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# ASSESSING THROUGH RUBRICS; AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO IMPROVE WRITING IN UPPER SECONDARY STUDENTS

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**UNIVERSIDAD DE PIURA**  
**FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN**  
**MAESTRÍA EN EDUCACIÓN**



**Assessing through rubrics; an effective tool to improve writing  
in upper secondary students**

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

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**Piura, octubre de 2018**



## Approval

The thesis entitled “**Assessing through rubrics; an effective tool to improve writing in upper secondary students**” presented by **Olga Neida Margarita Rodríguez Romero de de Thoisy** in accordance with the requirements of being awarded the degree of Magister in Education with mention in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, was approved by the thesis director: Dr. Majid Safadaran Mosazadeh, and defended on..... before a Jury with the following members:

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President

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Secretary

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Informant



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This work would not have been possible without the constant support of my loving and supportive mother, who has been a motivation for my career goals and who worked actively to provide me with the necessary academic tools to pursue those goals.

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## **Analytical - Informative Summary**

**Title:** Assessing through rubrics; an effective tool to improve writing in upper secondary students.

**Author:** Olga Neida Margarita Rodriguez Romero de De Thoisy.

**Thesis Director:** Dr. Majid Safadaran Mosazadeh.

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**Key Words:** Writing / rubrics/ assessment/ Autonomy/Improvement/ Positive Feedback

**Description:** The thesis to obtain the Master's degree in Education is dedicated to the implementation of international standardized rubrics to assess and improve the quality of students' writing and positive feedback.

**Content:** The present investigation is divided into two main parts. The first part, the research, is dedicated to selecting and analyzing the problems and difficulties students and teachers experience when assessing writing without using rubrics. The second part, the intervention, is dedicated to the actual implementation of international standardized rubrics to improve students' written outcome.

**Methodology:** The present investigation adheres to quantitative investigation of quasi-experimental type (with control and experimental groups).

**Conclusions:** The results of the intervention demonstrated that the use of international standardized rubrics when assessing students 'writing improve the quality of their production.

**Sources:** Dictionaries, books, articles from journals and magazines, articles from websites and webpages.

**Date of summary:** October, 2018.



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## **Introduction**

The English language has become a very important tool for communication. As a global language must be taught in almost all schools around the world; from elementary level to senior or secondary level, and continuing throughout university. Learners are not only expected to speak fluently but they also have to be able to manage the other language skills to be considered competent in the language: listening, reading, and writing. That is the reason why all the courses designed to teach English have to take into consideration a well-balanced combination of the four skills.

The language skills must be taught and learnt in an integrated way due to the more natural exposure to the language learners have these days. They process and acquire language similarly to their first language with the support of the “outside the classroom”, activities or the bilingual environment they sometimes have. When planning, it is important to consider the quality and amount of the “inside the classroom”, or formal exposure to the language learning students have, to carefully design the course so students reach their desired goals. It is well-known for most language and subject school teachers, that listening along with writing are two of the skills that students at least in Peru, struggle with the most. These two skills need to be improved and constantly reinforced. However, as for listening, learners are quite well self-motivated since they are exposed to music in English every day and the internet. This factor is one of the major advantages for teachers. As for writing, there will be later a proposal. The development of the speaking skill mainly depends on meaningful focused input. Learners must be exposed to a great variety of reading from which they can choose. The other two skills, reading and writing, are closely related since one is meaningful focused input and the other is the meaningful focused output. It is highly important to develop writing not only in the amount of words but also in quality. Unfortunately, learners do not enjoy reading unless they have to write in English.

Writing in English is an essential skill which demands much processed and organized thinking, since it is a form of written communication, it is expected to convey clear messages, respect formats and use effective and accurate language. It is well known that writing is an extension of other skills such as listening and speaking, therefore, students must be provided with a wide variety of techniques and strategies to better their

writing process. Seeing writing as a productive skill, it requires a direct link with listening and oral production. Students must be provided with plenty of opportunities to use, practice, and tune their oral language to improve their written output. In doing it so, student's development of self-confidence when speaking, writing and listening will definitely be enhanced. Students are usually prevented from speaking mainly because they do not feel confident enough to take the risk. Generally, students are very afraid of speaking in public due to their making mistakes. Writing comes as the other medium for students to communicate their ideas and thoughts since it is a great reflecting process in terms of time and preparation. Good writing should take steps such as; pre-writing, (brainstorming, outlining), writing, (drafting) and post-writing, (proofreading). This process, allows writers at any stage of their learning, to clearly structure their ideas, organize and develop relevant ideas and use language more accurately and effectively.

The question of how students get to develop and eventually master the writing productive component of the language is what concerns the researcher as a language teacher. The vast majority of students need a lot of support going along the path of learning how to improve their writing skills and being able to produce a decent paper. Every single teacher more than often deals with students' academic performance obstacles when trying to get them to produce a well-done written output. Here, it is needed to clarify what exactly is expected from students and what a "well-done" paper is for both; students and the teacher. Research has been conducted by the Peruvian Ministry of Education as a result of the weak performance of second grade of primary learners tested on reading and writing in 2012. The research contains a well-developed set of alternatives to improve the writing skills in the second graders, since the rationale behind is that at that stage of their learning students should be able to clearly and effectively convey a written message. The research is based on a census assessing students on both skills; reading and writing seen as intimately linked skills. The report is designed for teachers to individually and collectively reflect about how to effectively teach writing and more importantly on how they are currently working on the writing process. The main objective of this research is to immediately change or incorporate new strategies within the classroom context so the teaching and learning process for writing can be effectively improved. One of the most important aspects considered in this research is the use of very useful and effective strategies such as self-assessment and peer correction, as well as the use of rubrics to grade and assess the students' written output.

