practical concern. The first part of this research took place between 2011 and 2012 with the first group of the Blended learning Course for obtaining the Master degree.

An Action Research approach was conducted because improving the academic writing abilities- specifically the organization of essays- of students of a Master degree in TEFL was urgently needed. In other words, the research Hypothesis was that by introducing the basics of academic writing with emphasis on writing essays, the written performance of students was going to improve. The variables of this part of this research were improvement in the students´ written expression and a kit with guidelines for essay writing.

This way, students could relate the knowledge they had acquired along the different modules they had been learning with their current teaching practices to report it in an effective way.

Tribble (2000) points out that "everybody learns to speak at least one language fluently, but many are unable to write with confidence". The explanation for this may be that writing unlike speaking requires some form of instruction, it is not a skill that is readily picked up by exposure and its social role is different.

The above paragraph led to the development of this project where the problem statement considers that students who take an academic course encounter serious difficulties when it comes to writing papers that display academic rigor particularly regarding the organization of the introductory paragraph and the development of the thesis statement. These issues were constantly monitored along the project.

The second stage of the research took place between 2013 and 2014 when another similar group started the MTEFL blending course and the last part has been researched between 2015 and 2016 with the aim of

finding out if some changes could be made related to the need for developing Academic Writing skills prior to the development of an academic course - where writing texts is part of the course either as a means or as an end – in courses leading to obtaining a University degree in Peru.

Summing up, the main objective of this research was to show the importance to expose students who are going to undertake this kind of academic course, to some instruction sessions on the guidelines and foundations of academic writing. This way, their contribution could be assessed in terms of content and not be judged by the lack of organization of the ideas.

Thus, Chapter 1 shows how the problem was observed and the plan that was developed to collect information on how to help the students who presented difficulties when writing academic papers.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework used to organize the information that would lead the first part of this research and what advances have been made in the area since the time the research started to our current time.

Chapter 3 develops the stages of the research and shows the results obtained then and how the issue of lack of academic writing training is dealt with.

Chapter 4 finally shows the results obtained in the previous stages and how they connect with the current situation of similar institutions that offer courses to obtain Master degrees in TEFL.

Even if nowadays there are no blended courses offered by the Institutions that held this type of course, the information obtained here could be of great importance to any institution that requests academic papers written in English in Peru.

CHAPTER 1
INVESTIGATION OUTLINE

1.1 Formulation of the problem

When learning a foreign language, most people focus on developing the ability to speak well: fluently and appropriately since this is an ability we hope to achieve in our first language without problems.

However, regarding writing, the ability to write appropriately and effectively is not always easy even in our mother tongue. There are several reasons to explain this being one of them probably the specific characteristics of writing itself and the social role it plays depending on the type of texts we need to write, e.g. letters, shopping lists, messages or novels, poems and reports.

Writing in a foreign language remains a challenging and complex task, one cannot assume that the way things are done in the language of one culture will correspond exactly with the way things are done by expert writers in another. This was expressed by the same students when interviewed along the research.

The things EFL students at college or university need to write in a foreign language are more probably essays, reports or even theses. In this case, the role of written English in the lives of these students is very different from the one in the lives of people who use English as their mother tongue.

Moreover, the skills students need to develop are also different since they will use the language to demonstrate how they can manipulate certain knowledge to express opinions, expand ideas, formulate hypotheses, etc.

However, it is important to mention that learning to write is not just a mere developing of a set of mechanical skills (such as handling punctuation, spelling, etc.); it also implies learning a set of cognitive and social relations made evidence when approaching writing as a process. (Tribble, 2000)

For any university student and even more for the teachers doing their master course in TEFL, developing writing skills in academic settings implies gaining a mastery of the concepts and contents of the different content modules as well as developing the ability to express themselves effectively and appropriately.

Students need to know about the organization of texts associated with the genres they have to write to be able to gain control over different modes of argumentation. This will lead them into developing the ability to express themselves in the most effective and appropriate style for the context in which they are writing.

Claire Furneaux from the Centre for Applied Language Studies of the University of Reading, England in her work The Challenges of Teaching Academic Writing (Furneaux, 1995) suggested that the apparent lack of writing style of adult students is that many people now start their university course when they have been working for quite a while during which period they have written very little or none. This will make it hard to pick up on the style of writing that is needed in higher education.

The characteristics of the sample population of this research fit very well in this description since they were all teachers with certain years of experience who had been teaching at different levels and in different institutions for several years before they took up the MTEFL course.

From the information collected with the surveys and interviews, it is evident that the majority of teachers doing the MTEFL entered this

course relying on writing strategies that served them well in other academic situations in Spanish but that will not necessarily serve them for the course.

This scenario led to enunciate the problem: **How can we help this particular type of students write academic papers-mainly essays- in a more effective way?**

As the Primary Research of this exploratory thesis, information was collected to start this research for the MTEFL students offered by Universidad de Piura / FUNIBER and find answers to this question.

In order to do this, a kit for academic writing that included guidelines and exercises to familiarize students with the process of writing essays and the effect in students´ performance was considered.

The Secondary Research of this thesis aimed at gathering information on how much attention was paid to supporting Master degree students doing their course in English by providing them with some sort of guidelines on how academic texts are organized.

1.2   Hypothesis

Exploratory research as defined by Stubbins is "an examination into a subject in an attempt to gain further insight." (Stubbins, 2011). The exploratory nature of this research does not provide hypothesis that need to be confirmed but the Action Research stage allows for the formulation of an Action hypothesis. The characteristic of this kind of hypothesis is that it should be related to the problem and testable in classroom situations. Besides, it should be directly stated in terms of the expected outcome and what is more, it should be testable within a considerably short time. With all this in mind, the following Action Hypothesis is proposed:

Providing instruction about the writing process and the parts of the essay will end up in better organization and display of ideas for students of the MTEFL blended learning course.

1.3   Delimitation of the objectives

1.3.1   General Objective

To elaborate a kit of supplementary material to present information about academic writing, particularly essay writing, and to verify, along the development of the master course for TEFL students, if the exposure to this material improves the students´ ability to write essays.

1.3.2   Specific objectives

- To establish students´ previous experience regarding basic writing and academic writing skills.
- To measure the effect that language proficiency has in the development of academic writing skills
- To encourage the use of self-editing and peer-editing as part of the writing process.

1.4   Justification of the Investigation

The purpose of this research is mainly to draw attention to the fact that many times post-graduate students get into academic courses without having a sound knowledge of how to write academic papers.

In higher education, it is important to write effectively since in this way you show how much knowledge you have of your subject matters (The Institute of Writing and Rhetoric, 2011). Failing at doing this may compromise the whole performance of the student since the quality of the document represents the quality of the knowledge acquired by the student in the specific topic.

Action Research was chosen because of the need to address an issue of immediate practical concern. The first part of the research aimed at identifying areas where students typically had problems with their writing – developing their arguments, writing with the appropriate tone, style and level of formality, editing their work for concision and clarity, among others – and then at developing activities that would help students identify if and where these problems were in their own work, and how they might address them.

Students were given the chance to identify their major problems when writing their assignments and essays. They realized that one of them was that of planning the essays since many times they felt they did not completely understand the information from the binder stating that there was some vocabulary that was completely unknown or that the style of the discourse was too intricate and confusing.

Because of all the above, in this research attention was drawn to the first and nearly last stages of the writing process. The writing process typically involves four stages: Planning what we are going to write, Drafting, Reviewing and Editing what we have written to finally produce a final (and satisfactory) version. Of course this is not a linear process but this is something that not all students are aware of, not even mine who are teachers of English. Therefore, some encouragement was needed to plan, draft and edit even though this may be time-consuming and that is why we met some class resistance at the beginning.

Another problem was that of editing. Participants were not used to self-editing their work – because they did not have any checklist to refer to, they said. Peer editing was also something new for them since in their previous academic studies-whether in English or in Spanish- they had not had to go over somebody else´s work and assess the document organization or content.

All these findings led to the conclusion that for these students to succeed in their MTEFL course, they needed to improve the way they wrote their essays and assignments so they could show that they really knew the topics of their Content modules and could express their ideas in a clear and well-informed academic paper.

Additionally, the findings from this Primary Research would help to explore the possibility of supporting students who do a degree course in English in any other Peruvian institution (Secondary Research).

Specific research on the academic writing ability of language teachers has not been found but information about students who take entry-level English examinations or even International Certificate examinations can be obtained so as to have a sketchy indication of their writing ability. Unfortunately most of the time this information is used as

a source of assessment or placement but no additional help is usually offered.

Certainly, identification of the problems students have, might be planned at programme level but it is likely to be done through course-level actions such as diagnostic assignments, discussions of writing styles and structure, or explicit reference to features in academic texts which students are expected to reproduce. In this case, with the aim of developing a specific course or module on writing although most of the times this remedial work is offered as part of the preparation course of the international exam.

1.5   Limitations of the Action research stage

It has been mentioned in the literature that writing is a process, this means that it takes time and a good deal of practice to see how the application of the methodology and the supplementary material helps students improve.

Regrettably, due to the fact that the MTEFL course did not allocate time to the development of writing skills and that the organization of the courses only allowed tutors to see the students twice a month, it was rather difficult to devote the necessary amount of time at the appropriate pace and sequence for the practice of these skills.

Time had to be "smuggled" off the development of the modules under my responsibility to be able to demonstrate some of the activities that needed to be done but in some cases when the volume of the content was too much, no writing session could take place during class time and activities had to be left for homework.

Because of the characteristics of the course and the availability of tutors, sometimes it was possible to have the students two or more consecutive months although it was more likely to teach a module once every two months. Therefore, under these circumstances, it was difficult to provide enough continuity in the development of the academic writing material. There was no time to devote to either teaching and practicing every stage of the process or providing students with evaluation and feedback of their progress.

In fact, the practical stage of this research started in February 2011 and ended in February 2012 but there were only four or five instances to see students´ response to the input provided. In a year, there was portfolio evidence of only five essays- the first one was regarded as an Entry sample- and not all students provided all the five essays. All this showed that the intervention we planned had to go beyond providing supplementary materials and that there were other factors to be taken into consideration.

As Jeremy Harmer points out, "one of the disadvantages of getting students to concentrate on the process of writing is that it takes time: time to brainstorm ideas, to draft a piece of writing, review it and edit it for further changing the focus, generating more ideas, re-drafting, re-editing and so on" (Harmer, 2007)

Since writing is an individual process, a lot of responsibility of the progress lies on each student: how much they use the supplementary material and revise it before they write their own essays. Since all essays had been assigned for homework, there was a high probability that students wrote their essays without revising the information on how to organize their ideas in effective paragraphs according to the information provided, as some of them confessed along the research.

Bearing in mind all these factors, the Primary research only assessed improvement in outlining, writing introductory paragraphs with appropriate thesis statements and the use of cohesive devices that provide some unity and organization. It was not possible to get any further than that.

Another important issue to mention is that in spite of the fact there were eleven students originally registered in the first MTEFL course, the number of participants in each module and even in each session fluctuated and many a times, they were not the same participants. Furthermore, since the essay writing task was assigned for homework, not all of the participants handed in or sent these papers; as a consequence, the pieces of evidence of every essay topic per student is not even.

Additionally, there was no way to know that another blended MTEFL group would be formed so there was no way of doing a quasi-

experimental research with control and experimental group to test the writing kit. This is why Action Research turned into exploratory research and the information collected at this stage was regarded as Primary Research

In the case of the second group, for the second part of the research (Secondary research of the exploratory investigation), the situation was very similar and still no time was allocated to familiarizing with academic writing skills but we managed to use the kit prepared in the first part in the first few sessions as part of an introductory workshop. However, the same limitations regarding students´ attendance and compliance at handing in homework occurred.

Finally, It must be mentioned that one important limitation to carry out this project was the fact that it was impossible to know when students could be met again at the end of each module so even if the production of the essays was mandatory, the fact that the face-to-face sessions only accounted for 30% of the final grade made, in some occasions, students oblivious to attending classes and/or producing the required paper.

1.6   Antecedents of the investigation

There is ample research work on the importance of developing writing skills for English as a Foreign Language students. Writing has been developed as part of the syllabus in the teaching of English whether as a "backup" for consolidating grammatical structures or as the core of a development skills syllabus (Harmer, 2007).

Writing, as this author claims can be used to show what students have learned in terms of content – as it was already mentioned in the introduction- hence, writing is, in this case, a tool to learn better: "writing-for-learning". However, according to the same author, there is "writing for writing" whose purpose is not to consolidate language learning but to help students to become better writers. In this case, it is important to make sure that we are aware of what our students writing aims are for their academic writing. Harmer takes the view that "… effective writing usually has a purpose in mind and students should

construct their writing with a view to achieving that purpose." (Harmer, 2007)

Browsing the internet there are many pieces of advice which share the same information regarding what academic writing is and how to improve it. However, attention should be drawn to the fact that there was no research on how this applies to experienced – to different extents-practicing teachers; let alone, those who are doing a master degree in TEFL and have been required to write essays and assignments with some specific academic requirements.

Nevertheless, there are some pieces of evidence of previous work that even if are not specific for teachers doing a master course, focus on improving academic writing skills for anyone undertaking a university degree and it is this information what will provide a theoretical framework to this study.

Academic writing is defined as a particular style of writing used by students, teachers and scholars when they explore particular academic questions in essays, dissertations, PhD theses or any other academic papers.

1.- In the research paper **What is an Academic Paper?** by Dartmouth Institute for Writing and Rhetoric conducted in 2005, high school students were interviewed in preparation for writing academic skills and the results of the research suggested three main concepts that students needed to understand before writing academic papers:

1. *Academic writing is writing done by scholars for other scholars.* This implies reading and thinking critically when reviewing literature and writing in a specific way trying to respect the conventions and requirements of other scholars.

2. *Academic writing is devoted to topics and questions that are of interest to the academic community.* According to the Institute of Writing and Rhetoric "When you write an academic paper, you must first try to find a topic or a question that is relevant and appropriate*".* Perhaps a useful tip will be to remember that students´ production will be read by other students and scholars so that they find it useful and that this work helps them perceive the topic from a different angle.

3. *Academic writing should present the reader with an informed argument.* Informed arguments make a difference from what is known about a topic and what you think about it, in that order. According to this same author, to construct an informed argument, different degrees of knowledge are required to move from something very focused into something very general, capable of being explained with specific vocabulary.

These ideas were taken into account when preparing the presentation of the material to the TEFL students and when elaborating the material. Since "we write to be read", once information about what is known of a subject matter has been explained, the next step is to express the personal opinion about the topic in a critical way.

This is not an easy task since, due to our traditional educational system; we are not used to reading or writing critically. In most cases, our students are either too casual when they write or resort to "cut and paste" information when they want to "sound" academic.

2.- Another important contribution of Dartmouth Institute for Writing and Rhetoric was **the Institute for Writing and Rhetoric Assessment Project**. This project was conducted in 2009, once the results of the previous investigation led to the creation of writing courses for First year students.

The aim was to close examine first-year student writing by collecting first and final papers from students in every first-year class for a period of three years. These papers were coded to address specific questions that the faculty had proposed to define their writing courses´ learning outcomes.

Some of these questions were: Does the paper have a guiding claim? What kind of evidence does it offer? What are the strategies for introductions and conclusions? Does the paragraph have a controlling claim? What kinds of evidence does the writer use? What sort of transitions?

These questions were born in mind when preparing the material and rubrics to use in the Academic writing kit that was used in the

Primary research of this thesis so the contribution of this research is of paramount importance.

3.- An important article that helped understand the lack of academic skills that students of the Master in TEFL course showed was **Teaching Academic Writing** by Kendal Peet, written in 2008. Here he mentioned that coming across students that lacked the necessary academic writing skills-considered to be a prerequisite for higher education-does not constitute an unusual event.

In some cases, students have acquired the necessary native language required for their higher education tasks and are grammatically fluent- but there is no evidence of the necessary academic skills. For this reason, teachers who have to teach writing in a second language find this task hard to accomplish because there is no first language framework where to anchor the information about writing academically.

Not only this, but also in terms of second language level, the situation is yet more critical since due to the fact that the students are practicing teachers doing a degree, the assumption is that they have a good language level and may be able to display acceptable writing behavior without problems.

The first term to be analyzed then is what should be considered as acceptable writing behavior and if that would be a good starting point for moving into academic writing. After that we need to look into the background and experience these students have about writing in general since it is of common knowledge that the more you write the better you get at writing.

It is believed that if students have an acceptable writing behavior, it would be easier for them to develop academic writing skills. Therefore, students (or teachers in this case) who have prepared for and passed an international exam may have some ground basis on which to build the framework for formal writing.

What is considered acceptable writing behavior, then, depends on the marking rubrics used to assess academic writing at different levels of development. If considering the IELTS, a university entrance exam, organized content is the most important section in the marking rubric.

Band 9 of the IELTS key, for instance, reads: "The writing displays a completely logical organizational structure which enables the message to be followed effortlessly. Relevant arguments are presented in an interesting way, with main ideas prominently and clearly stated, with effective supporting material".

These two terms: relevant arguments and supportive material are crucial because they provide the framework that will allow us to compare the production of the students along the Master course with what tutors and teachers expect.

4.- Regarding the importance of academic writing input prior to the beginning of a university course in English, I found on **Academic Writing by Skills and Students Development** from Warwick University, UK (2017), information on courses that they offer both to undergraduate and Master course students so as to improve their academic writing skills. Here they offer several ways to help students. One of them is through their online academic writing resource for all students that via Moodle provides input on the writing process.

Several pieces of advice are also offered: Assigning writing mentors, which is "a peer support scheme specifically focused for undergraduates and taught Masters students who wish to develop and improve their written assignment skills". Another is online writing advice, Academic skills advice, a one-to-one appointment for undergraduate or Master students to help with study skills and Research academic coaching which is 40 minute appointments with advice and support on the following issues:

- Stages and requirements of writing
- Organization and structure of assignments and essays
- Paragraph construction
- Language and academic style
- Ethics in writing and research, referencing
- Reporting (paraphrase/ summary)

These issues are also developed in what they call Academic Writing Day, six hours in which lectures and seminars are presented on the topics mentioned above.

Knowing the importance that these academic institutions give to writing courses, justified the development of an initial course, workshop or session prior to the development of any course aiming at writing academic texts to show the knowledge acquired along.

5.- One research question that arose along was about establishing any difference between writing performance and second language proficiency in . To this regard, there is research mentioned in **Writing Expertise and Second-Language Proficiency** by Alistair Cumming done in 1989. He did this research in 23 adults whose mother tongue was not English trying to find the relationship between second-language writing performance and second-language proficiency and found out that the second was a factor that would enhance the overall quality of writing produced with regard to discourse organization and content mostly but that the composing process was not affected. This means that the elaboration and organization of ideas was dependent more on other factors rather than language proficiency.