Teachers seek for excellence in performance when it comes to teaching. Teaching writing is not the exception. A wide range of strategies and techniques in the classroom, are being used; giving students feedback is an effective one among them. Feedback must be based on what is expected from the students. Clearly, it is stated that students must know what and how they are expected to perform. This project is going to be devoted to prove how benefited students can be from the use of rubrics and the direct feedback in improving the quality of their written output.

The researcher intends to demonstrate how the use of internationally standardized rubrics when assessing upper secondary students' written output improve the quality of their writing through immediate feedback.

In the first chapter the investigation is outlined, the problem is explicitly mentioned, the information is also organized and it is complemented by the justification, objectives, hypothesis and antecedents of the investigation which are all framed within the investigation task as well as the bibliographical frame.

In the second chapter, the theoretical framework is appointed, which supports and structures the investigation. The investigation is based on relevant information which will be later used for the interpretation and the discussion of the results. In the theoretical framework, the use of rubrics, valid and fair assessment, international standardized rubrics such as the International Baccalaureate are seen.

In the third chapter the methodology of the investigation is described. The Investigation design is also explained as well as the population and the study sample, the variables, the techniques for gathering data, and how the information and results are organized and discussed.

In the fourth chapter, the results of the investigation are presented through the use of charts. The perspective of this distribution and organization of results are strictly aligned to the objectives of this investigation.

The fifth chapter, summarizes the investigation, taking into consideration the conclusions as well as the recommendations.

At the completion of this task new and better insights about the usefulness of rubrics will be shown, and hopefully more teachers will be aware of the main purpose of rubrics

when assessing students' performances. This research project will also contribute to the student's self-awareness, independency and self-reflection when assessing their own written output. Furthermore, the development of this thesis will allow educators to fairly assess students' writing, sticking to the description of their performance rather than subjectively "judge" their work and give them immediate feedback so they consciously use the coherent sets of criteria and the descriptions of levels of performance for these criteria. Feedback will be regarded as a logical consequence of the using of rubrics.

# **Chapter 1**

## **Investigation outline**

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

One of the main concerns regarding to the teaching-learning process of the English language is the lack of writing strategies students encounter every time they have to produce an acceptable academic written paper. Having to fulfil the international standards of the globalized schools and universities for which they are being prepared is a quest to be undertaken. Hence students should finish their upper secondary studies ready and capable to fit in any national or international educational center to continue their studies, however when Peruvian students take international exams such as Cambridge, TOEFL or any other exam requiring written production the results show very poor writing skills.

Part of the problem is teachers who have difficulties grading their students' papers as well as creating their own relevant tasks which must be aligned to the school international curriculum. Teachers are not being properly trained or being exposed to international standardized grading system. Teachers must acquire a wider perspective of how writing is assessed worldwide through the use of international standardized rubrics. Positive Feedback also, takes an important role when conducting the assessment and teachers must be familiar with it.

Therefore, Assessing is a weakness to be fixed. Teachers use their own criteria to assess the same tasks with that leading to a big difference from one another when grading students' papers. Feedback was seldom given, as a result, students made the same mistakes over and slips and errors were seen again.

The students who are the subject of this study belongs to El Pinar School in Peru, who were in need of a real improvement in regards to the quality of their written production. Data gathered in 2016 shows that the upper secondary students failed their final writing test in the last term of the year which was a problem to be solved.

Therefore, the study concentrates on the implementation of the use of rubrics to assess students' written production as an effective tool to improve writing in upper

secondary students since this is the group who are the most likely to take international exams for further studies. (See annex 1)

## **1.2. Research question**

Is assessing through rubrics an effective tool to improve writing in upper secondary students?

## **1.3. Hypothesis**

Assessing through rubrics improve the written outcome secondary students.

### **1.1.1. General hypothesis**

Secondary students whose written outcome assessment is based on rubrics is higher in quality than the ones who do not.

### **1.1.2. Specific hypothesis**

The appropriate and timely feedback help raise the students' level of conscious awareness.

## **1.4. Delimitation of the objectives**

To determine if the use of rubrics when assessing students written outcome improve the quality of their work.

### **1.4.1. General objective**

To implement the use of rubrics along with indirect feedback to improve student's written productive skills.

### **1.4.2. Specific objectives**

- To describe the problem of not using rubrics



- To compare the quality of the writing in the two groups
- To implement the use of standardized rubrics in the high secondary students' assessment.

### **1.5. Justification of the investigation**

Being the researcher a non-native English teacher, and teaching English as a foreign language, many challenges and difficulties were encountered. Of course, one of the major challenges has always been scoring writing. In the beginning of this 15-year path, the researcher empirically decided on how the papers were graded. Basically, following colleagues' rubric-made. The researcher was mainly concerned about the amount of words students could produce. In time the researcher realized that quality was also important and a balance of both was more than often impossible for students to achieve.

As any resourceful teacher, the researcher tried to help and support students by giving them lists of vocabulary to be used in their written production, however once again, no context was given along with the new words but a dictionary was provided. Even with that aid, students did not reach what it was expected.

In 2007 the researcher started working in a British school teaching intermediate and upper-intermediate levels in secondary, where all the students were to take Cambridge international examinations such as FCE (First Certificate Exam) and CAE (Cambridge Advance Exam) at the end of the school year as part of the bilingual curriculum. Back then, the exams consisted of five papers: Speaking, Reading, Use of English, Listening y Writing. Unsurprisingly, writing was among the lowest scored skills. Since the final score of the exam is the average of the scores obtained in the different papers, many of the students got a failing score due to the poor performance in their writing paper.

Due to the high percentage of failing students, steps to look for different strategies to improve students' writing skills were taken. The researcher did try many but the one that made a difference was the use of rubrics. Then the researcher started to use the ones provided by Cambridge. The problem arose when students had to take other international programs and the Cambridge rubrics did not frame the school programs and were only intended for ESOL. (English for Speakers of Other Languages. The researcher believed students had to develop creative and critical thinking skills when writing as they

understand what is expected from them and use a comprehensive assessment plan which promotes self-awareness and motivates them to improve their written productive skills.

What is intended with this research project is to prove how the implementation of international standardized rubrics along with feedback all explained in the introductory part of this work improve the students' performance in writing.

### **1.6. Limitations of the investigation**

There were some limitations which are important to mention since the researcher had to take them into consideration while conducting the research:

The period of time devoted to the research was just 10-12 weeks. In this period, the researcher had the students exposed to reinforcing the writing process, the writing task and feedback using rubrics, which was not the ideal however enough to prove the hypothesis. Another limiting factor was the level of fluency that the students had. Even though this particular group of students were standard level, their lack of fluency was another factor to be faced. The sample groups were always the same, however many students were absent from school or late due to personal issues or activities they had during the research periods. Questionnaires were a new tool for the students. They needed a lot of support understanding the purpose and the procedure. Anxiety, this emotional factor somehow interfered with the tasks since students knew they were part of the formal assessment. A well explanatory session about the impact of their scores solved this issue.

### **1.7. Antecedents of the study**

Since the topic of assessing as part of the teaching and learning process has always been of a great interest among researchers, there has been a great amount of investigation and study cases related to the subject. Each single work is absolutely valuable and covers different important aspects of the use of rubrics as a meaningful tool for evaluation. Rubrics seen as a multi-purpose scoring guide for assessing student products and performances not only when writing but for speaking as well. Moreover, different features and techniques such as quality rubrics, feedback, and designing effective rubrics have been proposed by the researchers as a solution to the problem.

Some researchers have played a significant role in the process of the development of the given investigation. Six papers were selected as the most valuable examples; the methodology of each research, the author's opinion about the studies and the connection of each paper with this investigation are described.

The first important study to be mentioned is **“The role of rubrics in advancing and assessing student learning”**, conducted by Kenneth Wolf and Ellen Stevens at University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center in USA. The investigation was carried out in 2007. This study took place in the School of Education and Human Development for use in research methods classes for students who are earning a master's degree in education or counseling. The objective of this particular study was to appraise the impact of the use of rubrics on the students' final written proposals. Students first submit a research proposal and receive ungraded, written feedback (based on the rubric). At the end of the semester they turn in their completed studies and receive written feedback along with an overall rating based on the rubric performance levels (e.g., proficient).

First the data was collected by observation and questionnaires, twenty students were asked to work on their initial proposal in the beginning of the academic year and write another final one at the end of the same academic year to be both compared. The main assignment for the course, which counts for half of the course grade, is for students to work together in small groups to design and carry out small-scale research studies on topics in their fields. Students are encouraged to conduct studies that advance the learning or development of their students or clients, or that contribute in some way to the organizations in which they work. Students in education might, for example, conduct a pilot experimental study to examine the effectiveness of a new literacy curriculum that their school is considering purchasing, interview Latino parents about their understanding of the school district's policies on bilingual education, or observe an individual student on the playground as a way of understanding that student's social skills and development. The Rubric for Research Project in Education considered the follow criteria; abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion/ conclusion, limitations, references and written report. The descriptors were; below proficient, proficient and above proficient. In this course, both “beyond proficient” and “proficient” translate into “A” grades on the projects, but “beyond proficient” recognizes performances that go beyond what was required, which is not an uncommon occurrence with graduate students who may be presenting their

findings at their school's faculty meetings or to school boards. "Below proficient" performances most often result in "B" grades since graduate students' projects typically suffer from only minor omissions or problems. The "beyond proficient" rating assumes that the students have demonstrated all of the features of a "proficient" performance, but with remarkable grace or insight.

The results of the investigation demonstrated a positive impact on the students' final proposal after the use of rubrics. The written paper and the performance of over 60% of the students participating in this study showed that rubrics contribute to student learning and program improvement in a number of ways— some obvious, others less so.

Besides, it must be stated that the researchers demonstrated that rubrics do work and play their role when given in advance.

The authors of the investigation considered the mentioned study to be valuable and applicable to any educational context since it concludes that rubrics make the learning target clearer. If students know what the learning target is, they are better able to hit it (Stiggins, 2001). When giving students a complex task to complete, such as a building an architectural model or putting together a portfolio of their best photographs, students who know in advance what the criteria are for assessing their performance will be better able to construct models or select photographs

That demonstrate their skills in those areas. Rubrics guide instructional design and delivery. When teachers have carefully articulated their expectations for student learning in the form of a rubric, they are better able to keep the key learning targets front and center as they choose instructional approaches and design learning environments that enable students to achieve these outcomes (Arter & McTigue, 2001). Rubrics make the assessment process more accurate and fair. By referring to a comm

On rubric in reviewing each student product or performance, a teacher is more likely to be consistent in his or her judgments. A rubric help to anchor judgments because it continually draws the reviewer's attention to each of the key criteria so that the teacher is less likely to vary her application of the criteria from student to student. Furthermore, when there are multiple raters (e.g., large lecture classes that use teaching assistants as graders), the consistency across these raters is likely to be higher when they are all drawing on the same detailed performance criteria. Additionally, a more prosaic benefit is the decided

decrease in student complaints about grades at semester's end. Rubrics provide students with a tool for self-assessment and peer feedback. When students have the assessment criteria in hand as they are completing a task, they are better able to critique their own performances (Hafner & Hafner, 2004). A hallmark of a professional is the ability to accurately and insightfully assess one's own work. In addition, rubrics can also be used by classmates to give each other specific feedback on their performances. (For both psychometric and pedagogical reasons, is recommended that peers give only formative feedback that is used to help the learner make improvements in the product or performance, and not give ratings that are factored into a student's grade.)