This particular research supported the findings of the Primary research stage of this investigation where similar results were found by the candidates of the MTEFL course who replied to the initial survey.

All these antecedents proved to be really useful when choosing the contents of the Essay Writing Kit and in confirming the proposal of the need of a course or workshop on developing academic writing skills prior to the development of courses where essays and assignments are required.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Background and Rationale

When it comes to developing a style or even to approaching writing, it is important to draw attention to writing as a process. This is particularly important in academic writing where the final product is the evidence readers use to judge the writer regarding social status, knowledge, commitment to the task, etc.

For the Primary Action Research the revised literature was divided in the issues that constitute the rationale to develop the Action Research. For the Secondary Research of this exploratory thesis, the information provided by authors on the need of Academic Writing input for undergraduate and Master students in EFL courses was synthesized.

2.1.1   Written texts

Christopher Tribble (2000) depicts the organization of written texts from three standpoints: Layout, Text Organization according to what the purpose of the text is and the relationships between clauses and clause complexes within written texts.

This is a very interesting way of explaining how writing is different and it is indeed really important for EFL learners since it helps to understand where exactly are the mistakes we make when writing texts.

It is probably the third aspect of text organization mentioned by this author, which is the most difficult to master and that is the one on how language is used to make connections within written texts. When the sentences are linked together in a sequence, we have a cohesive text. Thus, cohesion is achieved through the use of reference words, lexical repetitions, pronouns and other markers. However, cohesion is not enough if there is not something that we need to communicate, if it does not have a purpose. Only then, when we-as readers- make sense of the text we can say that the text has coherence.

One way to test the coherence of a written text- according to this author- is to treat it as if it were in fact one half of a dialogue. The idea here is that each sentence of a text is a remark made by the writer which anticipates the reaction from the reader. The imagined reaction is then responded by the writer´s next sentence.

In this research both researcher and students are aware of the importance of achieving cohesion and coherence in a text but decided to focus the research on the aspect that was the greatest source of problems for them: Text organization.

2.1.2   Academic writing

Academic Writing has different definitions since it may mean different things for different scholars, one simple and straightforward definition is "the process of breaking down ideas and using deductive reasoning, formal voice and third person point-of-view."(Vineski, 2017)

Hogue & Oshima state that Academic writing has different characteristics in different languages since as being of formal nature; it depends on the grammar, vocabulary and even organization of ideas of each language (Hogue & Oshima, 2016). This is why they have devoted to writing a series of books that guide students along the stages of the writing process from writing sentences to longer texts and also support them when writing different kind of academic papers

Peet´s views (2008) are that not only native, but second language learners as well, face problems in four general areas regarding academic writing. These areas are: attitude and planning- as they were

mentioned before, writing- both at the paragraph and essay level- and evaluating.

Scrivener (Scrivener, 2005) also agrees that the absence of planning or an inadequate level of planning which includes generating ideas and selecting and ordering them is one of the most common problems when teachers and students are asked about why writing is difficult to master, particularly at college or university.

Not only planning but self-evaluation as well are stages of the writing process that are very much neglected. Students are accustomed to finishing their work the same day they have to meet deadlines and do not revise or proof read their papers for content and format, respectively.

On the other hand, there are also cases where students do not have the necessary tools to enable them to evaluate their production and analyze their strengths and weaknesses. One way of helping students to develop a feeling for the language was to encourage them to rewrite their drafts and to be guided in the writing process by positive feedback and responses. (Scrivener, 2005)

Characteristics of Academic Writing: From what has been stated above, the characteristics of Academic Writing can be summarized as being
- Planned and focused: Answering the task question and demonstrating understanding of the subject.
- Structured: Coherently written, with ideas ordered in a logical manner.
- Evidenced: Offering opinions and arguments supported by evidence and accurately referenced.
- Formal: Using appropriate language and tenses to ensure accuracy in meaning and being balanced and objective.

In order to comply with these characteristics as proposed by Dickinson College Writing Programme (2011), some needed skills must be developed along the writing activity. These will be discussed in the next section.

2.1.3   Academic writing skills

It is apparent from the ideas presented in the above paragraphs that some careful work needs to be done on basic writing skills that

involve writing planning, paragraph writing, structuring the writing together without losing track of correct grammatical aspects   and the use of appropriate connectors depending on the kind of texts, quoting and referencing. (Zemach & Rumiseck 2005)

Analytical writing is also another important factor that helps improve academic writing since it demands connecting reading with writing and it goes along Bloom´s taxonomy of levels of thought. Analytical writing implies a process connected to analytical reading: summarizing what the text is saying, then evaluating the text to clearly articulate and support students´ personal response (Knott 2011).

Developing academic writing skills

Before any attempt to write, teachers should have established the objectives of the writing sessions. Short D. and Echevarria J., (2005) claim that the first step in the process of improving academic writing is to know the language demands of the content courses so students would know what aspects of English they need to know and apply to succeed in class as well as learn what academic requirements they need to meet. Therefore, even if students may be aware of the demand for writing, they need to know what specific texts they should write: sentences, paragraphs, opinion, comparison /contrast or problem/solution essays.

Short D., and Echevarria J.(2005), pointed out that : "by reflecting on the language demands of their courses, teachers can better support their students in learning the features of academic English and, on the side of the students, they have clearer outcomes to aim at".

These authors are also of the opinion that to improve academic writing it is important that teachers encourage students to join in academic talk during class including some discussion routines such as paraphrasing one another to become active listeners.

The additional benefit of this practice will be that all four skills can be practiced with this activity so this pre-writing activity is crucial for developing the writing process but also other language skills.(Scrivener, 2005)

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Harmer believes that teachers have a number of crucial tasks to perform before, during and after the writing process among which, one is to demonstrate the writing conventions of specific types of writing (Harmer, 2005).

Another piece of work that helped support this research and provided ideas to improve the teaching of academic writing was the work of Kendall Peet (2008) who in his article: *Teaching Academic Writing* mentions "the increasingly voiced complaints of university professors about students who lack the necessary academic writing skills…"proving that the perception of the lack of skills experienced by the tutors of the MTEFL course and the students themselves- as it is recorded in later sections- is not something that has not been experienced before but that, on the contrary, is a frequent problem.

An important contribution of Peet´s work is that on identifying some of the common problems EFL students face when attempting to produce acceptable content in academic writing- being some of the most important Attitude and Planning.

Regarding Attitude, in this author´s view, students feel that what they write is worthless because what they write is a flow of their own ideas- in the discussion section we will see that this is not exactly what the MTEFL students experience but quite the opposite.

The second problem mentioned by this researcher, planning, is a recurrent problem all teachers come across since, judging from the students production, what seems to occur when students are assigned with a writing task is that they do not know how to start and decide to start writing off the top of their heads in a very improvised fashion without any prior outline.

Peet´s work not only contributed to the literature review of this research but also by providing a technique that was used in some of the last writing sessions that consisted of using colour codes in the teaching of academic writing, mainly writing essays, so students could easily identify each part of the essay and paragraph when analyzing an academic text.

Shih,M.(1986) presented arguments to adopt content-based instruction to meet ESL composition goals as a way to exploit the instances that the content provided for thinking, researching and writing skills.

From the five approaches she suggested for structuring content-based instruction with writing instruction, it is apparent that the last two are the ones that best fit the actual needs of the MTEFL students: *composition tutorials as adjuncts to designated university courses and individualized help with course-related writing at times of need.*[1]

Shih´s research demonstrates that the tools that the MTEFL students need to use to show that they have made links between what they have read and discussed about the topics of the modules are the essays and the assignments. (Shih, M. 1986)

All of this information led to the objective of finding out what reasons students give to explain the problems they have when writing academic papers and what strategies can be used to improve may help any other student who initiates similar academic ventures develop academic writing skills that will allow them show their knowledge of the courses in a more effective way.

Schmidt (2005) supported this decision when stating that

> …many students will need teacher-support and guidance to go beyond adopting the superficial style markers of academic writing. The goal is to help students develop technical writing skills, to strengthen their language capabilities, and to develop their sense of self as academic writers. It is also to deter the few who might adopt strategies which threaten learning such as choosing courses to avoid coursework assessment, paying someone to write for them or plagiarism.

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[1] May Shih´s five approaches
- Topic-centred "modules" or "minicourses"
- Content-based academic writing courses (reading and writing intensive)
- Content-centered English-for-special-purposes courses
- Composition or multiskill courses/tutorials as adjuncts to designated university courses
- Individualized help with course-related writing at times of need.

2.1.4   The writing Process

Judging from the literature and my almost thirty years of experience teaching English skills, there is no doubt that writing is a process of creating ideas, organizing them, writing the first draft and polishing it by editing and making revisions (Harmer, 2005).

For the first part of the process, creating ideas, there are several techniques such as brainstorming or clustering, the problem lies on the second stage: organizing the ideas into an outline- which students are more likely to skip and which affects the quality of the writing- since students tackle the writing task without a clear idea of how to organize all the volume of ideas they generated in the first stage.

The last stage is also very frequently ignored: there are many students who confess that they do not revise their rough draft; what they sometimes do during this stage is just try to correct grammar, spelling or punctuation which is not revising but proofreading- a stage that should occur after revising ideas (content) and organization.

2.1.5   Writing in Academic and Study settings

Students who wish to write in new academic settings have to gain a mastery of the contents of their subject area as well as developing the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in the foreign language (Tribble, 2000).

Many language teachers in higher education find themselves having to teach aspects of the content of a specialist subject at the same time as teaching foreign language skills. This is one of the problems that teaching in CLIL environments pose so one of the ways round the problem is to develop close cooperation between language teachers and subject specialist in the development of writing programmes.

The context of academic writing may be taught using the intellectual approach mentioned by several authors which relates language system knowledge to context knowledge. Once learners can control the exponents at sentence level, they move on to paragraph-length and then full text-length exercises.

Another approach is the discourse community that can be characterized by common goals, participatory mechanisms, information exchange, community specific genres, a highly specialized terminology and a high general level of expertise-as it is the case of the community of teachers of EFL.

2.2 Important definitions to consider

It is important to clarify certain definitions that have been used along this research so as to understand the development of the research.

Exploratory Research:
It is a type of investigation that looks into a problem which provides insights to the researcher. This type of research provides details where there is a small amount of information. It may use a variety of qualitative methods: trial studies, interviews, group discussions and quantitative methods such as experiments or other tactics so as to gain information.

Action research:
It is a form of self-reflective inquiry carried out by practitioners, aimed at solving problems, improving practice, or enhancing understanding.
Academic writing:
A type of writing that operates consistently according to customary academic conventions, paying careful attention to layout, notes, references, quotations and bibliographies; at the same time it consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical control and accuracy.

Writing process:
These are stages a writer goes through in order to produce something in its final written form. It usually consists of Planning, Drafting, Editing and Final draft.

Drafting:
Refers to writing the first version of a piece of writing. A number of several drafts may be produced on the way to the final version.

Editing:
Consists of reading through what have been written to see where it works and where it doesn´t.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY OF THE INVESTIGATION

3.1   Investigation type

The MTEFL students' production showed that they lacked information or practice on academic writing. It was particularly evident that none of them had an idea of the presence of thesis statements in the introduction and that the thesis statement could guide the development of the rest of the essay.

For these reasons and due to the unique features of the sample- this was the only MTEFL blended course run at the time, an Action Research on improving students' academic skills, particularly those regarding the organization of Essays- was devised. In this case, there was no control and experimental group but just one experimental where the parameters were before and after the intervention.

This is qualitative action-research as mentioned by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) cited in FUNIBER (2011) where change is aimed at two levels. First, at the individual level because it is expected that once students know what is required from them to improve their academic writing skills, they will do what is necessary to do so.

Second, at institutional level, because by analyzing the data provided by these students and the information gathered by the literature revised to do this research, it was concluded that it was necessary to organize some sessions or workshops that would present or revise the basic issues of academic skills before initiating a further degree course.

Additionally, this kind of research meets some of the fundamental characteristics of action-research according to Elliott (1990) cited in FUNIBER (2011) "Action Research". *Module: Observation and Research in the Classroom Context*.

To begin with, it definitely analyses the human actions and situations that the MTEFL experiences, it aims at explaining why the students (teachers who are doing the MTEFL course in the semi-virtual modality) lack academic skills and it does interpret different classroom events from the point of view of the students, the teachers and institution.

3.2   Design of the investigation

After reading the students´ essays and their own discussions to detect their weaknesses at writing academic papers, the following assumptions provided some basis for the design of this research.

1. Developing writing skills implies knowing the kind of text you need to write and devoting time to learning and practicing the stages of the writing process.
2. Having sound knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of English does help relieve the pressure of writing in English since you do not have to focus on the accuracy of what you writebut mostly on the organization of the information and the style to be used .

3.2.1 Research questions

Bearing the above assumptions in mind, the following research questions arose:

1. Are students aware of their difficulties at academic writing and what needs to be done for improving?
2. Could students' writing performance improve in spite of not having a steady (in time) sequence of input and practice?

3. Does language proficiency and previous experience writing academic papers in L1 & L2 help students affect students´ academic writing performance?

4. Are there any other institutions that offer MTEFL courses in English in our country that offer some support guidance on how to write Academic texts?

For the third part of the Research some information from other universities besides Universidad de Piura that offer Master degree courses for teachers of English was sought. This list was gathered:

Headway College-Instituto Superior Tecnológico Privado
Instituto Pedagógico Nacional de Mujeres (IPNM)
Universidad César Vallejo- Piura
Universidad Nacional de Cajamarca
Universidad de Huánuco
Universidad Nacional Federico Villarreal
Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos

None of these institutions offered a Master degree course with all the courses run in English and perhaps for that reason, none of them had a course or a workshop on Academic Writing prior to the beginning of the course.

However, the information obtained in this thesis regarding the use of guidelines to organize written academic papers may prove useful in any other situation where content knowledge needs to be expressed through academic documents.

3.3 Variables

Because of the literature review mentioning the importance of developing awareness about the features of the academic writing process, in this Action research the following research variables were proposed:

Independent variable: A set of information and activities (Essay writing Kit) for students to support the essay writing process.

Dependent variable: Improvement in the development of students´ academic writing skills (Writing Essays).

Since this is action research no operationalization of variables will take place since there is no correlation to be tested.

3.4.   Population and study Sample

The Action research (Primary stage) was carried out among the group of teachers (11) who did the semi-virtual Master in Teaching English as a Foreign Language Course at Universidad de Piura / FUNIBER between 2011- 2012.

Since then, a second (and last) group of teachers from USIL registered in the semi-virtual Master in TEFL in 2013 (11).This group shared similar characteristics to the experimental group used in the Action Research Primary stage such as Age, Language Certifications obtained and they also shared the same difficulties to allocate time to do some extra work.

This second group contributed to reinforce the reliability of the research in terms of effectiveness of the material and corroborating some of the Research questions posted in this section.

It is important to mention that all the collected evidence was based on participants´ performance in a classroom setting at the beginning and then at the end of the research for this particular group.

Language background

As far as native language background, since this is a Master degree course, all students are expected to have been acquainted with some kind of academic writing in the first language when doing their bachelor degree and/or their "Licenciatura" (Licensure). However, as most of them claim, this previous experience at writing academic papers in Spanish do not compare with what they have to write in English because of the demands for vocabulary, structures and organization.

The situation regarding second language proficiency is a bit different. USIL´s recruiting process requires an upper-intermediate level (FCE); however, during the interview and the course development, some of the teachers showed they were not exactly at the upper-intermediate level of oral proficiency expected for the course but were hired to meet the demand for teachers of the University.

3.4.1 The Institutions

Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola (USIL) is a private university that fosters the development of competences in a business context. It is probably one of the few universities in the whole country where English courses are mandatory and part of the undergraduate studies curricula. The undergraduate students population was, at the time of the research, about 9,000 students out of which the language department served an approximate 6,000.

There were about 90 teachers working in different schedules in the Department whose responsibilities besides classroom teaching were those of writing lesson plans, contributing to quizzes, doing peer observations, keeping updated with the new methodology trends, etc.

USIL started its accreditation process in 2009 and it was only after thorough research and consultations that the MTEFL offered by Universidad de Piura and FUNIBER was granted the green light as a way of obtaining the Master degree that the international accreditation office required.

As a consequence, an agreement was signed between the language department of USIL and the language department of Universidad de Piura / FUNIBER to provide a semi-virtual MTEFL course that had to end in March 2012.

The Master in TEFL semi-virtual modality was created by the Language Centre of Universidad de Piura to provide practicing teachers of USIL University with the opportunity to advance in their professional development by doing a semi-virtual master degree course based on a comprehensive curricula where they would have the opportunity to match their newly acquired knowledge with their day-to-day practice.

FUNIBER provides the content material for each of the modules in binders written by scholars and well-known authors. The course demanded writing essays for the face-to-face sessions and assignments for the virtual sessions. The expectations of the tutors were that the

teachers who participated in this module had already mastered the foundations of academic writing.

3.4.2. The course

The MTEFL course started in December 2010 and it was the first time FUNIBER – in agreement with Universidad de Piura accepted to teach a semi-virtual course. Each module was taught in one month with two four-hour-face-to-face sessions per module every other week. Students were supported by a Virtual campus where they could find readings, links and other resources to accompany their modules. As reference material, each module has support material in a binder with the contents of the module divided in chapters.

The completion of an 8-to-10-page academic assignment for most of the modules and –in the case of the face-to-face component- the completion of a two-page essay additional to the assignment constitute the evidence that students have learned and related the knowledge to their practicing experience.

3.4.3 Academic writing in the MTEFL course

Teachers who registered in the MTEFL course (participants, students) were practicing teachers from USIL with at least an Intermediate level or Upper Intermediate level of proficiency, proved by an International Certificate- or so it read in the recruiting requirements- and all had a previous bachelor or licensure degree.

Because of the above, it is assumed that these teachers were aware of the requirements of an academic course in terms of the quality of the written papers (essays and assignments) for which they were expected to perform well.

Because of their assumed previous experience at writing academic papers but also because, as teachers, they were supposed to be familiar with the writing process and style, they were all expected not to have problems with academic writing.

However, the problems students faced at not being able to elaborate good academic papers that could represent how well they could manipulate the information presented in the online and in their face-to-face sessions led us to devise a set of activities that would allow them to improve their academic writing.

3.5 Techniques and Instruments for gathering data

The use of ethnographic techniques such as journals, video and interviews allowed to re-examine and re-interpret the data as well as to analyze it and develop the ethnographical classroom research that constitutes "action research". (FUNIBER "Classroom Observation: Ethnography": 28)

The following instruments were used:

3.5.1 Survey

Surveys have extensively been used because, as we all know, they are useful to understand better how things are really operating in your classroom or to describe the abilities and other characteristics of the learners (Brown, 2004) Therefore, it was an easy decision to start the data collection with a survey to know the students´ experience at writing and their language background.