To sum up, the research about the impact of the use of rubrics on undergraduate students, in Denver, which somehow equals students of upper secondary in Peru has been a great source of inspiration in the process of the present investigation. It confirmed the need and importance of providing the learners with clear information about what is expected from their production and performance. Moreover, the authors mentioned the participation and involvement of the students in designing their own rubrics to assess their own work. Self-assessment, and peer correction as strategies to be applied in the educational settings. The connection of the mentioned research with the current investigation is related to the analysis of how rubrics make the learning target clearer and the positive impact of timely feedback as part of the formative assessment.

The second research about the impact of the use of rubrics on improving writing, is called **"A review of rubric use in higher education"** A case study of English language students at ICFAI Business School, Hyderabad, India; and Educational and Counseling Psychology, University at Albany, NY, USA, by Y. Malini Reddy and Heidi Andrade performed at ICFAI Business School, Hyderabad, India and at University at Albany, NY, USA in 2010.

The subjects for the investigation were researchers' previous empirical works. The objective of this paper was to review the empirical research on the use of rubrics at the post-secondary level, identifies gaps in the literature and proposes areas in need of research. Studies of rubrics in higher education have been

Undertaken in a wide range of disciplines and for multiple purposes, including increasing student achievement, improving instruction and evaluating programmes. While,

student perceptions of rubrics are generally positive and some authors report positive responses to rubric use by instructors, others noted a tendency for instructors to resist using them. Two studies suggested that rubric use was associated with improved academic performance, while one did not. The potential of rubrics to identify the need for improvements in courses and programmes has been demonstrated. Studies of the validity of rubrics have shown that clarity and appropriateness of language is a central concern. Studies of rater reliability tend to show that rubrics can lead to a relatively common interpretation of student performance. Suggestions for future research include the use of more rigorous research methods, more attention to validity and reliability, a closer focus on learning and research on rubric use in diverse educational contexts. This paper states that a rubric has three essential features: evaluation criteria, quality definitions and a scoring strategy (Popham 1997).

Evaluation criteria are the factors that an assessor considers when determining the quality of a student's work. Also described as a set of indicators or a list of guidelines, the criteria reflect the processes and content judged to be important (Parke 2001). Quality definitions provide a detailed explanation of what a student must do to demonstrate a skill, proficiency or criterion in order to attain a particular level of achievement, for example poor, fair, good or excellent. The quality definitions address the need to distinguish between good and poor responses, both for scoring purposes and to provide feedback to students. Scoring strategies for rubrics involve the use of a scale for interpreting judgments of a product or process. Scoring strategies will not be discussed here because the calculation of final grades is not a concern of this review. Rubrics are often used by teachers to grade student work but many authors argue that they can serve another, more important, role as well: When used by students as part of a formative assessment of their works in progress, rubrics can teach as well as evaluate (Arter and McTighe 2001; Stiggins 2001). Used as part of a student-centered approach to assessment, rubrics have the potential to help students understand the targets for their learning and the standards of quality for a particular assignment, as well as make dependable judgments about their own work that can inform revision and improvement.

The data was collected by means of bibliographical review of 20 articles which were retrieved online using two inclusion criteria: 'empirical research' and 'higher education'. Master's theses about rubrics were excluded from the review, though they were numerous.

Doctoral dissertations were included if they appeared to use research methods that could lead to credible results and observation as a result of this data collection the authors found out some gaps in literature which was a motivation for them to write about.

According to the results of the review, the studies of rubric use at the post-secondary level included in this review have been organized according to the overarching themes that were detected by noting topics that recurred across studies. The themes include student and instructor perceptions of rubric use, the effect of rubrics on learning or academic performances, the use of rubrics as instructional and programme assessments and studies of validity and reliability.

At the conclusion of the research, some general views have been provided by the investigators; student perceptions of rubric use: Studies of students' responses to rubric use suggest that graduate and undergraduate students value rubrics because they clarify the targets for their work, allow them to regulate their progress and make grades or marks transparent and fair. The undergraduate and graduate business students (N = 150) in Bolton's (2006) study asserted that rubrics enabled them to engage in important processes, including identifying critical issues in an assignment and, thereby, reducing uncertainty and doing more meaningful work, determining the amount of effort needed for an assignment, evaluating their own performances in order to get immediate feedback, especially on weaknesses, estimating their grades prior to the submission of assignments and focusing their efforts so as to improve performance on subsequent assignments. These findings are strikingly similar to those found by Andrade and Du (2005). The 14 pre-service teacher education undergraduates interviewed for this study reported that they used rubrics to plan an approach to an assignment, check their work and reflect on feedback from others. They said that using rubrics helped them focus their efforts, produce work of higher quality, earn better grades and feel less anxious about an assignment. The students also emphasized their perceptions of rubric-referenced grading as fair and transparent.

To conclude, the author of this thesis finds this review very valuable from the perspective of bibliographical review. The concept of getting a wider knowledge encourages and develops a better work. Therefore, the connection of this research with the given investigation is related to the similarity on validity and reliability of rubrics, as well as a rubric has three essential features: evaluation criteria, quality definitions, and a scoring

strategy. The findings help the investigator to look for reliable and valid standardized rubrics to solve the problem stated.

The third research work is called **“The use of scoring rubrics for formative assessment purposes revisited: A review”** performed by Ernesto Panadero and, Anders Jonsson, at Departamento de Psicologia Bàsica, Evolutiva i de l’ Educació, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain Department of Learning and Environment, Kristianstad University, Sweden in 2013.

The subjects of the study were previous works conducted on the summative aspects of the use of rubrics and the ones directed to the formative role of rubrics. In order to investigate if, and how, rubrics have an impact on student learning. In total, 21 studies about rubrics were analyzed through content analysis.

The authors of the discussed investigation stated that the mainstream researches on scoring rubrics has emphasized the summative aspect of assessment. In recent years, the use of rubrics for formative purposes has gained more attention. The aim of this study is therefore to review the research on formative use of rubrics.

Sample, subject/task, design, procedure, and findings, were compared among the different studies in relation to effects on student performance and self-regulation. Findings indicate that rubrics may have the potential to influence students learning positively, but also that there are several different ways for the use of rubrics to mediate improved performance and self-regulation. There are a number of factors identified that may moderate the effects of using rubrics formatively, as well as factors that need further investigation.

The data was collected by means of bibliographical review. Studies from all kinds of disciplines were reviewed and included or rejected based on their relevance. First, a study was considered relevant for the present research since it was based on empirical data on the use of rubrics. Theoretical arguments or articles presenting only practical guidelines were not included in the review, although they may have been used for the theoretical framework. Second, the use of rubrics had to be for formative purposes. Articles reporting on summative uses of rubrics (e.g. enhancing inter-judges’ reliability) were only selected if there was also a formative use (e.g. allowing the students to reflect on different performances based on their grades). Third, the selection was limited to include only



printed and peer-reviewed material, such as articles in journals, edited books, research reports, and doctoral dissertations. Also a literature search was conducted via the PsycINFO and ERIC databases, searching with no limitation on the year of publication. The following combinations of keywords and metacognitive activities were used: self-assessment & rubric/s; peer assessment & rubric/s; self-regulation/self-regulated learning & rubric/s. These combinations produced 57 hits. After analyzing the abstracts and main conclusions of these articles only 17 were included. The main reasons for rejecting articles were that the studies focused exclusively on summative uses of rubrics (e.g. increasing inter-rater reliability), that they were non empirical, or that the definition of rubrics diverged radically from the definition used in this study. Furthermore, by applying the so called “snow-balling method”, 4 additional studies were found and included in the review.

The results of the study demonstrated that the use of rubrics may mediate improved student performance. There are several ways for the formative use of rubrics to mediate improved student performance such as increasing transparency, reducing anxiety, aiding the feedback process, improving student self-efficacy, or supporting student self-regulation.

**Increasing transparency.** An important prerequisite for improving students' performance is by letting them know what is expected from them (Good, 1987) and as can be seen from the studies reviewed, rubrics can aid in communicating expectations to the students. For instance, in the study by Andrade and Du (2005), students contrasted the frustration of not knowing their teachers' expectations with the relief or insight provided by a rubric. Similar results are reported by Reynolds-Keefer (2010), where the students claimed that they better understood teacher expectations when the assignment involved a rubric, and by Schamber and Mahoney (2006), where students' responses indicated that they found the rubrics useful for clarifying the components and requirements of the assignment. In the same study, a majority of the faculty members were also found to perceive the rubrics to be “very useful” in clarifying assignment requirements (cf. Reddy & Andrade, 2010). Furthermore, questionnaires administered at the end of a study by Goodrich Andrade (2001) revealed that students, after using a rubric, tended to identify more of the criteria by which their performance was evaluated. As indicated above, the results from studies investigating the transparency provided by the use of rubrics are quite unanimous in suggesting that rubrics may aid in clarifying expectations. Although

acknowledging that these results are based on students' perceptions only (Andrade & Du, 2005; Reynolds-Keefer, 2010), there are also studies that investigated quantitative measurements of student performance together with either students' perception (Schamber & Mahoney, 2006) or student identification of teacher's expectations (Goodrich Andrade, 2001).

Reducing anxiety Clarified expectations, as provided by rubrics, may also support student performance by lowering students' anxiety regarding assignments (Kuhl, 2000; Wolters, 2003). For instance, as reported by Andrade and Du (2005), the students spoke about increased confidence and making it easier to hand in assignments when having a rubric. These results are based on students' perceptions when asked about anxiety directly in relationship with rubrics. The work by Panadero (2011), and Panadero, Alonso-Tapia, and Huertas (2012) has also shed some light on this particular topic. These authors used a performance/avoidance self-regulation scale measuring students' self-regulatory actions motivated by negative emotions, such as anxiety. In studies performed in higher education, rubrics significantly decreased this type of negative self-regulation (for instance that students do not finish a task because they get blocked), in two out of three studies. The authors therefore conclude that students' anxiety may decrease when implementing long-term interventions with rubrics, which is probably due to the fact that students know what is expected of their work and how it will relate to their grades (Panadero, 2011).

Aiding the feedback process. Another manner for the use of rubrics to contribute to student learning is by aiding the feedback process, which has been deemed useful by teachers and students alike. In relation to the former, Schamber and Mahoney (2006) report that a majority of faculty members found the rubrics to be "very useful" for providing students with feedback on drafts. In relation to the latter, Andrade and Du (2005) report on how students reflected on their feedback by reviewing the scores they received from the teacher with the help of the rubric. Again, these results are based on students' perceptions only.