The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the students´ proficiency in academic writing before they initiated the course as well as their previous academic writing experience. It also aimed at collecting information on the perception students had of their own command of spoken English as well as the scores obtained in any international exam they could have taken as a unit of measurement.

The survey also provided another important piece of information: students´ previous academic writing experience. The survey (Academic Writing Research Questionnaire) was used with both Primary Research Stage and Secondary Research Stage groups. (See Appendix 1).

In the case of the Secondary Research Stage group, the Survey was used to confirm that the group shared similar characteristics with the

Primary Research. Thus, no tables or Graphs will be presented on the results since they are not the focus of this research.

3.5.2   Essay writing kit

A set of handouts were gradually provided to participants. They were taken from three texts: Writing Academic English (Oshima, A. & Hogue, A. 2006), Academic Writing: from paragraph to Essay (Zemach, D & Rumisek, L 2005) and Writers at Work: from Paragraph to Essay (Zemach, D. 2008).

The information was collated from different sections of the books to have one handout per session whenever possible. The focus of the research was to improve writing essays but the information had to be extended to writing paragraphs as well since some of the participants had problems at writing effective supportive paragraphs.

However, this did not hinder the research; on the contrary, being a classroom research study, diverting the research from Essay to paragraph made sense since it helped to find the best strategies to support students.

Some of the sections used to prepare the handouts were taken from the texts shown in Table 1.

As explained before, since along the research it was shown that some participants did not write good supporting paragraphs, some work was done about this as shown in Table 2.

Table 1.- Material for Essay writing Kit

Text	Chapters	Pages
Academic Writing: From Paragraph to Essay	**Chapter 8: The Structure of an Essay and a Model Essay**	57, 58, 59
	Chapter 9: Outlining an Essay	66, 67
	Chapter 10: Types of Information (Introductions and Conclusions)	74, 75
	Chapter 11: Unity and Coherence	79
	Scoring Rubrics: Essays	316
Writing Academic English	**Peer-editing Essays**	322

Source: My own

Table 2.- Material for Paragraph Writing

Text	Chapters	Pages
Academic Writing: From Paragraph to Essay	**Chapter 3: The Development of a Paragraph**	19,20
Writing Academic English	**Chapter 1: Paragraph structure**	9,15
	Peer editing worksheets for paragraphs	320

Source: My own

Likewise, the handouts resulted from this are collected in Appendix 4.

Due to the fact that writing is a process and that the more you write, the better you become once you have been trained in recognizing and producing the different sections that essays demand, it is logical to think of evaluating the effect of the supplementary material and the techniques to identify important parts of the paragraphs and essays.

Unfortunately, as it was mentioned in the Limitations of the Research, the distribution of modules did not allow doing this follow up immediately after the intervention since the allocation of modules was not known in advance.

For instance, I was not assigned any Modules from October 2011 until February next year. There was an urgent need for an alternative plan and that is how a blog as part of the module on Teaching English through Translation http://tettformasterintefl.blogspot.com was created. This way students could have the information of the tasks of the course as well as the information about Academic writing and the instructions for the activities in a slide share hosted in the same place. (See Appendixes 5 and 6)

The criteria to assess students´ progress was based on the same items that were identified at the beginning of the research regarding Essay organization: the lack or the presence of Thesis Statements in the introductory paragraphs and an effective conclusion, there was no time for more.

Although there were two activities regarding paragraph writing, the presence of a topic sentence in all the supporting paragraphs of the essay was not regarded as an indicator because the two activities dealing with paragraph organization and asking students to write a paragraph had been developed in class, taking off some minutes from the core sessions. Also, in most cases, the presence of a topic sentence in each supporting paragraph of the essay depended on how good the thesis statement was.

For the secondary stage of the research, this material was provided at the beginning of the course as Slide share links: Essay Writing https://es.slideshare.net/mumarialuisa/essay-writing-23430869 and Paragraph Writing https://es.slideshare.net/mumarialuisa/paragraph-writing-11505878 .

3.5.2.1.   Classroom Activities

As it has been mentioned in the literature review, Writing is a process and so it should be developed along a continuum where students are provided with several opportunities to write. However, as it has been explained before, teaching writing was not part of the syllabus of the course so we tried to make room for the different stages whenever it was possible but there was not a steady source of input or a change in students´ attitude regarding the time and the preparation they had to invest in their essay writing.

In the classroom activities, the PPTs – that were later provided as slide share – were presented together with the handouts from the kit and depending on the session dates, self-editing and/or peer editing took place in class.

Methodological approaches such as class discussion and colour-coding for editing purposes were also introduced during some of the lessons.

3.5.3   Journal

Journals provide an effective means of identifying variables that are important to students providing awareness about the way students learn (Wallace, 2012) They were useful because of the particular

development of the course: in a time continuum and with students sharing the same place of work.

However useful students found the supplementary material, they candidly confessed in some cases that they had not revised it before writing their essays. They said that most of the times they wrote just minutes before they had to present the document and did not have enough time to gather ideas or go over the guidelines for essay writing. A frequent comment they made was that they were always under pressure to complete a module and that there was not enough time to read the information from the binder.

In some sections of the journal, some students stated that they regarded the essays and assignments more as pieces of mandatory homework than as the opportunity to show how much they had learned on the topic and how they could link this knowledge with their teaching practice.

Along the academic writing sessions, notes were taken and a record of classroom events were kept together with comments the students made about how they felt and what they thought about these activities.

3.5.4 Portfolios

Portfolios are personalized long term documentation of student mastery of course material and they also are student reflections on their own learning and progression towards the mastery of the material documented in the portfolio (Brown & Rodgers, 2004) .

 Portfolios were only used for documenting the achievement of mastery of essay writing and assessing it without any opportunity for reflection to be recorded. These Portfolios were not assessed against Rubrics since the focus of the research was not the use of Portfolios as an evaluation tool.

As it has already been mentioned in the course description, students of the semi-virtual MTEFL course are requested to write essays as the last evaluation activity for their face-to-face modules, the first

piece of evidence that there were problems regarding essay writing was some samples of these essays. (Appendix 7 shows one Essay sample before our intervention with the Essay Writing Kit)

All the Essays, even before the onset of this research were assessed using the Rubrics provided in Academic Writing from Paragraph to Essay (Zemach & Rumiseck, 2005).

3.5.5 Interview

From my own experience, Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences and pursuing in-depth information around the topic. This instrument was chosen because the portfolio was not intended to provide any reflection on students´ perception of background and progress but just to display their production.

For the interviews, permission was requested by mail and some appointments were made to hold them before class time, in some cases and in others, at other specific dates.

The interview was semi structured, made up of 10 questions which acted as prompts to allow fuller, more detailed responses. Students were warned that they could take as long as they wanted to answer the questions and that the purpose of the interview was to hear what they had to say about their academic writing experience.

Although interviews are meant to be administered without the pressure of time constraints, in this particular case I had to make sure that they did not last longer than twenty minutes since that was the time these students could provide due to their busy schedule.

 All students were told and reassured that the purpose of the interview was to guide them into informing what sources of difficulties they found when doing academic writing and what action points they could think of to help them overcome the problems.

The guiding questions are presented in Appendix 9 and they consist of a combination of opinion, knowledge and background questions that would help answer the research questions of the project.

Not all the questions were asked like such during the interview, sometimes they were paraphrased to get the information needed. See transcripts of some of the interviews in Appendix 10.

3.5.6 Self- editing and Peer-editing worksheets

The Rubrics for correcting Essays presented in Appendix 8 that were used all along the course were distributed to all students from the beginning of the research so they could use them as checklist for Self-editing their Essays before handing them in. In fact, students were asked to staple the Rubrics before the cover of their Essays to ensure that they have used them for this purpose.

For Peer-editing, the instrument of choice was the hand out Peer-Editing worksheet 4 from Academic Writing from Paragraph to Essay (Zemach & Rumiseck, 2005) to keep the same criteria of the Rubrics. Appendix 11 shows a sample of this Worksheet together with a real sample of a student self-editing activity (Appendix 12).

For Peer- editing a paragraph, a similar worksheet from the same text was used (Appendix 13) and some samples of students´ production are shown in Appendix 14.

3.5.7 Validity and Reliability of the study

Considering that validity is the degree to which the results obtained in the research can be accurately interpreted (Brown, J.D. & Rodgers, T. 2004) and being this research mostly of qualitative nature, great efforts have been made to provide a clear , complete and detailed description of the research. Journals, portfolios and video-recorded interviews were used to gather data and provide **methodological triangulation.**

In order to obtain some data that could validate the effectiveness of the intervention for guiding essay writing, it was decided that the essay rubrics used as checklist for self-editing will be used to measure students´ written performance.

Likewise, since reliability is the degree to which the results of the research are consistent, **investigator triangulation** was used by asking

two other researchers to evaluate the exit essays using a short version of the rubrics (Fig. 1) and the indicators that were prepared for the Organization section. (Appendix 8)

Fig.1.- Grid for Investigator Triangulation

	St 1	St2	St3	St4	St5	St6	St7	St 8	St 9	St 10
1. Essay has an introduction, body and conclusion organization										
2. The introduction ends with a thesis statement										
3. Each paragraph of the essay has specific supporting material										
4. Each paragraph of the essay has unity										
5. Each paragraph of the essay has coherence										
6. Transitions are used to link paragraphs										
7. Conclusion summarizes the main points or paraphrases the thesis statement										

Furthermore, to increase the reliability of the Rubrics, data was obtained by the **test-retest method** through which the grades from the first essays and then with the last essay were compared. However, as mentioned before, due to the writing process and all the issues considered in the Limitations of the Investigation section, all the Essays produced from the beginning of the research to the end have been considered as record of production and progress.

3.6 Procedures

The whole research is exploratory in nature but the first stage was developed as Action Research. The primary study was carried out from February 2011 to February 2012 where the actual research variables were studied.

Being Action Research mostly situational- it is concerned with the identification and solution of problems in a specific context, the steps outlined by Kemmis and Taggart (1988) were followed.

3.6.1 Stage I: Develop a plan of action to improve what is already happening

As it has been mentioned before, the first activity that originated the action research took place when observing the low grades obtained by the students and they realized that their academic writing was a common problem that needed to be solved.

Once the guidelines on Essay Writing were presented, students decided that they would collect all the essays that they had written in a Portfolio and take it to the classroom the following session so they would analyze it to find out what the main sources of difficulty when writing essays were. This activity took place during the first session of the module.

For the second session of the Module (Classroom Management), it was noticed that the problem that most papers presented was lack of organization; this problem had been identified by the students themselves once they were shown the parts of an essay in a discussion session. After checking their production against the Essay Rubrics, the students agreed their essays lacked introduction and thesis statement and this contributed to the lack of coherence and unity of the supporting paragraphs. Appendix 14 shows some samples of these papers.

They also noticed that they did not write conclusive paragraphs or they usually included new ideas to develop instead of rounding up what the essay was trying to convey.

Similarly, along the development of this Action Research, the research questions were made so some information had to be collected to answer them.

This is how the Academic Writing Research Questionnaire was created (Appendix 1). This document was sent by mail to all students so as to collect information about their background, degrees, language proficiency, etc.

3.6.2   Stage II: Act to implement the plan

After the planning stage had finished, stage II demanded action to implement it trying to consider the circumstances in which it would provide effective results.

Following the information from the binder, FUNIBER (2011) "Action Research". *Module: Observation and Research in the Classroom Context,* once the problem was detected, it was time to move on to the second stage: The Action Plan.

Students in each group elaborated a plan to tackle this situation and after some class discussion concluded that the best way to deal with the lack of structures in essay writing was going over the convention of how to write an essay and for that it would be necessary to use supplementary material (handouts) where the different parts of the essay were explained and with which they could practice recognizing and producing thesis statements.

3.6.3   Stage III: Observe the effects of action in context

It is then, when all students in the class were aware of the problem and the possible solution that this research started. It seemed this would be a very good way to motivate students to do their own classroom research in class and students would feel motivated to provide all the samples and work with all the supplementary material to improve the situation.

However, before the implementation plan started, it was necessary to collect information about students´ language background and the previous academic writing activities since these were some of the research questions the revised literature suggested could affect written production. All this information was collected using the questionnaires and journals.

The observation of the effects of the intervention was completed by using peer evaluation and self-evaluation activities using the rubrics after collecting the essay samples in the Portfolios.

As mentioned before, the portfolio was made up for each student with samples of their work which had been assessed using the rubrics from the book *Writing Academic English* by Oshima & Hogue where the evidence of good academic writing performance was given by the categories shown in Fig. 1.

It is important to notice that when half of the research had already taken place, it was evident that the only evidence that could be assessed in all fairness because students had had practice with them were: Presence of an introduction that ends with a thesis statement and that the conclusion summarizes the main points or paraphrases the thesis statement.

To summarize the Actions that took place in the Primary Stage and the Comments students made at the time – which were collected in the Journal, a table with the plans and actions for the sessions all along the development of the research was produced.

Table 3.- Summary of the Action Plan along the Modules sessions at the Primary Stage

Dates	Academic Writing sessions	Comments
Feb 11th, 2011	Feedback on Essay 1: Classroom Management. Explanation of Rubrics. Difference between proof-reading and editing.	Students 3 and 7 mentioned that some tutors told them that they needed to improve their writing but had not provided any support regarding this.
Feb 25th	Class discussion about students´ writing performance. Explanation on the board of the different parts of an essay. Preparing Portfolios with Essay samples.	Students 1, 2, 8 and 10 said that they knew that there were specific features in an essay but they had not had previous information about which they were. The other students said they did not know the features. Students 6 and 7 commented they had never been presented with essay features such as thesis statement.
March 2nd	Feedback on Essay 2: Materials and resources. Applying the Academic Writing research questionnaire. Stages on Action Research	Students were presented with the Stages in Action Research document and followed Stages 1 and 2 . Analyzing the Portfolios, all students agreed that their essays lacked thesis statements and some other features. For stage 3, they concluded preparing supplementary material to learn about essay features was the action plan.

Dates	Academic Writing sessions	Comments
May 14th	Raising awareness of academic writing performance and Action Research in use	
May 28th	Informal self-editing of essays	Using the rubrics as checklists, students realized their essays needed editing for thesis statements.
June 11th	Preparation of the academic writing kit	
June 25th	Presentation of the first handout: Parts of an Essay, Thesis Statements. Practice activities left for homework Feedback on Essay 3: CLIL	Students 3 and 6 said that it was the first time they had worked on specific issues of essay writing such as the Thesis statement. Students 8 and 9 liked the possibility of practicing the recognition and use of the essay features.
July 9th	Feedback on the handout: Parts of an Essay. Presentation of the second handout: more on Thesis Statements and conclusions. Practice activities left for homework	Students 2, 3 and 9 said they liked the task of recognizing good thesis statements and student 7 said she finally realized that writing a good thesis statement is key in organizing the remaining paragraphs of the essay. Since some essays still showed that no editing had been made regarding organization, coherence and unity, student 6 stated they did not always use the reference material before writing their essays claiming lack of time and that the other tutors did not use the same criteria to mark their essays so they only tried to use the essay guidelines for my courses.
July 23rd	Feedback on Rubrics and Feedback and Response for Essay 4: CLIL	Students found the Responses useful as well as the Rubrics but still failed to consider all the features of the essay when writing since they did not use the rubrics as checklist
October 15th	Discussion on Pronunciation topic to generate ideas for Essay. Presentation of handouts on paragraph writing. Writing a paragraph on How do you teach Pronunciation? Peer editing. Writing the final version using the editing sheet completed by their peers. Paragraphs and editing sheets were collected.	Students 6 and 9 failed to see the difference between a paragraph and an essay and wrote three-paragraph essays instead of a paragraph. When peer-editing, editors realized the paragraphs lacked topic sentences and in some cases the restatement was not clear. When they returned papers, in most cases but one (student 2), writers demanded explanation of the comments editors had made. At the end of the activity, all participants found the activity useful because it made them realize what paragraph organization meant.
October 29th	Use the methodology of colour coding to recognize the different	When students used different colours they said they understood the relationships

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Dates	Academic Writing sessions	Comments
	parts of a model essay. Self-editing activity using colour coding for Essay 5: Pronunciation	between the parts. Even some of the good performers (Student 2 and 10) agreed that they had made mistakes in their essays and that colour-coding helped them realize what they were. Student 8: "*I feel ashamed since I just wrote my essay this morning and did not remember to go over the material of the conventions for the essay writing.*"
February 11th, 2012	Discussion on the use of Translation in Teaching. Writing a paragraph on the issue: Translation: Good or Bad? Peer editing. Presentation of the blog with the slide share on Academic Writing	Students liked the peer-editing of paragraphs and it showed that some of them were good at writing topic sentences but had problems with the restatements. Students had not had any practice on paragraph writing or essay writing for 3 months so they welcomed the possibility of having the reference material and the module activities all in the same place.
February 25th, 2012	Peer editing and final Essay 5: The place of translation as a cross-lingual and communicative activity in the EFL classroom.	We had to move to a café because of an activity in campus for the last half hour of the session. Students were not very focused on the peer editing activity because it was the last day of classes but produced their editing sheets and paragraphs and regretted not having had more practice with writing.

3.6.4   Stage IV: Reflect on these effects

In this particular part of the research, some improvement was expected to be shown in the development of Essay writing so as to support the need for academic writing sessions prior to similar courses.

The existence of a second group of MTEFL students (Secondary stage) made this possible since some of the material used in the research at the beginning of the course was introduced, just after the first essay of the module had been produced and the results were somewhat better than to the Primary stage group but not for all of them.

3.6.5 Intervention

As explained in the summary of Table 3, the Primary stage started with   the   collection   of   essay   samples   and   information   on   what

characteristics the writing process had and what was expected in a good essay.

The second essay occurred after some theoretical guidelines had been produced but only student 2 – who was the one with more international certificates as well as experience at teaching writing-improved in more than one characteristic.

Essay 3 was written after the First handout on Essay writing (Introduction and Outline) had been given and practiced and that explains the improvement shown by most students regarding Introductory Paragraphs. Appendix 15 shows a summary of Individual progress of Primary Stage students where the progress on these specific issues can be observed.

For Essay 4 students had already received and practiced the second handout (Improving Thesis Statements and conclusions) but that is when the problems with paragraph writing became more evident and so some remedial work needed to be done.

During the Classroom activities, two additional strategies were incorporated at this time: Previous discussion of the Essay topic and peer-editing. These two facilitated students ´generation of ideas and organization just as the literature recommended.

Additionally, providing students with the possibility of editing using colour- coding also helped consolidate the recognition and use of essay features. Appendix 16 shows some samples of this classroom activity.

When the final essay was written, progress regarding introductory paragraphs was evident but there was still the need to perfect the supporting paragraphs and conclusions.

As students made progress regarding their essay writing, it was obvious that some of them did not follow the convention for paragraph organization so their supporting paragraphs lacked topic sentences, explanations and even unity and coherence.

For this reason, additional supplementary information on paragraph organization was presented after information on essay

organization had, which is not the usual order of presentation of information in academic writing but whose necessity was not discovered until after they had produced some more essays. Neither students nor the tutors were aware of this problem and that is why it was not solved by working on paragraph organization before dealing with organization of essays.

Due to the lack of time only part of two classroom activities were devoted to paragraph organization but this time writing and editing happened during the same session so students could read the comments on the editing worksheet and discuss with the editor about them.

All students found Peer – editing in class quite useful because sometimes the editors failed at understanding what they were supposed to look for in a paragraph. This is why we have included some evidence of peer editing to show that in some cases students failed to detect the problems their peers had. In the end, everybody had a clearer idea of what a good paragraph organization was about thanks to the peer-editing and later discussions as students were allowed to dissent with the editor´s opinion and leave their work untouched instead of introducing some changes. (Appendix 13)

When students were interviewed, they all agreed on the effectiveness of the kit that had been introduced since it not only presented information regarding writing essays but also provided exercises for students to recognize strong or weak thesis statements or match introductions with conclusions. All of the students, when interviewed, recognized that the use of the supplementary material helped them improve since it provided information and practice exercises, which is something they needed.

As it has already been mentioned in previous sections, in January 2013 another group joined the MTEFL course and their participation was taken into consideration to foster the reliability of the results obtained in the original research. That is, that by familiarizing students with some aspects of writing academic papers, at the beginning of the course, they would be more able to produce better organized texts.

All these students were presented with the kit with all the guidelines, explanations and practice worksheets that had been used in

the Primary stage as slides but no additional classroom activities were devised besides those of peer editing. The Slide share with the summary of this information was also available for them to use as reference.

The information gathered with all these techniques and tools is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

4.1   Data Analysis

Due to the descriptive nature of this research project, the analysis of the data will be reported in terms of individual analysis of the instruments used to develop it. The only independent variable that was manipulated was the knowledge of essay writing stages since all the others were intrinsic to the personal background of each student in the research.

The research yielded the following sets of data:

4.1.1   Survey (Writing Research Questionnaire)

The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the students´ proficiency in academic writing before they initiated the course as well as their previous academic writing experience. The results of the survey are as follows:

4.1.1.1 Age of participants

The Primary stage group (2011-2012) is the group under exploration but coincidentally, the Secondary stage group of this Action Research shared the same age distribution as can be seen in Table 4.

Learning about participants´ age is important since literature suggested that the older the student, the more probabilities that s/he had not been exposed to any academic writing for quite a long time or not at

all and so his/her performance may not match academic standards. Although age was not considered a variable, we considered it may be an interesting piece of information to try to understand how to help these students in the best way.

Table 4.- Age distribution among the Primary and Secondary Stage Research groups

Range	Experimental	Control
From 25 -30	4	4
From 30-40	3	3
Over 40	4	4

Source: My own
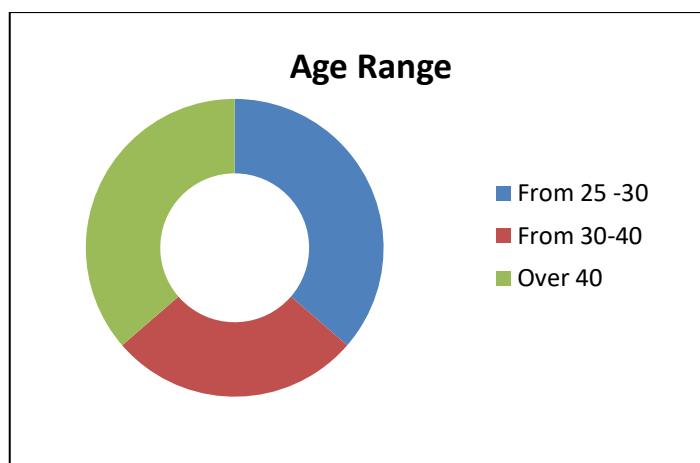
Graph 1.- Age range distribution of both Primary and Secondary Stage Research groups

Table 4 shows that all of the students were over 25 so it is logical to think that they may have been exposed to formal writing before. Two students of the Primary group had just been granted their Licensure, a dissertation they had written in Spanish, were aware of the formalities of academic papers in Spanish but did not know about thesis statements or topic sentences in paragraphs.

From those who were over 30, they had not done any academic writing- whether in English or in Spanish- for a long time and only two

students, when interviewed, claimed to have taken methodology courses that had made them write academic English. This may explain their good performance in the course essays.

From the evidence obtained, the students who were over 40 seemed to have problems with the different aspects of academic writing but after becoming aware of the conventions and writing some essays, they seemed to catch up with their younger peers, except for one.

4.1.1.2 Language background

Along the literature review it was learnt that there are several factors that can have an effect on academic writing performance, these were regarded as "research" variables because they could affect students´ production. Some of them that are connected to experience and they are:

Experience at writing essays in native language

To present this information, students and their written production were matched in order to find some coherence between what they say and perceive and how they actually perform.

The results of this part of the research are shown in table 5 where participant students were given a number to later compare their performance against the information provided.

This table was made up using the students´ answers to the questionnaire sent by mail and according to this only one student had not had any previous experience writing in Spanish but when asked during the interview (Students 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9) replied that their writing in Spanish for academic purposes had not helped them writing academic texts in English. Only Student 2 felt that his knowledge of writing in Spanish had helped him with features such as organization of ideas and punctuation.

According to the literature review, there is not supposed to be a tremendous effect of language proficiency on the composition of a text but just on the language and vocabulary and these results prove it.

Table 5.- Experience in writing academic texts in L1

Criteria	Students	Total
No experience writing academically in Spanish	Student 7	1
Writing for International Baccalaureate	Student 8	1
Writing for an undergraduate degree	Students 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8	7
Writing for a certificate or diploma	Students 1, 6	2
Writing for a post-graduate degree (Licensure)	Students 1, 4, 10	3

Source: My own
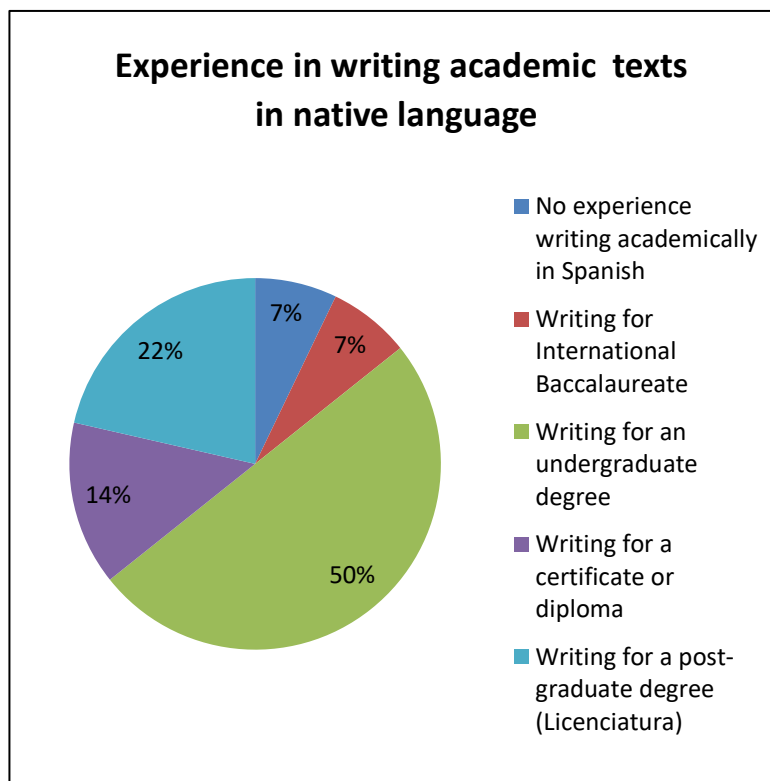
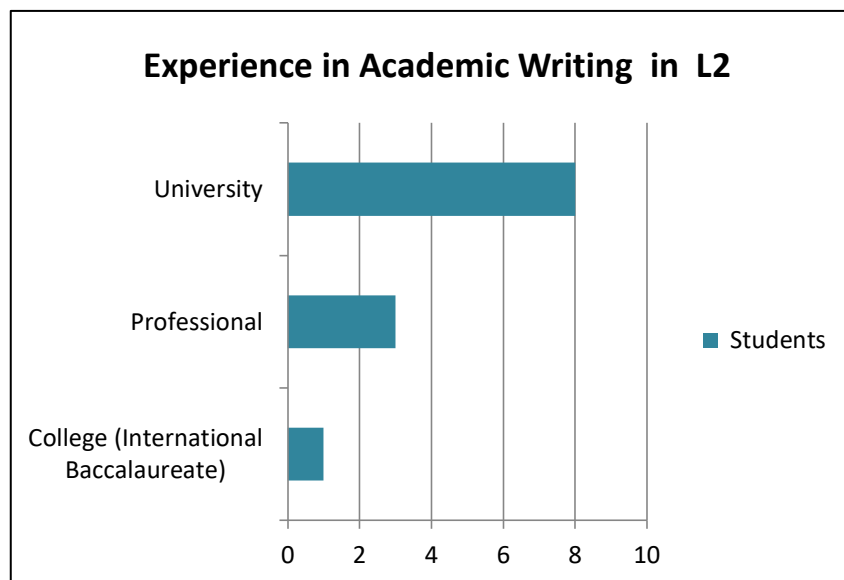*Graph 2.- Experience in writing academic texts in native language of Primary Research students*

Experience in academic writing in Second Language

The answers to the Survey show that all students had had some experience writing in English for academic purposes in different academic contexts as it is shown in the following table.

Table 6.- Experience in writing academic texts in L2

Criteria	Students	Total
College (International Baccalaureate)	Student 8	1
Professional	Students 1, 2, 4	3
University	Students 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10	8

Source: My own

Graph 3.- Experience in Academic Writing in L2 of Primary Research Students

For some students, university courses had required writing essays of different types. Those who claimed experience in writing academic texts for professional purposes said that they had done that when they were in charge of teaching courses on Writing.

Since some students had taken international exams that have a test paper on writing, and essay writing is one of the required texts, it is expected that the students who have passed them perform better when writing academically than those who haven´t.

When interviewed, most of the students mentioned that they had not had any previous experience writing essays in English before joining the course (Students 3, 5, 6 and 7) whereas the others mentioned that they had written essays before but without any deep information about how to write good introductory paragraphs or conclusions, etc. (Students 2, 4 and 10)

4.1.1.3 Proficiency level

According to the literature review, there is not supposed to be a tremendous effect of language proficiency on the composition of a text but just on the language and vocabulary. To determine students´ language proficiency, information was collected on students´ own perception and the international certificates they have obtained to corroborate this information against their use of language in their written production.
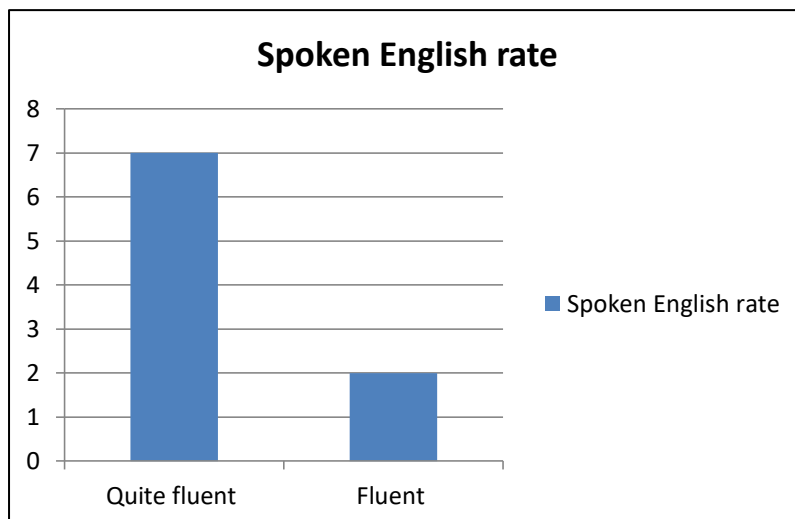
Students´ perception of their level of Proficiency in Spoken English

Like most people who are studying English as a Foreign Language, students regard their level of proficiency in spoken English higher than their level of proficiency in writing.

Table 7.- Students' perception of their Proficiency in Spoken English

	Quite fluent	**Fluent**
Spoken English	Students 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10	Students 1, 8

Source: My own

Graph 4.- Students´ own perception of their level of Proficiency in Spoken English

Being all students teachers of English, their perception of their spoken performance was quite high and it certainly showed in their class participation and discussion.
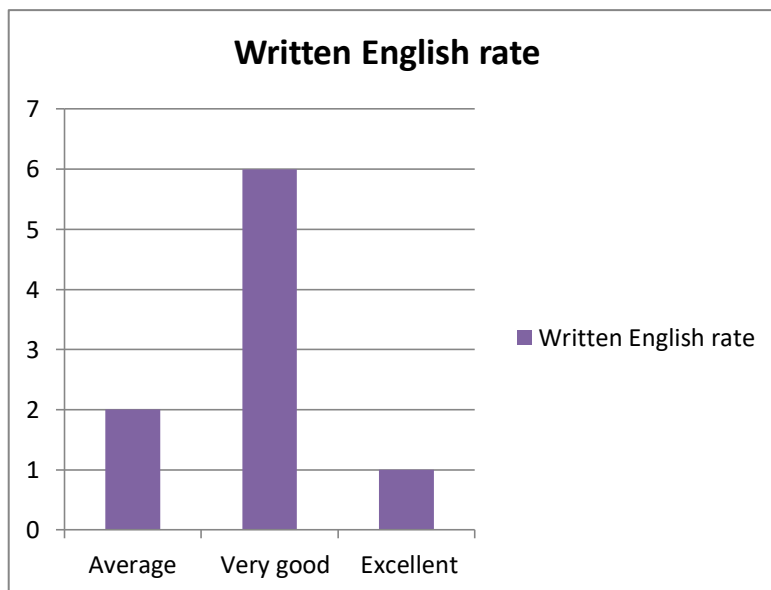
Students´ perception of their level of Proficiency in Written English

Since Writing Essays was one of the problems that came out in the course, it was important to know how students perceived their proficiency in writing. Table 8 shows the information gathered.

Table 8.- Students´ perception of their level of Proficiency in Written English

	Average	**Very good**	**Excellent**
Written English	Students 4, 7	Students 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8	Student 10

Source: My own

Written English rate

Graph 5.- Students' own perception of their level of Proficiency in Written English

Regarding their performance in written English, most of them seemed to be quite satisfied with the command they had and this may be a reason why they got poor grades in their essays. Not knowing the guidelines for writing essays, most of them thought they could just get by with the knowledge of English they had, disregarding issues such as layout, text organization or style.

Students´ class performance showed that some of these perceptions were not very accurate, particularly in the case of those students who did not have an international certificate of proficiency in the language (Student 6 and 7) but in some cases even students who were supposed to have an upper-intermediate level had problems with sentence structure and vocabulary when writing academic papers (Student 3).

Only one student regarded her writing better than her speaking and indeed it showed in her class performance (Student 10). The level of her writing was good in terms of depth of ideas, argumentation and vocabulary but at the beginning she lacked the knowledge of paragraph organization and essay layout-which she later acquired.

However, most of them (except student 2) claimed that even if they knew the general organization of an essay – Introduction, Body and Conclusion, they did not know about thesis statements or different ways of introducing an essay, the kind of supporting paragraphs they could use or how to write a good conclusion as they did after using the supplementary material that was presented in this research.
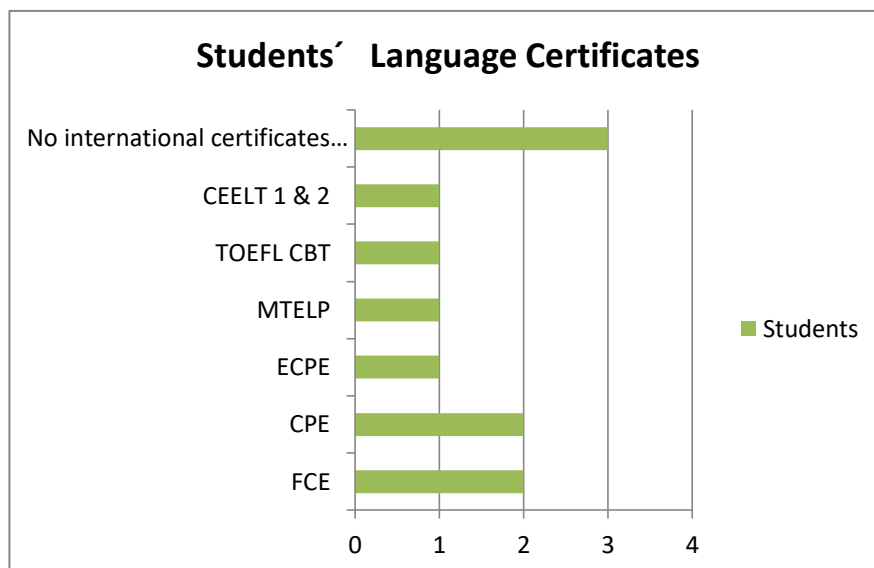
International Certificates

Students who had passed an international exam or had obtained a Language or Teaching Certificate have definitely been exposed to some kind of academic writing. Additionally, their claim for their language proficiency is supported -to a certain extent- by the international certificates they may have passed.

Table 9.- Students´ International Language Certificates and Grades

Tests	Students	Grades
FCE	Student 1	Pass
	Student 3	C
CPE	Student 5	Written: 91, Oral: 88
	Student 10	C
ECPE	Student 4	Pass
MTELP	Student 2	Speaking and Writing: Good
TOEFL CBT	Student 2	Writing: 24
CEELT 1 & 2	Student 2	Speaking A and Writing B and C respectively
No international certificates or exams	Students 6, 7, 8	Student 8* had a graduate degree from an American university.

Source: My own

Graph 6.- Students´ International Language Certificates

Regarding Language Proficiency, International language certificates are supposed to show how good students 'command of the language is. From the graph 3 students had an upper-intermediate level (Students 1, 3 and 4), 2 students had an advanced, near-native level and one had been writing formally along his academic studies.