Improving student self-efficacy. As has been suggested by previous research (Pajares, 2008), the performance of students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to be higher, as compared to those who report lower levels of self-efficacy. In the study by Andrade, Wang, Du, and Akawi (2009) generating a list of criteria from a model essay and using a rubric to self-assess drafts, was shown to improve students' self-efficacy. The

relation to performance was not, however, investigated in this particular study. Investigating the relationship between self-efficacy and rubric use was one of the aims in the research performed by Panadero (2011), Panadero et al. (2012). In this research, self-efficacy was impacted by the use of rubrics, but only in one of the three studies. However, a possible explanation is the one suggested by van Dinther, Dochy, and Segers (2010): that students may need to be confronted with teachers' feedback regarding their performance in order to have a realistic opinion about their advances (or lack of it) which was only controlled in Panadero's research in the study with significant results (Panadero et al., 2010).

Supporting student self-regulation developing an adequate sense of own knowledge and skills is one aspect of owning the learning. Planning the work, as well as continuously self-assessing the work in progress, are other important aspects of self-regulated learning (Efklides, 2011; Zimmerman, 1990). Rubrics have been shown to facilitate both planning and self-assessment (Panadero, 2011). For instance, in relation to planning, the students in the study by Andrade and Du (2005) reported using the rubric to plan their approach to an assignment, much like a recipe or a map. Students' responses in the study by Reynolds-Keefer (2010), a replication of the study by Andrade and Du (2005), also indicate that rubrics aided the students in both planning and in the production of the assignment. Most students claimed to read the syllabus and then start working on the assignment, using the rubric as a reference point. Several students also stated that they worked through the assignment by reading the rubric and working on one portion at a time, merging all the separate parts before submitting (see also Reitmeier & Vrchota, 2009). Indications that rubrics may aid the students in checking their work in progress (i.e. self-assess) are found in Andrade and Du (2005), where students reported doing a lot of informal self-assessment in addition to the formal rubric-referenced self-assessment required by the course. This self-assessment was facilitated by the rubric, which was used – as expressed by one of the students: “before, during and after to make sure I had everything covered” (p. 4). Reynolds-Keefer (2010) also reports that most students claimed that the rubric was helpful in reflecting on their work before submitting it (see also Andrade, Buff, Terry, Erano, & Paolino, 2009). The connection of this wide review to the present work is in relation to the definite formative role of the use of rubrics and positive and timely feedback to improve writing in students.

The fourth research about the impact of the use of rubrics on improving writing, is called **“The Implementation of Rubrics to Increase Writing Scores with Secondary Students”** An action research for a Master’s degree in education, conducted by Elaine M. Gerken at Defiance College in Ohio, USA in 2009.

The subjects for the investigation were ten secondary language arts students enrolled in a rural Midwest school in Ohio State. The participants in this study were students enrolled in a pre-advanced placement English class, which was 42 minutes in length and held during the last class period of the day. The study included ten students, four males and six females, all juniors in a small high school in a rural, Midwestern state. Students participating in the study were of limited ethnic diversity. The study was conducted during the researcher's student teaching experience.

The purpose of this project was to determine if using rubrics with secondary language arts students improved academic achievement in the area of writing. The ten participating students were instructed to complete three specific writing assignments, which were assessed using a grading rubric. The rubric was explained and discussed with the students before each assignment

The author of the research project, stated that the implementation of rubrics, increase writing scores. Also, she indicated that there were four main benefits of using rubrics. These benefits included increased objectivity, the use of rubrics as instructional tools, peer and self-assessment, and saved time (Andrade & Saddler, 2004; Goodrich, 1997; Moskal, 2000). Each of these benefits was examined in order to answer the second research question.

The first benefit discussed was increased objectivity in evaluating and grading student assignments. Moskal (2000) stated that "by developing a pre-defined scheme for the evaluation process, the subjectivity involved in evaluating an essay becomes more objective". The author stated that a rubric with a specific scoring guide would help in objectively rating performance. In addition, Goodrich (1997) pointed out that by using rubrics, students could no longer claim that a grade was unfair. She said that teachers could use rubrics to justify grades and to prove that students knew what was expected of an assignment. Furthermore, according to Andrade (2000), rubrics were concise and easy to understand, characteristics which lent themselves to objectivity in grading. She asserted

that students often don't know what teachers are looking for in grading; a rubric made grading less scary and made the standards clearer.

The second benefit discussed in the literature of using a rubric was its use as not only an evaluative tool, but as an instructional one as well (Moskal, 2000). According to Andrade and Saddler (2004), a rubric was not just a scoring guide. The authors suggested that rubrics assisted students in setting goals for work and indicated what high-quality work looked like, such that students could get a sense of what they were expected to do. Moreover, using rubrics for instructional purposes supported the development of skills (Andrade, 2000). The author suggested that the mere distribution and explanation of a rubric helped to improve student writing and understanding.

The third benefit of using a rubric was that it increased peer and self-assessment (Goodrich, 1997). The author explained that "when rubrics are used to guide self and peer-assessment, students become increasingly able to spot and solve problems in their own and one another's work. In addition, Goodrich stated that when students engaged in rubric-based self and peer-assessment, they felt responsible for their work and felt more confident in knowing when a writing assignment was complete. Also, according to Andrade (2000), students absorbed more of the content when they used a rubric to assess their own work. She stated that students who used rubrics learned more than students who did not. Another part of self-assessment was revision (Andrade & Saddler, 2004). Andrade and Saddler discussed using rubrics to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in order to improve. For example, according to the authors, if a category on a rubric was sentence structure, and students were encouraged to begin sentences in different ways, a student could assess his or her sentences based on the rubric and revise the sentences to meet the standards specified.