In spite of this, those who have not got an international certificate to prove how proficient they are in the second language agree that a fluent use of vocabulary and writing accurately affects the written production. Some of them even confessed that they relied on their good command of the language to go by when they had to write something in English.

When interviewed, all students agreed that having a good language level helped to write better since once they knew how to structure a paragraph or an essay they did not have to worry that much about vocabulary, structures or the use of linking words. These ideas match what Cummins (1989) mentioned about the relationship between second-language writing performance and language proficiency.

For all of them, knowing about how to write a strong thesis statement, an effective introduction or conclusion and even writing good topic sentences for the supporting paragraphs was information they had not been presented before but that had helped them improve their writing.

4.1.2   Portfolios

Regarding the improvement in their essay production- as it was saved in the Portfolios, the production of each student of the Primary stage is summarized in the chart below. Essay correction was made using the same rubrics that were used in the Primary Research group and they rendered the following results:
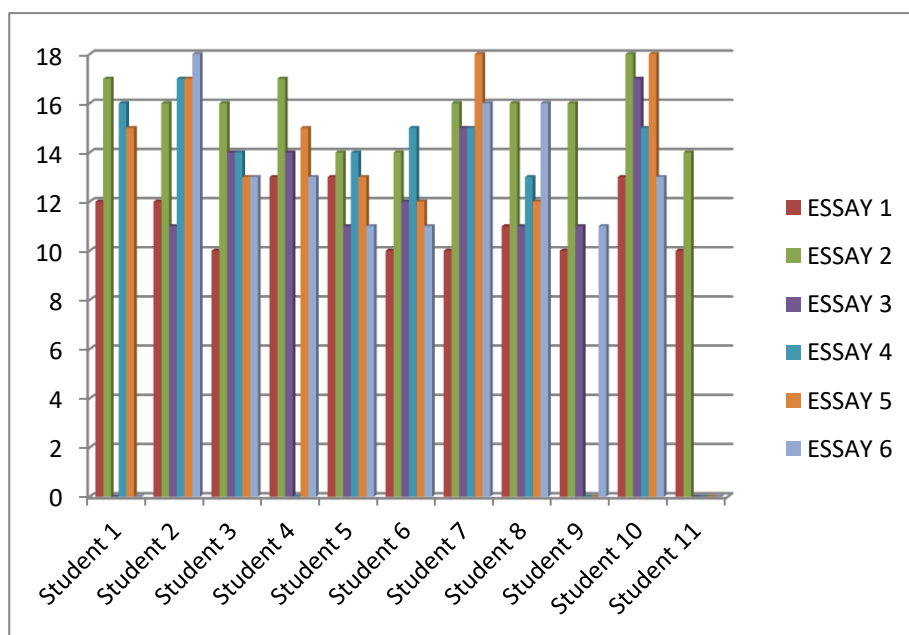
Table 10.- Chronological Essay production of Primary Stage students

	ESSAY 1	ESSAY 2	ESSAY 3	ESSAY 4	ESSAY 5	ESSAY 6
Student 1	12	17	0	16	15	0
Student 2	12	16	11	17	17	18
Student 3	10	16	14	14	13	13
Student 4	13	17	14	0	15	13
Student 5	13	14	11	14	13	11
Student 6	10	14	12	15	12	11
Student 7	10	16	15	15	18	16
Student 8	11	16	11	13	12	16
Student 9	10	16	11	0	0	11
Student 10	13	18	17	15	18	13
Student 11	10	14	0	0	0	0

Source: My own

Essay 1: Classroom Management
Essay 2: Materials and Resources
Essay 3: Learning Strategies

Essay 4: CLIL
Essay 5: Pronunciation
Essay 6: Teaching English through Translation

Graph 7.- Chronological Essay production: Primary Stage students

Table 10 shows the results of students´ performance according to the rubrics used to mark the essays they produced along the research. The first column shows the First Essay they wrote and the low grades show the difficulties students had at writing essays. This essay was graded using the Rubrics mentioned in chapter 3.

As it was mentioned before, not all students produced all Essays. In fact, Student 11 withdrew from the face-to-face sessions but continued working on the online sessions and student 9 stopped attending after Essay 3 but sent his final Essay.

One possible reason there was not evidence of steady progress is because of the time gap between some of the Essay productions. For example, Essay 2 was produced on March 2nd and Essay 3 on May 28th, some students forgot to use the Self-editing checklist (rubrics) to guide their writing. The same happened with Essays 5 (Oct 29th) and Essay 6 (February 25th, 2012).

Students 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 showed improvement in essay organization and production of thesis statement as well as a summary of

the main points in the conclusion but the improvement was not consistent since there was not constant practice of essay writing features due to the time lapse between each module and essay. This progress – or lack of it – is shown in Table 11.

Table 11.- Individual Progress of Primary Stage Students

	ESSAY 1	ESSAY 2	ESSAY 3	ESSAY 4	ESSAY 5	ESSAY 6
1. Essay has an introduction, body and conclusion organization	None	Stud 1, 4, 6, 10	Stud 6, 7	Stud. 1, 2,3,5, 6, 7, 8, 10	Stud. 1, 2, 3,4,5,7,8 ,10	Stud. 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10
2.- The introduction ends with a thesis statement	None	Stud 1, 4, 10	Stud 7, 10	Stud. 1, 2,5, 6, 7, 8, 10	Stud. 1, 2, 3,4,5,7,8 ,10	Stud. 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10
3.- Each paragraph of the essay has specific supporting material	None	Stud. 6	Stud 7, 10	Stud. 1, 2,5, 6, 7, 8, 10	Stud. 2, 5, 7, 10	Stud. 2, 3,4,6,10
4.- Each paragraph of the essay has unity	None	Stud. 6	None	Stud. 8	Stud. 5, 7	Stud. 2, 4, 6,7, 10
5.- Each paragraph of the essay has coherence	None	None	Stud 7, 10	Stud. 1, 2, 10	Stud. 5, 7, 10	Stud. 2, 6, 7, 8, 10
6.- Transitions are used to link paragraphs	None	Stud. 2	Stud 4, 7, 10	Stud. 1, 2, 10	Stud. 1, 2, 4, 7, 10	Stud 2, 6, 7, 8, 10
7.- Conclusion summarizes the main points or paraphrases the thesis statement.	None	Stud.1, 2, 4,10	Stud 4, 7, 10	Stud. 1, 2, 3,5,7,10	Stud. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10	Stud. 2, 4, 6, 10

Source: My own

Some features of paragraph development had also improved but since no practice had been done regarding paragraphs in essays, these features were disregarded in the evaluation of the intervention. However, improvement in this area was certainly seen even if not steady.

Secondary Research group

As it was mentioned before, a year after this Primary Action Research stage took place, another group with similar characteristics registered for the Blended MTEFL course.

In this case, since the group was not intended to become a control group but just to test some of the research questions, the writing kit was introduced first thing in the course and the worksheets and activities were sent by mail. Students were provided from the first section with explanation on the guidelines for writing essays and paragraphs and the links to the Slide share were provided to them so as to use them as reference. The chronological production is shown in the table below.

Table 12.- Chronological Essay production of Secondary Stage students

	Essay 1	Essay 2	Essay 3	Essay 4	Essay 5	Essay 6
Student 1	15	14	12	11	17	14
Student 2	13	13	11	0	0	0
Student 3	15	20	14	10	15	14
Student 4	14	20	17	16	19	20
Student 5	14	15	13	15	14	19
Student 6	13	17	19	19	19	18
Student 7	19	20	18	18	19	18
Student 8	10	0	14	0	0	0
Student 9	11	14	16	13	19	15
Student 10	12	10	5	5	9	0
Student 11	20	20	18	19	20	19

Source: My own

Essay 1: Methodological Approaches   Essay 4: Learning Strategies
Essay 2: Individual Factors   Essay 5: Pronunciation
Essay 3: Materials and Resources   Essay 6: CALL
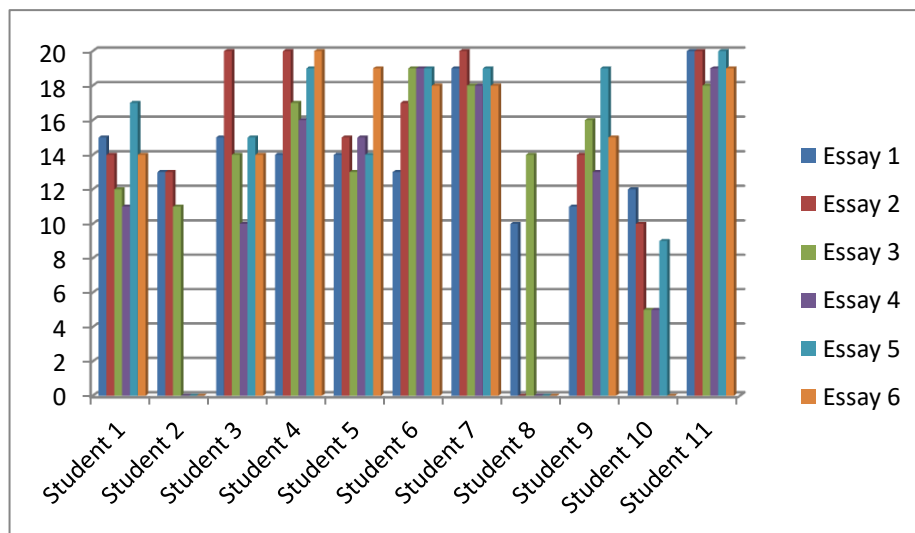
Graph 8.- Chronological Essay production: Secondary Stage students

In both groups, only 9 students attended continually but the Secondary group – which received instruction on Essay writing before they started producing essays, had a better performance in terms of production of Essays and quality of their production. The average grade obtained for the Primary Stage students was 13 at the end of the Research period but mostly because some of them failed at producing their Essays whereas for the Secondary Stage, all of the students who remained presented Essays and their average grade was 15.

4.1.3 Discussion of the Results of the Interview

Regarding the Research Questions, the following results were obtained, a brief discussion on the importance of these results towards the objective of the research is added.

1.- Are students aware of their difficulties at academic writing and what needs to be done for improving?

When having the discussions and feedback from students´ essays and from the interviews, it is clear that students can spot the difficulties they have in their writing performance. Some of them are the lack of familiarity with writing whether in English or in Spanish.

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2.- Could students' writing performance improve in spite of not having a steady (in time) sequence of input and practice?

As it was mentioned before, all students recognized that the essays they had written up to that moment lacked these characteristics.

As students became familiar with the Essay writing, grades started to improve, particularly when they remembered to use the guidelines and did the practice activities. However, the grades decreased when the time lapse between one course and the other was longer than one month.

3.- Does the level of students' language proficiency affect the effectiveness of academic writing in this group of teachers?

Students who mentioned that they had experience at writing professional essays are those who mentioned that they had taught courses on Writing and composition as part of their teaching practice. However, out of the three, only student 2 showed steady good performance in his essay writing production.

Most students stated that a high level of language proficiency helped them achieve accuracy and vocabulary choice but it did not help with text organization, layout or style. In fact, in this group, the level of written performance did not always matched students´ own perception of their proficiency level or the expected performance due to the their language certificates. Nevertheless, this characteristic – language performance- was not regarded as an indicator of progress in academic writing for this research.

4.- Does previous experience in writing academic papers in Spanish help students affect their academic writing performance?

There is a belief that if students had had the possibility of writing essays in Spanish they may found it easier to do the same in English since they would only have to transfer the knowledge of organization and academic writing guidelines they have in their first language to English. (Peet 2000). However, according to students´ answers, this was not the case.

5.- What may be the best strategies towards improving writing to be used in the face-to-face sessions?

Zemach and Rumiseck (2005) had stated that in order to improve the writing production students needed to know the different stages of the process to detect their failure and then decide on the action plan to overcome the situation and that is why students were asked to suggest ways to improve their academic writing production.

Table 13.- Problems with Writing

	Generating ideas	Vocabulary	Use of linking words	Text organization
Students	2	2	2	5

Source: My own
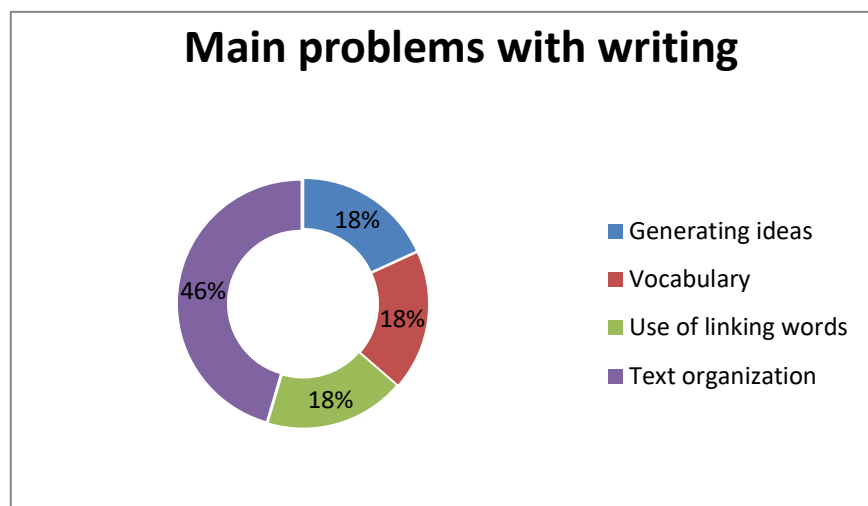
Graph 9.- Students' perception of problems with writing

From the information gathered, it was clear that students were in the position of judging what stage of the academic writing process they considered the most difficult and what action plans they had made to overcome the difficulties. Table 13 shows students´ perception of what aspect of writing was the hardest for them.

The discussion previous to the writing activity as suggested by Echevarria (2005) proved to be effective in generating students´ ideas, focusing them and providing them with a reason for writing keeping their motivation high especially when they were asked to write the paragraphs in class.

Another advantage of starting the writing sessions with a discussion on the topic that would be the theme they would write about in their essays was that it helped give writing a real purpose.

Students were also more involved in using writing as a means of transmitting the knowledge they had on the content of the module rather than worrying about how to put words on the paper, i.e. students were more relaxed and confident when they participated in these discussions than when they were just told what to write about at home.

From the students' side, when asked *What to do to perform effectively*? the results shown in Table 14 were obtained.

Table 14.- Students´ suggested ways of improving their writing skills

	No. of students
Improve Organization	4
Read more (to increase vocabulary and critical reading)	2
Write more (to practice organization, editing and proof-reading)	5

Source: My own

Students´suggestions for improvement

- Improve Organization
- Read more (to increase vocabulary and critical reading)

46%   36%   18%
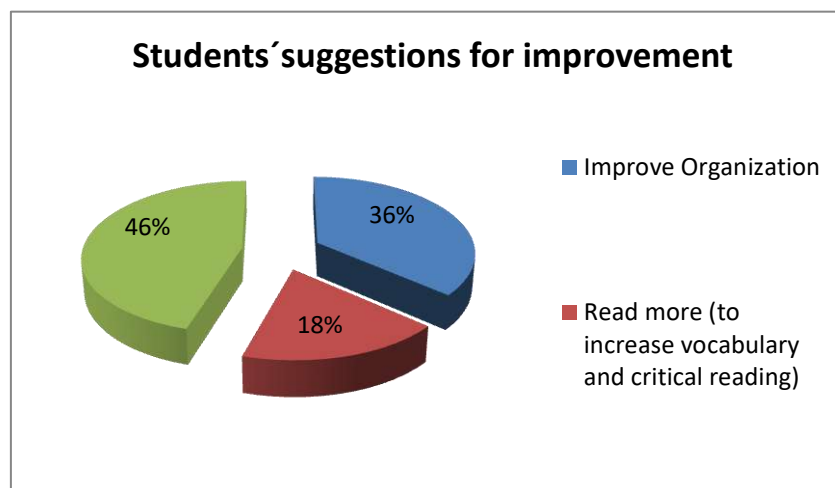
Graph 10.- Students' suggestions for improving their academic writing

As can be seen in Graph 9, more writing practice was the most popular suggestion followed by improved organization but reading more was not considered as useful.

One possible explanation for this is that students do not realize that by using critical reading they could have more sources of ideas to write about and by keeping a content-based approach they would know more about the topic of the course (Shih, 1986).

Although reading was not popular, the class discussions would help students to read critically since there were specific tasks and questions they had to answer to show they had understood and internalized the contents of the course which should hopefully lead to more critical writing (Knott, 2011).

Regarding text organization, from the comments expressed in the last sessions, students felt that knowing how to organize the different parts of a text and practicing doing that would better support their written production.

Besides, the use of colour coding for highlighting the sections of the paragraphs and essays that were related and peer- editing, helped them realize what their strengths and weaknesses at essay writing are. both for themselves and their peers. (Peet,2000).

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Unfortunately, in spite of providing students with the evaluation rubrics that they had to attach to the essay when they handed it out, they failed to use the handout as a checklist to self-edit their work before handing it in. This issue had been explained by Scrivener (2005) who had already mentioned that editing the draft and proof-reading the text were often neglected stages. This research showed that students need to be trained at revising and editing since they only did it when the activities were done in class but very rarely when they had to prepare the essay as homework.

4.2 Pedagogical implications

Although our study is rather small-scale, some pedagogical implications were drawn for teachers interested in finding out what tools may be most effective when trying to improve students´ written production of essays.

The main pedagogical implication of this research would be to make students and institutions aware of the fact that all students, even if they are teachers, need to be reminded that writing is a skill that needs to be instructed, that cannot be acquired on their own and that academic writing has the specific role of developing ideas and opinions in an effective way.

Because of the above, it is important to introduce or refresh guidelines about the type of academic texts students are expected to write before beginning a course like this, where the evaluation heavily relies on the quality of the academic paper.

As students made progress regarding their essay writing, it was obvious that some of them did not follow the convention for paragraph organization so their supporting paragraphs lacked topic sentences, explanations and even unity and coherence. For this reason, additional supplementary information on paragraph organization was presented after information on essay organization had, which is not the usual order of presentation of information in academic writing but whose necessity was not discovered until after they had produced some more essays.

Neither students nor the tutors were aware of this problem and that is why it was not solved by working on paragraph organization

before dealing with organization of essays. The Academic writing process needs to be taught in a sequence: Sentence – Paragraph – Essay.

Doing some peer-editing in class allows students to read the comments on the editing worksheet and discuss with the editor about them. All students found this activity quite useful at that moment, since sometimes the editors failed at understanding what they were supposed to look for in a paragraph. Thus, peer-editing constitutes an invaluable support for students to guarantee the quality of their written production.

The supplementary material used in this research not only presented the information on essay organization but also provided exercises for students to recognize strong or weak thesis statements or match introductions with conclusions. Students appreciated this kind of activities since it is not easy to develop the skill of writing useful thesis statements for good introductions. Therefore, a constant supplement of writing practice should help to ensure the quality of written production.

It proved very useful to encourage students to rewrite their drafts and to be guided in the writing process by positive feedback and responses- a practice that even if time consuming, paid off in the end when editors and writers could discuss the notes of the editing page.

Moreover, to expand the exposure to essay writing conventions and practice the different stages of the writing process, we could suggest that whenever there are courses with different tutors and students need to write academic pieces, all tutors share the same rubrics for essays so as to consolidate the habit of writing using the agreed conventions, as it is the case with the assignments that have an assessment criteria that is used by all the tutors of the different courses.

The final problematic area and a very important one is self-evaluation. Students are very much accustomed to finishing their work the same day they have to meet deadlines and neither revise nor proof read their papers for content and format, respectively.

On the other hand, there are also cases where students do not have the necessary tools to enable them to evaluate their production and analyze their strengths and weaknesses. Using rubrics for essay correction allowed students to use them as checklists once they

understood how language works at both paragraph and essay level. If there were a course on academic writing, it should definitely include spaces for self-editing the essay students had written before they handed it out with plenty of opportunity to make some changes where necessary.

CONCLUSIONS

Assuming that because this was a Master degree course and the students were practicing teachers, they would know how to write essays or any other types of academic writing proved to be wrong. Because of this, a kit to present students with guidelines for academic writing was useful to help students improve their performance and at the same time, the research found other factors that may contribute to it.

When students learnt the characteristics of academic writing, particularly of writing essays, they could certainly identify their problems. Because of this, it is important to introduce or refresh guidelines about the type of academic texts students are expected to write before beginning a course like this, where the evaluation heavily relies on the quality of the academic paper.

As students became familiar with the Essay writing, grades started to improve, particularly when they remembered to use the guidelines and did the practice activities. However, the grades decreased when the time lapse between one course and the other was longer than one month. Therefore, continuity is important whenever we need to break old habits and introduce the habit of respecting the writing process.

Regarding age, it can be assumed that the older the student the more likely it is that s/he has not had recent experience at writing academic papers or had not even been exposed to the conventions of

formal writing. This makes it hard to pick up on the style of writing that is needed for an academic course since they need to break their old habits for writing.

Similarly, having previous experience at writing whether in English or in Spanish did not prove to have an effect in students´ performance. However, doing peer-editing in class allowed students to read the comments on the editing worksheet and discuss with the editor about them. This was really useful since sometimes the editors failed at understanding what they were supposed to look for in the text peer editing checklist (rubrics). Thus, peer-editing constitutes an invaluable support for students to guarantee the quality of their written production.

This research showed that students need to be trained at revising and editing since they only did it when the activities were done in class but very rarely when they had to prepare the essay as homework.

Therefore, it would be advisable that in the early stages of the MTEFL course, some time could be saved for self and peer editing of the essays so as to allow students learn from their mistakes. The more students write, the better they can see the features of paragraphs and essays and the more skilled they may become.

Regarding the effect of the level of language proficiency, all students agreed that having a good level will translate into not having to worry about vocabulary or structures in the second language and focusing mostly on the conventions of paragraph and essay organization. However, regarding the use of academic conventions in writing, there was not a major difference and the progress was due mostly to individual attempts rather than language background. However, not knowing the way paragraphs or essays should be organized, their performance will not show the knowledge of the subject course the way it should.

Since writing is a process, it may be useful to start with a workshop or seminar on academic writing for students to get into the habit of planning their essay, organizing ideas and working on good introductory, supporting and concluding paragraphs even before the MTEFL –or any academic course- starts. This may provide them with the

necessary confidence to develop their writing assignments with fairly less pressure since they will only have to focus on the content of the essay.

The main contribution of this research is to draw attention to the importance of providing students who are doing an academic course in EFL with a revision of paragraph structure and essay writing before students- no matter what background they have- start it. Revising the conventions for paragraph and essay writing will allow them to focus more on the contents of the course.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research, the stage of Generating ideas was mentioned as a difficulty students had for writing their assignments in English whereas in Spanish, they felt they did not have to worry very much about this. Discussing the topic of the essay during the discussion helped students understand what they had to write about and that is why they rarely failed at fulfilling the requirement of the essays. Having mentioned this latter, it may have been interesting to do some research about students who attended classes and participated in these discussions to see if they produced essays with better content than those that missed the sessions and just read the module content.

Similarly, age, together with work responsibilities, played an important role as factors that may affect students´ performance- others than knowing the conventions for academic writing- because these students had already habits that were hard to break regarding their writing and their study strategies. Most of them worked in two or more places to make ends meet and claimed that they had little time to devote to critical reading and writing. It may be interesting to run a similar research on students who had just entered college or university to see if the effect of introducing guidelines for academic writing is much more effective in this kind of students.

Since there are some teachers from the same institution that are doing the same MTEFL course in its virtual version only but with the same requirements of the Assignment, this research could be extended to this kind of students even if they do not have to write essays but assignments since some of the conventions for academic writing apply

for both. Students say that improving their essay writing helped them improve their assignments but that is an affirmation that would need to be proved.

With this information, research could be done to test if the measures taken to overcome the problems of the students in the semi-virtual programme may help those from the virtual programme and by extension any student who enters a degree like this. That is to say, introducing material to refer to and practice on academic writing- not only writing essays but other kinds of academic texts required by the institutions.

The writing Kit used in these courses may be customized to meet the needs of the different institutions and so can be the Rubrics. There could also be some research on how long these additional writing sessions may last or even look into the possibility of doing them online so as to not interfere with the syllabus.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1   Survey: Writing Research Questionnaire
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Academic writing Research questionnaire

The answers you provide in this short questionnaire will be considered as part of a research on the importance of developing some academic writing skills prior to the development of any University course .

Please take time to answer the questions as fully and accurate as possible.

About You
1. **Last name**
2. **First name**
3. **Age:** Less than 25   from 25 – 30   from 30 - 40
               over 40
4. **Sex :** male   female

Native language background
1. **Have you written essays in your native language?**   Yes
               No
2. **If the answer to the above question was Yes, please indicate the level by checking any that apply**
- High School for International Baccalaureate (or equivalent)
- At college for a certificate or diploma (after the age of 18)
- At university for an undergraduate degree
- At university for a post-graduate degree
- Other

Proficiency level
1. **How would you rate your spoken English? (1 = poor, 5= fluent)**
   1.-   2.-   3.-   4.-   5.-
2. **How would you rate your written English? (1= poor, 5= excellent)**
   1.   2.-   3.-   4.-   5.-
3. **If you have taken an English test (whether at your institution or as part of your own teaching development) please give the title of your test and your score**

4. **Have you written essays in English before this course?**   Yes
               No
5. **If the answer to the above question was Yes, please indicate the level by checking any that apply**
   High School   University
   College   Other
   Professional

Appendix 2
Writing Kit Handout 1

Writing Essays Kit
Introductions and Thesis Statements

Thesis statements

⟳ **What is a thesis statement?**

The *thesis statement* is the sentence that tells the main idea of the whole essay. It can be compared to a topic sentence, which gives the main idea of a paragraph. It usually comes at or near the end of the introductory paragraph.

In these introductory paragraphs, underline the thesis statement. Then circle the topic and draw another line under the main idea in each thesis statement. Share your answers with a partner.

a.

Before I travelled to the UK last year, I thought that British food was just fish and chips, roast beef, apple pie, rice pudding and endless cups of tea. These foods are popular in Britain, but during my travels, I discovered that there is so much more to eating in the UK. People from all over the world have made their home in Britain, and they have brought with them their own food. Even in small towns, you can find Chinese, Indian and Italian restaurants, amongst others. The UK can be divided into different regions that each has its own characteristic foods influenced by the culture of the people who live there.

b.

Everybody knows the koala, that sweet Australian animal that resembles a teddy bear. Although koalas look like toys, they are actually strong climbers and spend their days in the treetops. Mother koalas carry their babies around from tree to tree in a pouch, or pocket, on their stomach. Although there were millions of koalas in Australia in the past, they are now a protected species of animal. As a result of human population growth, deforestation and hunting, the number of koalas has declined.

c.

Taoism is an ancient philosophy from Asia that places great importance on the natural world. Taoists believe that spirit can be found in every person or thing, living or non-living. For the Taoist, even a mountain or a stone contains spirit. Lao Tsu, a Taoist writer and philosopher, said, 'People follow earth. Earth follows heaven. Heaven follows the Tao. The Tao follows what is natural'. For thousands of years in China and other Asian countries, gardens have been an important way to create a place where people can feel the spirit of the natural world. Creating a Taoist garden is an art. No two Taoist gardens are exactly alike, but all Taoist gardens include four essential elements: water, mountains, buildings and bridges.

From: Zemach, D. & Rumisek, L.(2005). Academic Writing From Paragraph to Essay. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers. p58

Thesis statements

Writing a strong thesis statement

- A thesis statement gives the author's opinion or states an important idea about the topic. It should give an idea that can be discussed and explained with supporting ideas:

  The qualifications for getting into university in my country are unreasonable.

  When studying a foreign language, there are several ways to improve your use of the language.

  These are strong thesis statements. They can be discussed or explained.

- A thesis statement should not be a sentence that only gives a fact about the topic:

  In the Northern Hemisphere, the summer months are warmer than the winter months.

  This is not a strong thesis statement. It cannot be discussed or argued about.

- A thesis statement should not state two sides of an argument equally:

  There are advantages and disadvantages to using nuclear power.

  This could be a topic sentence, but it is not a thesis statement. It gives two sides of an argument without giving a clear opinion of support or disagreement. It could be revised like this:

  Although there are some advantages, using nuclear power has many disadvantages and should not be a part of our country's energy plan.

  This is a strong thesis statement. It clearly gives the writer's opinion about nuclear power.

Read these thesis statements below. Write ✓ (strong thesis statement), F (fact only—a weak thesis statement), or N (no clear opinion—a weak thesis statement).

a. .... The top government official in my country is the prime minister.

b. .... Some people prefer digital cameras, while others like traditional cameras.

c. .... India became an independent country in 1947.

d. .... To be a successful student, good study habits are more important than intelligence.

e. .... There are several advantages of owning a car, but there are also many disadvantages.

f. .... Half of the families in my country own a house.

g. .... Using public transport would be one of the best ways to solve the traffic and pollution problems in cities around the world.

h. .... While travelling, staying in a hotel offers more comfort, but sleeping in a tent is less expensive.

i. .... Classical music concerts are very popular in my country.

j. .... In order to create a successful advertisement, it is necessary to consider three issues: who should be targeted, where the advert should be placed, and what type of advert should be made.

Zemach, D. Rumisek, L. (2005). Academic Writing from Paragraph to Essay. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers, p 59

Outlining an Essay

Fill in this outline for the essay on The Changing Vocabulary of English.
Then compare with a partner.

The Changing Vocabulary of English

I. Thesis statement: ....

II. Words introduced by ....

    A. ....

        1. From an African language

        2. Now used all over the world to mean ....

    B. Jazz

        1. Came from ....

        2. Exact origin unknown

III. ....

    A. Cool

        1. ....

        2. New meanings

    B. ....

        1. Original meaning

        2. ....

IV. ....: Existing ethnic groups in the United States as well as new immigrants will certainly continue to bring new words to English and give fresh meanings to existing words.

Zemach, D. & Rumisek, L. (2005). Academic Writing from Paragraph to Essay. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers, p 66

The Structure of an Essay

Changing English: the African American Influence

If you ask average Americans where their language comes from, they will probably say 'England'. However, English vocabulary has also been influenced by other countries and groups of people. Some words are borrowed from other languages, such as *typhoon*, which originally came from the Chinese word, 'tai-fung', meaning 'big wind'. *Skunk*, the name of a small, smelly, black-and-white animal, came to English from a Native American language. African Americans, too, have both contributed new words to English and changed the meanings of some existing words.

African Americans, many of whose ancestors were brought to the States as slaves hundreds of years ago, have introduced a number of words to English from languages that they spoke in their native countries. The common English word *OK* is used around the world today, but it was not always part of English vocabulary. One theory is that slaves in America used a phrase in their own language that sounded like *OK* to mean 'all right'. Americans heard the phrase and started using it. Today, almost everyone in the world uses *OK* to mean 'all right'. Another good example of a 'new' word is the word *jazz*. African American musicians living in the United States began playing jazz music in the city of New Orleans, and they used the word *jass* or *jazz* to describe the music and certain kinds of dancing. No one is sure where the word originally came from, but as jazz music became more and more popular, the word *jazz* became a common English word.

The meanings of words sometimes change over time. The word *cool* is a good example. *Cool* has been used in English for a long time to describe a temperature that is 'not warm but not too cold' or to describe a person who is 'calm or unemotional'. However, an additional meaning was given to the word *cool* in the past 100 years. Just like the word *jazz*, African American musicians used the word *cool* to describe the music they were playing. For them, *cool* meant 'good'. As jazz music and other forms of music played by African American musicians became popular, more and more people started to use the word *cool* in conversation. Today, it is still a commonly used word, especially by younger people, to mean 'good' or 'great'. A word with the opposite meaning of *cool* is *square*. Square is, of course, a shape, but it also is used to describe a person who is not cool. This may be because a person who is too old-fashioned and not flexible is like a shape with four straight sides and four corners.

English owes some of its interesting and colourful vocabulary to African Americans. Existing ethnic groups in the United States as well as new immigrants will surely continue to bring new words to English and give fresh meanings to existing words. Who knows what the 'cool' words of tomorrow will be?

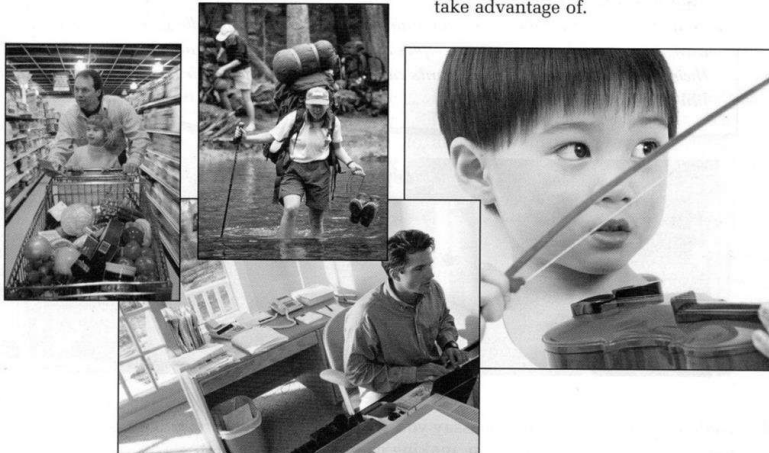Zemach,D. & Rumisek, L. (2005). Academic Writing from Paragraph to Essay. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers, p 58

Introductions and Conclusions

Types of information

⊃ **How to make an introduction interesting**
To make an introductory paragraph interesting for the reader, you can include ...

- interesting facts or statistics.
- a personal story or example.
- an interesting quotation.

> Did you know that the average human eye blinks 20,000 times every day?
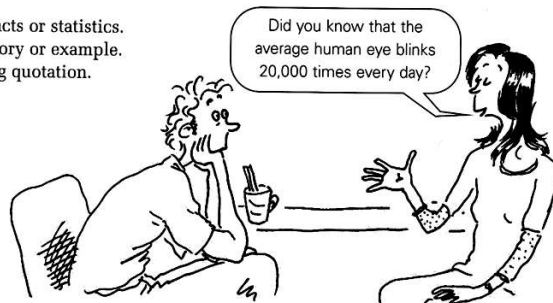
Read the three introductions from **Writing Kit : Handout 1**, page 1. What types of information does each introductory paragraph contain?

The conclusion

⊃ **The importance of a conclusion**
The conclusion is the final paragraph of the essay. A good concluding paragraph ...

- summarises the main points of the essay.
- restates the thesis (using different words).
- makes a final comment about the essay's main idea.
- may emphasise an action that you would like the reader to take.

Don't introduce new ideas in a conclusion. A conclusion only restates or gives further commentary on ideas discussed in the essay.

Look at the essay in Unit 8, exercise 1 on page 57 again. Answer these questions.

a. Does the conclusion use any of the four techniques described above? Which ones?

....

....

b. Which sentence in the conclusion restates the thesis (from the introduction)?

....

....

Zemach,D. & Rumisek, L. (2005). Academic Writing from Paragraph to Essay. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers, p 66

Introductions and Conclusions Practice Activity

Match each of these introduction thesis statements with its rewritten version for a conclusion.

a. ...... Supermarkets are the best places to buy food because of their convenience and lower prices.

b. ...... Travelling abroad is a valuable learning experience.

c. ...... Learning to play a musical instrument is very beneficial for children.

d. ...... Creating and owning a business offers more advantages than working as an employee in a company.

e. ...... More houses should be adapted to use solar energy because it is clean and renewable.

f. ...... The World Wide Web can be very useful for research, but it also contains a lot of incorrect information.

1. People can learn many things by travelling to other countries.

2. Despite the challenges, being an entrepreneur can offer more benefits than other types of employment.

3. The fact that larger supermarkets offer cheap prices and a large selection of products makes them the best place for shoppers.

4. The World Wide Web gives access to a huge amount of knowledge, but users shouldn't believe everything they read there.

5. When children are exposed to music and are taught to play instruments such as the piano or violin, there are many positive effects.

6. The sun gives a constant, free supply of clean energy, which more homes should take advantage of.

Zemach,D. & Rumisek, L. (2005). Academic Writing from Paragraph to Essay. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers, p 75

The Two Parts of a Topic Sentence

As noted earlier a topic sentence has two essential parts: the **topic** and the **controlling idea**. The topic names the subject of the paragraph. The controlling idea limits or controls the topic to a specific area that you can discuss in the space of a single paragraph.

> TOPIC   CONTROLLING IDEA
> (Convenience foods) are easy to prepare.

The reader immediately knows that this paragraph will discuss how easy it is to prepare convenience foods and perhaps give some examples (canned soup, frozen dinners, and so on).

> CONTROLLING IDEA   TOPIC
> Immigrants have contributed many delicious foods to (U.S. cuisine.)

The reader of this topic sentence expects to read about various ethnic foods popular in the United States: tacos, egg rolls, sushi, baklava, pizza, and so on.

A topic sentence should not have controlling ideas that are unrelated. The three parts of the following controlling idea are too unrelated for a single paragraph. They require three separate paragraphs (and perhaps more) to explain fully.

TOO MANY IDEAS

Indie films are characterized by experimental techniques, low production costs, and provocative themes.

GOOD

Independent films are characterized by experimental techniques.