The fourth benefit suggested by the literature was that rubrics saved teacher's valuable time (Goodrich, 1997). Goodrich asserted that by the time a piece of work was evaluated by the author, then assessed by a peer, there was little left for the teacher to do in terms of revision. In addition, she stated that teachers also saved time because if they did need to make corrections or comments, they were able to easily circle an item on the rubric instead of spending great amounts of time writing.

The data was collected by means of questionnaires, the placement of three written assignments based on a novel, the implementation of rubrics for instructional and evaluative purposes, forums and teacher's modelling the use of rubrics.

The findings of this study indicated that half of the students increased their writing scores (improved academic achievement) when using rubrics. The other half of students maintained their same scores from the beginning of the study to the end when using rubrics. None of the student scores decreased from the beginning of the study to the end when using rubrics. This might mean that using rubrics did help some students to increase scores on writing assignments. Five out of ten students improved their writing scores when using rubrics. These students were able to identify the characteristics of excellent work and used the grading rubric as a guide when completing the three assignments. By distributing, explaining, and discussing the rubric before each assignment, these students were better equipped to produce quality work.

The other half of students maintained their same scores on the three writing assignments when using the grading rubric. When these students were presented with evaluative criteria before each assignment, they were able to produce consistent work. It is worth mentioning that some of these students did improve scores on some of the individual criteria. For example, student one scored a three in the area of focus on the first assignment, but scored a five in the same area on the second and third assignments. Due to fluctuating scores in other areas, however, student one had the same overall score on each assignment.

None of the student scores decreased from the beginning of the study to the end. It is worth mentioning, however, that student ten decreased his score from assignment one to assignment two, and then increased his score from assignment two to assignment three. This might mean that student ten recognized his mistakes on assignment two and used the grading rubric to improve his score on assignment three.

The conclusion to be drawn from this project was that using rubrics might be effective in helping secondary language arts students to improve writing scores. The connection to the current investigation is merely the author's recommendations; an extended timeline for the study. A longer period of time would allow students to become more familiar with the rubric and to spend more time writing and editing assignments. An

extended timeline would also allow for more assignments, thus creating more data for analysis. A larger sample size for the study. The researcher believed that a larger sample of students might show more increased scores when using rubrics. Students be involved in creating the rubric and look at more examples of poor and quality work.

The fifth authors inspiring this investigation is the one called **“Student Perspectives on Rubric-Referenced Assessment”** conducted by Heidi L. Andrade and Yin Du, both from University at Albany, State University of New York, in 2005. This study suggests that students use rubrics to support their own learning and academic performance. In focus groups, fourteen undergraduate students discussed the ways in which they used rubrics to plan an approach to an assignment, check their work, and guide or reflect on feedback from others. The students said that using rubrics helped them focus their efforts, produce work of higher quality, earn a better grade, and feel less anxious about an assignment. Their comments also revealed that most of the students tend not to read a rubric in its entirety, and that some may perceive of a rubric as a tool for satisfying a particular teacher’s demands rather than as a representation of the criteria and standards of a discipline.

The objective of this work was to determine whether or not rubrics have become popular with teachers as a means of communicating expectations for an assignment, providing focused feedback on works in progress, and grading final products (Andrade, 2000; Goodrich, 1997; Moskal, 2003; Popham, 1997). Although an informal survey of rubrics available on the Web reveals that educators tend to define the word “rubric” in different ways, a commonly accepted definition is a document that articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria, or what counts, and describing levels of quality from excellent to poor (Andrade, 2000).

The subject of this research were fourteen undergraduate teacher education students (six females and eight male Caucasian, middle class Midwesterners) who participated in topical interviews in focus groups. Three of the groups included four students. Because two women could not attend their scheduled focus group interview, one of the female groups had two students. Each student had completed Dr. Andrade’s 200-level educational psychology course with a field placement prior to the interviews. The course and field experience involved regular use of rubrics, including co-creating rubrics in class, formal rubric-referenced self-assessment, and teacher feedback.

Data was collected through focus groups which were used because they may permit participants to make more critical comments than they would in one-on-one interviews (Kitzinger, 1995), because the format of a focus group tends to create a permissive, non-threatening environment in which participants can share ideas and perceptions (Krueger & Casey, 2000), and because “young people are often stimulated to talk more expansively when others of their age join them” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 100). The groups were segregated by gender because earlier research suggests that males and females may respond differently to rubric referenced self-assessment (Andrade & Boulay, 2003; Goodrich, 1996). The interview protocol for the main study, from which the data for the study reported here was drawn and created by the researchers.

The results of the investigation turned out that students’ comments regarding rubric use were consistently positive. They liked the fact that rubrics let them know “what’s expected,” and contrasted it with the “guessing game” they felt they had to play when teachers did not provide a rubric or some sort of guidelines for an assignment. In fact, the most commonly cited purpose of rubrics was to communicate the teacher’s expectations and thereby provide “direction.” Students also noted that rubrics helped identify strengths and weaknesses in their work when used to give feedback, and that knowing “what counts” made grades seem fair. Both the male and female students talked at length about how they used rubrics and about the results of rubric use. No evidence of gender differences in the data was found.