PRACTICE 2

Identifying the Parts of a Topic Sentence

Circle the topic and underline the controlling idea in each of the following sentences. The first one has been done for you as an example.

1. (Driving on freeways) requires skill and alertness.
2. Driving on freeways requires strong nerves.
3. Driving on freeways requires an aggressive attitude.
4. The Caribbean island of Trinidad attracts tourists because of its calypso music.
5. Spectacular beaches make Puerto Rico a tourist paradise.
6. Moving away from home can be a stressful experience for young people.
7. Many religious rules arose from the health needs of ancient times.
8. A major problem for many students is the high cost of tuition and books.
9. Participating in class discussions is a problem for several different groups of students.
10. In my opinion, television commercials for cosmetics lie to women.
11. Owning an automobile is a necessity for me.
12. It is an expensive luxury to own an automobile in a large city.
13. Taste and appearance are both important in Japanese cuisine.

Oshima, A & Hogue, A.(2006). Writing Academic English. NY:Pearson Education, Inc, p 9

The Concluding Sentence

A concluding sentence serves two purposes:

1. It signals the end of the paragraph.
2. It leaves the reader with the most important ideas to remember. It can do this in two ways:
   - By summarizing the main points of the paragraph
     OR
   - By repeating the topic sentence in different words

A paragraph does not always need a concluding sentence. For single paragraphs, especially long ones, a concluding sentence is helpful to the reader because it is a reminder of the important points. However, a concluding sentence is not needed for every paragraph in a multiparagraph essay.

You may want to begin your concluding sentence with one of the signals in the list on page 14. You may also end a paragraph without a formal signal or perhaps by using an expression like those in the column on the right.

Examples of paragraphs

Paragraph A: Paragraph without Support

Red-Light Running

Although some people think that red-light running is a minor traffic violation that is no worse than jaywalking,[1] it can, in fact, become a deadly crime. Red-light runners cause accidents all the time. Sometimes people are seriously injured and even killed. It is especially a problem in rush hour traffic. Everyone is in a hurry to get home, so drivers run red lights everywhere. The police do not do much about it because they are too busy. The only time they pay attention is when there is an accident, and then it is too late. In conclusion, running a red light is a serious offense.

Paragraph B: Paragraph with Support

Red-Light Running

[1]Although some people think red-light running is a minor traffic violation that is no worse than jaywalking, it can, in fact, become a deadly crime. [2]Red-light runners cause hundreds of accidents, including deaths and injuries as well as millions of dollars in damages. [3]Each year more than 900 people die, and nearly 200,000 are injured in crashes that involve red-light running. [4]Motorists run red lights all the time. [5]For example, in Fairfax, Virginia, a five-month-long survey at five busy intersections revealed that a motorist ran a red light every 20 minutes. [6]Red-light runners are seldom caught. [7]According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, "Communities don't have the resources to allow police to patrol intersections as often as would be needed to ticket all motorists who run red lights" ("Q&A").[2]

Oshima, A & Hogue, A.(2006). Writing Academic English. NY:Pearson Education, Inc, p 13, 14

End of paragraph signals

End-of-Paragraph Signals Followed by a Comma		End-of-Paragraph Signals Not Followed by a Comma
Finally,	Lastly,	The evidence suggests that . . .
In brief,	Therefore,	There can be no doubt that . . .
In conclusion,	Thus,	These examples show that . . .
Indeed,	To sum up,	We can see that . . .
In short,		

Notes
1. Many writing teachers think *In conclusion* and *In summary* are overused and so will not want you to use them.
2. Do not use the phrase *At last* as an end-of-paragraph signal. *At last* means "at the end of a long period of time," as in this sentence: *At last, you've come home.*

The models that follow demonstrate the two ways of writing a concluding sentence. As you read them, determine which concluding sentence summarizes the main points and which concluding sentence repeats the topic sentence in different words.

MODELS
Concluding Sentences

Greeting Cards

Have you noticed how many different kinds of greeting cards you can buy these days? In the old days, the local drugstore had one rack displaying maybe five or six basic kinds of cards. You could walk into the store and choose an appropriate card in five minutes or less. Nowadays, however, the display space for greeting cards is as big as a soccer field, and it may take an hour or two to hunt down exactly the right card with exactly the right message. There are at least 30 categories of birthday cards alone: birthday cards for different ages, from different ages, for different relatives, from different relatives, for different genders, from different genders, from a couple, from the office, for dog owners, for cat owners, and so on. There are cards for getting a job, for retiring from a job, for acquiring a pet, for losing a pet, for becoming engaged, for breaking up. There are also greeting cards to send for no reason—"Thinking of you" or "Just because" cards. The newest type of card is the "encouragement card." An encouragement card offers comforting thoughts and helpful advice to someone who is sad or distressed in these troubled times. In short, there is now a greeting card for every possible life event and for a few nonevents as well.

Oshima, A & Hogue, A.(2006). Writing Academic English. NY:Pearson Education, Inc, p 14
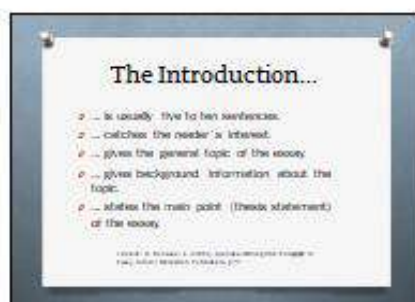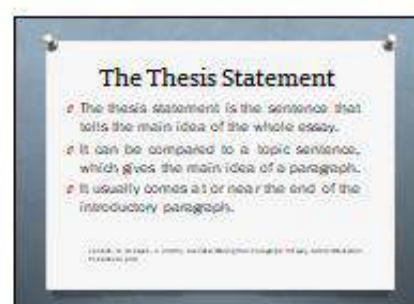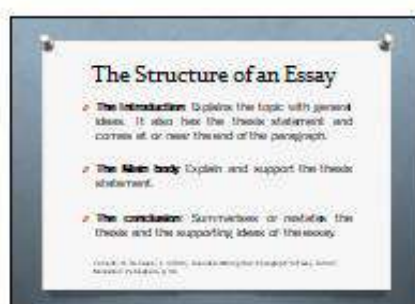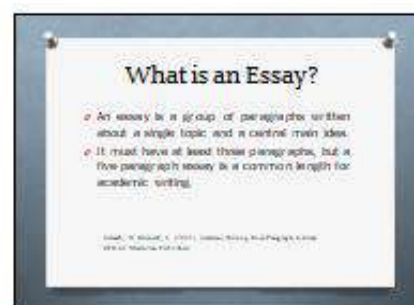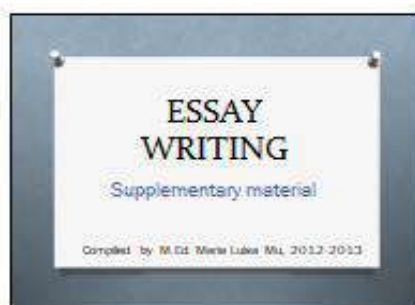
Another Example

A Hawaiian Legend

Native people create legends to explain unusual phenomena in their environment. A legend from the Hawaiian island of Kauai explains how the naupaka flower, a flower that grows on beaches there, got its unusual shape. The flower looks like half a small daisy—there are petals on one side only. The legend says that the marriage of two young lovers on the island was opposed by both sets of parents. The parents found the couple together on a beach one day, and to prevent them from being together, one of the families moved to the mountains, separating the young couple forever. As a result, the naupaka flower separated into two halves; one half moved to the mountains, and the other half stayed near the beach. This story is a good example of a legend invented by native people to interpret the world around them.

Oshima, A & Hogue, A.(2006). Writing Academic English. NY:Pearson Education, Inc, P15

Appendix 5
Essay writing slideshare

ESSAY WRITING
Supplementary material

Compiled by M.Ed. Maria Luisa Mu, 2012-2013

What is an Essay?

- An essay is a group of paragraphs written about a single topic and a central main idea.
- It must have at least three paragraphs, but a five-paragraph essay is a common length for academic writing.

The Structure of an Essay

- **The Introduction:** Explains the topic with general ideas. It also has the thesis statement and comes at or near the end of the paragraph.
- **The Main body:** Explain and support the thesis statement.
- **The conclusion:** Summarizes or restates the thesis and the supporting ideas of the essay.

The Thesis Statement

- The thesis statement is the sentence that tells the main idea of the whole essay.
- It can be compared to a topic sentence, which gives the main idea of a paragraph.
- It usually comes at or near the end of the introductory paragraph.

The Introduction...

- ... is usually five to ten sentences.
- ... catches the reader's interest.
- ... gives the general topic of the essay.
- ... gives background information about the topic.
- ... states the main point (thesis statement) of the essay.

How to make an introduction interesting

- Include ...
- ...interesting facts or statistics.
- ... a personal story or example.
- ... an interesting quotation.

Paragraph Writing

Compiled by M.Ed. Marie Luísa Mu, 2012-2013

The topic sentence

What is a paragraph?

Topic sentences

Paragraph organisation

Supporting sentences

Supporting sentences

The Concluding Sentence

- A concluding sentence serves two purposes:
- It signals the end of the paragraph.
- It leaves the reader with the most important ideas to remember by summarizing the main points of the paragraph or by repeating the topic sentences in different ways.

Example of supporting Sentences

Structure
Example
Quotations

End of Paragraph Signals

The Concluding Sentence

- It is the final sentence of a paragraph.
- It sums up the main points or restates the main idea in a different way.
- It reminds the reader of what the writer's main idea and supporting points were.
- It should give the same information in a slightly different way.
- It should not introduce a new point.

Concluding Sentences: Another example

A Hawaiian Legend

Native people create legends to explain unusual phenomena in their environment. A legend from the Hawaiian island of Kauai explains how the hauloula flower, a flower that grows on beaches there, got its unusual shape. The flower looks like half a small daisy—there are petals on one side only. The legend says that the marriage of two young lovers on the island was opposed by both sets of parents. The parents found the couple together on a beach one day and to prevent them from being together, one of the families moved to the mountains, separating the young couple forever. As a result, the hauloula flower separated into two halves, one half moved to the mountains, and the other half stayed near the beach. This story is a good example of a legend invented by native people to interpret the world around them.

Peer Editing

- There are two reasons for peer-editing:
- To get a reader's opinion about your writing (whether you should add more details, something is not organized clearly, you have some information that is not relevant).
- To read more examples of writing.

Heath, R. Besant, J. (2005). Active Writing Two. Copyright © Guy Writer Means Publishing ??

How to peer-edit

- Read the work around times. The first time from the beginning to an end, the second time more slowly and look for specific parts of the writing.
- Look for topic sentences and concluding sentences.
- Note places where it is difficult to understand and where there is unnecessary information.
- Pay attention just to the content and organization of the work.

Heath, R. Besant, J. (2005). Active Writing Two Copyright © Guy Writer Means Publishing ??

Introduction is missing

LEARNING STRATEGIES ESSAY

Topic: "How important is learning strategies instruction in your syllabus and course development"

why to go mention this?

Before introducing the use of the syllabus for classroom instruction, I want to mention what Faerch and Kasper(1980) stated about a process which is a sequence of operations in the development of a plan, and a strategy which is defined as a single operation or feature of that process. I am using the English III syllabus at a pre-intermediate level taught at the university. The syllabus meets some of the requirements that academic English needs; for example, it mentions the hours, the weeks, the type of studies either autonomous or in a classroom setting, and it gives a simple explanation of the learning activities students should enroll while in class. It also gives us the resources to use, but it does not explain what learning strategy the teacher is teaching to get students to learn in a better way. I like the definition that a strategy is a one single operation of one plan. I want to write about the learning strategies I can adapt to the syllabus on a weekly basis including important studies made by Oxford, Rubin, Naiman, O'Malley, Chamot's, and Valcarcel's etc. as well; and to give examples of my own teaching and what improvement do I need to make in course development to assure productive monitoring on how students are learning.

Adapting learning strategies to my syllabus will definitely help in my participation and observation on how students can help themselves learn. I will start with one topic students have to do according to syllabus that is the Writing Workshops. The syllabus only tells us that the student should achieve a competence of being able to write four paragraphs about finding a job and nothing else. We know that this skill is many times hard to achieve because it is a skill that is learnt as a process of processes. As Naiman's taxonomy says, '...in learning to write we can use pen pals, writing frequently, and the frequent reading of what you expect to write." This is a good point to encourage my students to have maybe not pen pals, but friends through Facebook writing to each other about their everyday life. I would recommend them to read short articles about successful young people and how they found their first job. As I have said many times to my students, you start reading in English..then you will think in English and write in English. Furthermore, I want to mention O'Malley and Chamot (1990) in talking about the metacognitive strategy that is the planning which is generating a plan for the parts, sequence, and main ideas for writing. This means not just telling students "today you have to write a four paragraph essay", but there is a previous organization. Also, in the syllabus there is a topic to be covered every week with its learning activity. Each unit covers language, vocabulary and practice, but it just gives a general explanation of the competence as a goal. We do not know how the student's strategy is for learning. We have very little knowledge, but we can measure their progress by pop quizzes or longer quizzes. I would add in the syllabus a column on learning strategies to be used. For instance, organizational planning for the writing process; self-management on how well can a student learn vocabulary on teaching how to study;

writing

Perhaps you should divide this paragraph in two since it looks as if there are two differential being analyzed

activate background knowledge in the writing and reading use what you already know, elaborate on prior knowledge. These are some strategies to consider when rewriting the pre-intermediate English course.

Giving examples of my own teaching can best be described as when I teach vocabulary. I usually use pictures, or ppt's to explain words that are difficult to learn such as in the chapter of Describing illnesses, we have sore throat, sneeze, runny nose, aching all over, temperature, flu or cold etc. By reading the direct/indirect LS taxonomy (Oxford 1990), you can help by creating mental linkages: associating, elaborating, *How?* placing the new words into context; applying images and sounds: using imagery, using keywords, by representing sounds in memory, and using mechanical techniques as in acting out. Eg. Sneezing On the other hand, Oxford's affective strategies are helpful. Encouraging yourself with positive statements. Discussing your *Again,* feelings with someone else can help students in their learning process because if a teacher applies these *you seem to* strategies those weak ones will feel better. They will not be shy to participate in class. I have even *Talking abo* recommended stronger students to write a language learning diary. Jot down every single way they are *different th* learning English, by using music, or using cd's from the book and to write it down. They need to get *here.* encouragement when a goal is reached. Another point to mention is to discuss your feelings with someone else because it is a need. You are not alone in this big challenge of learning a foreign language. Share your success and failures. I think this will help students overcome future jobs where they can encounter bosses with a bossy attitude.

I must say that the use of learning strategies by a huge group of heterogeneous college students varies enormously. It is affected by many factors such as family relationships, career decision, age etc. and not only on classifying a student as poor or excellent. I believe the best strategy to choose will come with the task the student has been given. It is also important to mention that we have an array of auditory, visual or kinesthetic individuals who have a different learning style. The age factor is also important in LS because learning develops in stages young, young adult, adults etc. which makes learning strategies more sophisticated with time. I used to hate to write in English, but as time went on and having to take an academic autobiography writing class at college, I started to enjoy and love it. This attitude I try to motivate in my students to write about themselves in the L2 language and see how it feels. To edit their writing once in a while or ask the teacher to read it so they can see improvements. Finally, I like what Oxford (1990) says " there is no complete agreement on exactly what strategies are, how many strategies exist, how they should be defined...and categorized." It is the teacher who will have to decide what learning strategies to use in her classroom. She or he should encourage students on teaching students how to learn to learn. It is important to add a few learning strategies in the syllabus for the teacher to incorporate it into her class goals too.

Conclusion?

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Appendix 8
Rubrics to Correct Essays

Scoring Rubric: Essays

	Maximum Score	Actual Score
Format—5 points		
Title centered (2), first line of each paragraph indented (1), margins on both sides (1), text double-spaced (1)		
Total	5	
Mechanics—5 points		
Punctuation: periods, commas, semicolons, quotation marks (3), capitalization (1), spelling (1)		
Total	5	
Content—20 points		
The essay fulfills the requirements of the assignment.	5	—
The essay is interesting to read.	5	—
The essay shows that the writer used care and thought.	10	—
Total	20	
Organization—45 points		
The essay follows the outline, and it has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.	5	—
Introduction: The introduction ends with the thesis statement.	5	—
Body		
Each paragraph of the body discusses a new point and begins with a clear topic sentence.	5	—
Each paragraph has specific supporting material: facts, examples, quotations, paraphrased or summarized information, etc.	10	—
Each paragraph has unity.	5	—
Each paragraph has coherence.	5	—
Transitions are used to link paragraphs.	5	—
Conclusion: The conclusion summarizes the main points or paraphrases the thesis statement, begins with a conclusion signal, and leaves the reader with the writer's final thoughts on the topic.	5	—
Total	45	
Grammar and Sentence Structure—25 points		
Estimate a grammar and sentence structure score.	25	
Grand Total	100	

Oshima, A & Hogue, A.(2006). Writing Academic English. NY:Pearson Education, Inc, p 316

Indicators for the Organization section of the Essay Rubrics

0	1	2	3	4	5
Essay has no distinctive introduction, body and conclusion organization	There is an attempt to organize the essay in three parts but the introduction and conclusion are not fully distinctive	Most paragraphs are independent and no introduction is distinctive. The final paragraph is just a long sentence preceded by the words: Finally or As a Conclusion.	The introductory paragraph is a long paragraph but develops in full the main topic of the essay.	Either the introduction or the conclusion is absent.	Essay has a distinctive introduction, body and conclusion organization.
The first paragraph is not an introductory paragraph	The initial paragraphs, somehow introduces the essay but there is no thesis statement.	The thesis statement states two sides of an argument equally.	The thesis statement only gives a fact about the topic.	The thesis statement is not the last sentence of the introduction.	The introduction ends with a thesis statement.
None of the paragraphs is supported by specific supporting material	In most paragraphs the supporting material does not really support the information of the paragraphs. (2)	Only one paragraph is supported by specific supporting material: quotations, examples. (4)	When using quotes to support material there is no mention to author. However, examples are good .(6)	Most paragraphs of the essay have specific supporting material. (8)	Each paragraph of the essay has specific supporting material. (10)
None of the paragraphs show unity.	Most paragraphs are too long and each one develops several ideas, some of them have no connexion with the topic of the essay.	Each paragraph develops several ideas related to the topic of the essay but do not focus on the topic of the paragraph.	Only one paragraph shows unity and develops one of the topics of the essay fully.	Most paragraphs develop the ideas stated in the thesis statement or in the topic sentence.	Each paragraph of the essay has unity.
None of the paragraphs of the essay show coherence.	Only one paragraph shows some coherence in the development of the topic.	There are cohesive devices but their choice makes the ideas they connect unclear.	Some of the paragraphs show coherence but lack of enough cohesive devices makes it hard to read.	Most of the ideas in the paragraphs are arranged in clear and logical way.	Each paragraph of the essay has coherence.
No transitions are used to link paragraphs	Paragraphs of the essay seem to be disconnected one from another.	The only transition used to link paragraphs of the essay is the one that shows the conclusion.	Lack of enough transitions make it hard to understand if paragraphs are connected or not.	Transitions are not correctly used and mislead understanding.	Transitions are used to link paragraphs
There is not a conclusive paragraph	Final paragraph continues the previous one and only the last sentences seem to conclude the topic.	Final paragraph is preceded by a transition but it really introduces new topics.	Final paragraph is just a sentence preceded by the transition: As a conclusion or To sum up.	Conclusive paragraph summarizes the main points but introduces new arguments	Conclusion summarizes the main points or paraphrases the thesis statement

ACADEMIC WRITING RESEARCH INTERVIEW
Date _____   Time _____
Place _____
Interviewer: Maria Luisa Mu
Interviewee Name _____

Informed level of proficiency in English _____

1. What types of writing do you do in your native language?
2. Do you think that writing in English is more difficult than writing in Spanish?
3. Could you define academic writing?
4. What do you find most difficult in writing academic English? Getting ideas, planning, the organization of the text, the kind of language that needs to be used, self-evaluation, any other?
5. Do you think that if you have a good level of language that would help you write better in English?
6. Do you think that your experience at writing in Spanish helps you to write in English?
7. Did you know that you had to write essays and assignments when you registered in this course?
8. Did you know the features of paragraph and essay organization before entering the course?
9. What do you think you need to do to improve your academic writing?
10. Do you think that the supplementary material provided and the time spent during some of the modules for academic writing has had any effect in your current level of academic writing?

Observations:

Appendix 10
Transcripts of some of the Interviews

(Student 2)
T : Do you think that writing in English is more difficult than writing in Spanish?
S: I think that ah.. it would depend on the type of text to write.
T : Which would you say is more difficult? Type of text?
S: In English. ..Well, I think that both in English and in Spanish academic writing ahhhh… I mean text that implies doing some research, writing based on a format…
T: aha, Ok. According to that, how would you define academic writing?
S:..er…Well , it´s a… let´s see. It´s a task that is based on a specific topic that follows certain patterns, you know and if we do not stick to those then… the product may not be the one expected.
T: Mhhm. And what do you find most difficult for producing this kind of texts? Academic writing I mean? Getting ideas? Planning? Organization?
S: mmmm . I think the whole… the whole process is.. er.. challenging and demanding…mmm I wouldn´t say difficult or maybe the level of difficulty may depend on the topic to be… the topic we would have to write about. No?, so In that sense, the Collection of ideas or information maybe…. is the hard one, no?
T: Alright Do you think that if you have a good level of language, that would help you write better in English or there is no connection?
S: I think ..right.. that having a good level of writing skills in native language helps a lot writing in foreign language . I mean If you know to how to organize your ideas in Spanish, how to produce texts in Spanish, how to punctuate, then I think the process is less complicated in English. That is as long as we have the mmm the required level in English to produce what we are asked to do.
T: Mhhmm. And your experience at writing in Spanish helps in some way?
S: To do academic writing in English?
T: Mmmhmm ?
S: Actually I would say no much. I don´t remember writing academically in Spanish.. mm… at university there were basically.. because of the courses I took at university there were.. workshops so there was no much academic writing and since I do not write did not write a thesis then it would be more complicated
T: When you registered in these courses did you know how to write essays and assignments in English?
S: I had some ideas but …er….
T: Formally?
S: But… Ideas acquired as part of my teaching career but I would say that I learned… a lot in here
T: What do you think you need to do to improve your academic writing?
S: To write more . Yes, To write more and to be aware of what the steps to be followed are and the format as well. That I think will help. Actually it helps me a lot now. Whenever I am asked to write, I mean,
As part of this master course I think it´s not as complicated as it used to be
T: So you think the supplementary material that´s been worked on during some of the modules helped?

S: A lot. I am not saying that now I don´t find it difficult but not as difficult as it used to be.

T: All right. Thank you very much.

(Student 6)

T: Thank you for answering these questions. This is about academic writing research. Keila, do you think that writing in English is more difficult than writing in Spanish?

S: Well, In my personal opinion, I think so ..that… I think that English.. writing in English is kind of difficult than   writing in Spanish. in Spanish maybe because you have a lot of words, a lot of vocabulary and in English well, it is necessary to have the real connectors, the connectors that are going to be useful for the… academic writing. Er.. Sometimes to know use of structures. I think that is easier writing in Spanish than writing in English.

T: How would you define academic writing?

S: Academic writing for me is… a… flow of structure. Is introduction, having   an Introduction and body and conclusion and also …organization of ideas that we have in all the essays or the writing that we are doing.

T: When you are writing an essay for example or doing academic writing what do you find most difficult? The planning? The format? The organization?

S: The organization. For me , the most difficult is the organization because sometimes we start writing and when we write….. is just that we continue with the ideas writing the ideas but we don´t have a ….. an organization .And this is happens to me, maybe I start writing something in the introduction And maybe that introduction is some ideas that happen in conclusion so my organization sometimes is not so good.

T: Ok. Do you I think that if you have a good level of language this is going to help people write better?

S: Yes, I think so that if you have a good level of language it could help because of the vocabulary and the words that you are going to use…   because informal words sometimes are so different than the standard level that we are going to write. It is not the same and informal or formal vocabulary and also the linker words that we are going to use are different. maybe I can use all the time *and* or *but* or *so* … I have to use another ones: *furthermore*, or *however* and other linkers that are.. that have a different kind of level.

T: Did you know that you had to write essays and assignments when you registered in this course? In the master degree?

S: In the master degree? No I didn't know , I didn´t know anything about that I had to write essays.. at this time because…. I remember that I wrote essays at the university for some kinds of presentation that I had for homework but never, never they taught me the correct way to write an essay. All the time have an introduction, body and conclusion but I didn´t know about the thesis statement, the topic sentence or maybe order my paragraph short in order to… to… understand.. that the people that are going to read it can understand   better This is something that was really difficult for me in the master classes

T: What do you think you need to do to improve your academic writing?

S: To improve my academic writing I think that I have to learn more vocabulary and also organize better my ideas I think that I need to organize better my ideas in order to maybe focus in… some kind of sentence   and try to develop step by step because in an

essay everything is… something that you are going to write in the part of introduction you have to develop each step by step in the writing . This is something   that I need the organization. This is difficult for me, again, organization

T:Do you think that the supplementary material that we´ve been dealing with had any effect on your essay writing along the course?

S:Yes, the supplementary material is really useful because you can   learn better. Because If you watch other essays so like examples. for me it was really useful, it was really useful it is just that   sometimes I don´t have time enough time to check it but I have to do it I have to do it. This is like a challenge for me right now. To start writing the best that I can and try to order my ideas and with that supplementary material it is really useful.

T: Thank you very much.

Appendix 11
Peer-editing Essay Writing worksheet

Peer-Editing Worksheet 4
Chapter 4: From Paragraph to Essay

Peer Editor: _____ Date: _____

1. What kind of introduction does this essay have? (funnel, dramatic, etc.)
   _____
   How many sentences does it contain? _____
   Does it capture your interest?   ☐ yes   ☐ no
   Where is the thesis statement placed?
   _____

2. How many paragraphs are there in the body? Number: _____
   The topics of the body paragraphs are as follows:
   1. _____   3. _____
   2. _____   4. _____
   (If there are more or fewer paragraphs, add or delete lines.)

3. What kind of supporting details does the writer use in each body paragraph?
   1. _____   3. _____
   2. _____   4. _____

4. Check each paragraph for unity. Is any sentence unnecessary or
   "off the topic?"   ☐ yes   ☐ no
   If your answer is yes, write a comment about it (them).
   _____

5. Check each paragraph for coherence. Does each one flow smoothly
   from beginning to end?   ☐ yes   ☐ no
   What key nouns are repeated? _____
   What transition signals can you find? _____
   _____

6. What expressions does the writer use to link paragraphs? If there is none, write none. (If there are
   more or fewer paragraphs, add or delete lines.)
   To introduce the first body paragraph _____
   Between paragraphs 2 and 3 _____
   Between paragraphs 3 and 4 _____
   Between paragraphs 4 and 5 _____
   To introduce the conclusion: _____

7. What kind of conclusion does this essay have—a summary of the main points or a paraphrase of the
   thesis statement? _____
   Does the writer make a final comment?   ☐ yes   ☐ no
   What is it? _____
   Is this an effective ending (one that you will remember)?   ☐ yes   ☐ no

8. In your opinion, what is the best feature of this essay? In other words, what is this writer's best
   writing skill?
   _____

Oshima, A & Hogue, A.(2006). Writing Academic English. NY:Pearson Education, Inc,
p 322

Peer-Editing Worksheet 4
Chapter 4: From Paragraph to Essay

Peer Editor: _Marleni_   Date: _Feb 25, 2012_

1. What kind of introduction does this essay have? (funnel, dramatic, etc.)
   funnel
   How many sentences does it contain? _1_
   Does it capture your interest? ☒ yes ☐ no
   Where is the thesis statement placed?
   Translation is a skill ...

2. How many paragraphs are there in the body? Number: _3_
   The topics of the body paragraphs are as follows:
   1. _motivation and interest_ 3. _Places to study translation_
   2. _Social - cultural knowledge_ 4.
   (If there are more or fewer paragraphs, add or delete lines.)

3. What kind of supporting details does the writer use in each body paragraph?
   1. _opinion_ 3. _facts._
   2. _Experience in Ica_ 4.

4. Check each paragraph for unity. Is any sentence unnecessary or
   "off the topic?" ☒ yes ☐ no
   If your answer is yes, write a comment about it (them).

5. Check each paragraph for coherence. Does each one flow smoothly
   from beginning to end? ☐ yes ☐ no
   What key nouns are repeated? _translation_
   What transition signals can you find? _____

6. What expressions does the writer use to link paragraphs? If there is none, write none. (If there are
   more or fewer paragraphs, add or delete lines.)
   To introduce the first body paragraph _I would like to start by..._
   Between paragraphs 2 and 3 _In using translation in the classroom..._
   Between paragraphs 3 and 4 _Finally, I would like to add..._
   Between paragraphs 4 and 5 _____
   To introduce the conclusion: _To sum up..._

7. What kind of conclusion does this essay have—a summary of the main points or a paraphrase of the
   thesis statement? _Summary of the main points._
   Does the writer make a final comment? ☒ yes ☐ no
   What is it? _Translation love to be fun._
   Is this an effective ending (one that you will remember)? ☒ yes ☐ no

8. In your opinion, what is the best feature of this essay? In other words, what is this writer's best
   writing skill?
   Unity, coherence.

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Appendix 13
Peer-editing Paragraph worksheet

Peer Editor: _____ Date: _____

1. Is the paragraph interesting?   ☐ yes   ☐ no
    Write a comment about a part that is especially interesting to you.
    _____

2. Do you understand everything?   ☐ yes   ☐ no
    Circle or underline any part that you do not understand, and write a comment about it.
    _____

3. Copy the topic sentence here, and circle the topic and double-underline the controlling idea.
    _____

4. How many supporting sentences are there in the paragraph? Number: _____
    a. What kind of supporting details does the writer use (facts, examples, quotations, statistics, etc.)?
    _____

    b. Would you like more information about anything?   ☐ yes   ☐ no
    If your answer is yes, write down what you would like to know more about.
    _____

5. **Unity:** Is there anything unnecessary or that seems "off the topic?"   ☐ yes   ☐ no
    If your answer is yes, write a comment about it/them.
    _____

6. **Coherence:** Does the paragraph flow smoothly from beginning to end?
    a. What key noun is repeated? _____
    b. Are pronouns consistent?   ☐ yes   ☐ no
    c. What transition signals can you find? _____
    d. Are the ideas arranged in some kind of logical order? What kind?
    _____

7. If the paragraph has a concluding sentence, copy it here and circle the end-of-paragraph signal (if there is one).
    _____

8. In your opinion, what is the best feature of this paragraph? In other words, what is this writer's best writing skill?
    _____

Oshima, A & Hogue, A.(2006). Writing Academic English. NY:Pearson Education, Inc, p 320

Peer-Editing Worksheet 2
Chapter 2: Unity and Coherence

Peer Editor: _David C._   Date: _11/2/2012._

1. Is the paragraph interesting?   ☐ yes   ☐ no
   Write a comment about a part that is especially interesting to you.
   I found interesting. "it is a tool that the teacher requires sometimes when the explanations..."

2. Do you understand everything?   ☑ yes   ☐ no
   Circle or underline any part that you do not understand, and write a comment about it.

3. Copy the topic sentence here, and circle the topic and double-underline the controlling idea.
   There is not topic sentence

4. How many supporting sentences are there in the paragraph? Number: ____
   a. What kind of supporting details does the writer use (facts, examples, quotations, statistics, etc.)?
   Examples ; opinions

   b. Would you like more information about anything?   ☑ yes   ☐ no
   If your answer is yes, write down what you would like to know more about.
   "The use of translation in the teaching of foreign language as an approach that teachers can"

5. Unity: Is there anything unnecessary or that seems "off the topic?" ☐ yes   ☒ no
   If your answer is yes, write a comment about it/them.

6. Coherence: Does the paragraph flow smoothly from beginning to end?
   a. What key noun is repeated? _Translation_
   b. Are pronouns consistent?   ☑ yes   ☐ no
   c. What transition signals can you find? _In addition / For that reason_
   d. Are the ideas arranged in some kind of logical order? What kind?
   Although there is no clear topic sentence, the ideas flow logically.

7. If the paragraph has a concluding sentence, copy it here and circle the end-of-paragraph signal (if there is one).
   For that reason, translation can be helpful in class.

8. In your opinion, what is the best feature of this paragraph? In other words, what is this writer's best writing skill?
   Ideas on Translation.

Appendix 15
Real samples of Essay Introductions

Student 10

The teaching of English as a medium to learn other subjects has been widely known in Latin America. In Peru, it is closely connected to bilingual education, and especially accessible to private schools. Therefore, the notion of CLIL and its implications may be closely connected to our socio-cultural reality. Certainly, even though there would be easy to identify more benefits for the Peruvian student population, it is also true that the implementation of a CLIL curriculum – especially in the public schools – would definitely be a difficult challenge to overcome.

Student 2

Content and Language Integrated Learning refers to teaching subjects such as science, history and geography to students through a foreign language. It is claimed that this can be done by the foreign language teacher using cross-curricular content or the subject teacher using foreign language as the means of instruction. Marsh and Stenberg, 2001 call CLIL: "... *is about using languages to learn... It is about installing a 'hunger to learn' in the student. It gives opportunity for him/her to think about and develop how s/he communicates in general, even in the first language*". Following Marsh and Stenberg's definition, which summarizes what CLIL involves, and thinking about our cultural and educational context, what would the advantages and disadvantages of implementing CLIL in Peru be?

Student 5

If we start from the idea of using the English language as a learning tool and a means for our students get the knowledge, we have to recognize what strengthens and weaknesses are in our Peruvian Educational System. Implementing CLIL means that teachers in all areas impart at least some of its contents in English and it seems unlikely in public schools but in private schools. In spite of the great difference between these two kinds of schools we will try to say the advantages and disadvantages of each one. Furthermore, I want to share my experience teaching mathematics and science in English to Peruvian kids.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Phonemic Symbols in the Foreign Language Class.

During the process of language acquisition, it has been observed from teachers and students' point of view that mastering pronunciation is a desired target which tends to be difficult to accomplish. On one hand, learners usually find it hard to produce 'native like' pronunciation and accent – especially if they are adults – and they try different ways to help themselves overcome this obstacle. On the other hand, teachers have to deal with the task of choosing the right tools to help their students achieve their objectives without overusing the repetition tool. It is within this context that the use of phonemic symbols appears as an important tool to help both, the teacher and the student, to overcome pronunciation problems and acquire good pronunciation. Even though using symbols in class faces some drawbacks, the advantages of using them are many and compensate the time required to learn them.

One of the main difficulties that a teacher has to face when teaching pronunciation with phonemic symbols is attitude towards learning. Using phonemic symbols requires that both the teacher and learners be familiar with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and this may cause both of them feel scared by the IPA and transcription when they are first exposed to it. Grown up students may be unfamiliar with the sounds and symbols and may find them too difficult to learn. This can eventually lead to a natural resistance to using these symbols in class. In the case of young learners, teaching phonemic symbols seems to be easier due to their natural openness to learn everything that is new, even if it represents a new kind of writing style.

There is also another important issue that deals with attitude towards teaching. Some teachers feel that teaching these 44 symbols puts an "additional burden" on their students. When a teacher shows this attitude, he will find it hard to motivate his students to learn the phonetic symbols because the problem starts in himself. This could be detrimental to his own teaching production in terms of teaching tools and learning activities design due to for what has been explained above, motivation plays a major role in developing the right attitude towards learning.

Nevertheless, there are some benefits that can be considered when using phonemic symbols in class. For instance, the problem of teaching the 44 phonemes can be easily overcome by the advantage a teacher has to be able to select the sounds he considers

Support

Support

Support

convenient for his students to learn and to focus on. Teachers can use a bottom-up approach to gradually teach the phonemic symbols to their students, no matter how old they are. Indeed, the methodology and activities designed to do this may vary according to the learner's age and context.

In addition, it should be noted that learning the phonemic symbols enables the students to better use their dictionaries and better understand their errors in pronunciation and improve their autonomous learning skills. Consider that once accustomed to them, they can use them in their notes to help themselves learn the correct pronunciation of new vocabulary.

Another important advantage of using the phonemic symbols is the fact that gradually they are useful for showing the significant differences between the pronunciation of isolated words and the pronunciation of those same words when they are grouped together in connected speech. Again, students can better understand why connected speech is more difficult to understand when they are shown the modifications in pronunciation that occur in this type of speech, and they can learn what modifications to expect and how to recognize them.

Finally, there is another important factor that outweighs all advantages mentioned above: whereas written English is only an approximate representation of the spoken language, phonetic transcription, in contrast, is an exact representation of spoken language. Therefore, it is of peak importance to help learners and other teachers to understand these advantages in order to get them both past any initial psychological aversion and benefit from the support that phonemic symbols give to facilitate the learning of pronunciation. As we can see, there are more advantages than disadvantages a teacher would face when using these symbols in class and the most benefited would not only be the students, in the long run, it would be the teacher himself, since it is a strong tool that can supplement any teaching of pronunciation activity.