Student use of rubrics: Students spoke about using rubrics to determine a teacher’s expectations, plan production, check their works in progress, and guide and reflect on feedback from others. Determining expectations for an assignment. Some of the most animated discussions arose when the students talked about being unable to decipher their teachers’ expectations. Their frustration was clear during such conversations. Each focus group in some way contrasted the frustration of not knowing their teachers’ expectations with the relief or insight provided by a rubric. Some students, talked about using rubrics to simply give the teachers what they wanted: “[A rubric help] me understand what they want or how they think so I can... give them what they want”; “[The rubric brings] you in the right direction, what you know the teacher feels you should be focusing your thought on.” Other students noted that rubrics orient them toward their teacher’s expectations while allowing them to “make the decisions ourselves about how we wanted to go about it”: “It’ll



gear me toward where I'm supposed to be and what I'm supposed to be understanding from it without telling me what I'm supposed to be understanding, [rather than] telling you, 'This is what you're supposed to be understanding,' [it is telling you,] 'This is where you're going to find that understanding.'". Planning production. With few exceptions, students reported using rubrics to plan an approach to an assignment: "We read through and, you know, we use that as a guideline to help us plan out the paper, the project we're going to be working on." Some of their comments suggest that they use a rubric like a recipe or a map: "I can look through that before I start the assignment and use that as a plan of attack and have that mapped out"; "I read it over once or twice and then I just keep thinking to myself, you know, I'll put that towards the end of the paper, this in the beginning...." Some students admitted that, although they used a rubric to plan an assignment, they rarely read every level or gradation of quality: "I would read [levels] A and B, because I wouldn't want to go less than that"; "I would just glance at [levels C and D] just out of amusement to see what I could get by with"; "I just read A." One student said she didn't read the rubric very closely until she got feedback from the instructor on a draft of her assignment: "It becomes overwhelming... [so] I looked at it more after you had evaluated it, and then I was like oh, I've got to improve this category and so I'd look at the [levels] in that category."

Checking their work and revising. The interview questions for the study focused on the formal rubric-referenced self-assessment required by the course that students had taken. Not surprisingly perhaps, students reported doing a lot of informal self-assessment as well, using the rubric "before, during and after to make sure I had everything covered." More surprising were the comments on the ways in which students were able to use a rubric to get a critical perspective on their own work.

Guiding and reflecting on feedback. One student who tended to struggle with writing told of taking a copy of her rubric to a tutor and saying, "... here's what I need in this paper." One young man used rubric scores to analyze patterns of strength and weakness in his writing: "After a number of papers you got like a pattern you could tell like maybe you kept doing well in this part and you kept not doing so well in a certain part, then where you really need to work a little longer on certain areas." Other students spoke about how they would review the scores they received from the teacher and reflect on what the scores meant about the quality of Perceived results of rubric use The participants in this study

believed there were positive outcomes associated with rubric use, including better and fairer grades, improvements in the quality of their work, and less anxiety about assignments.

Better, fairer grades. Students claimed the rubrics “made you do better.” Improvements in quality of work. One student felt that having a rubric offered him “an opportunity to make sure that I have more quality work to turn in.” Students tended to attribute the improvement in their work to knowing what counts as high quality on an assignment: “I think my [writing] has gotten a lot better. I think it’s just knowing what you expected.” Knowing what was expected enabled students to focus their efforts. And last but not least, less anxiety. Perhaps because they dislike writing “BS” as much as we, their teachers, dislike reading it, some students spoke about the affective benefits of rubric use.

To sum up, the research on the student perspectives of rubrics, encourages the author of the current study to keep on working on the benefits of rubrics since students are the final depository of the positive impact in their assessment. The connection of the work conducted by Heidi L. Andrade and Yin Du with this investigation is fully related to the conclusions drawn by the s fourteen undergraduate teacher education students participating and their own valuable reflection, which will be a light to guide the reflection made by the participants of this investigation.

The sixth research about the positive impact of the use of rubrics in writing is called **“Authenticity and the assessment of modern language learning Group 2 Languages in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme”** an article, by John Israel, published by the Journal of Research in International Education in Istanbul, Turkey in 2007. In this article authenticity is defined by componential concepts, common to spoken and written communication through language, which frame assessments of interchanges produced for ‘high-stakes’ examination purposes. They are referents for analysis and critique of International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme evaluations of second and foreign language performance in international contexts. Experimental data derived from wide-ranging, criterion-referenced measurements triangulate results for IB-derived assessments. Within this system, potential improvements to practice in evaluating interactive language use are explored. Through focusing on communicative authenticity, validity and reliability problems in grading students’ language proficiency are investigated. Greater consistency in test-task and criteria design for qualitative assessment of language

use, it is argued, that it better matches production samples with programme aims and objectives. The overall credibility of typical evaluation systems may thereby be enhanced.

The objectives of this research were to assess validity in devising standardized tasks for stimulating authentic language use at differing levels of competence, within set rubrics and in ‘high stakes’ contexts. Reliably to correlate qualitative, criterion-referenced assessments of task-based examination productions, both oral and written, with associated quantitative evaluations. To determine reliability in grading significant quantities of recorded language thus produced for formal assessment, according to experimental criteria. To triangulate the results of experimental assessment and evaluation for validity and reliability, with samples of results from official IB DP assessments. Better to understand authenticity as a working concept for guiding these aims and to identify theory and practice in distinguishing the international programme researched as a meaningful and respectable view of pedagogy and learning, through the investigation of some of its products.

The subjects of the investigation were a range of examiners and moderators applying published DP criteria which have been compared with results derived by a single researcher applying experimental criteria under a common, invariable, IBO-defined procedure of standardization and multiple moderation – one that is typical, nevertheless, of many nationally based systems, for example, the American College Board Advanced Placement, the English AQA ‘Advanced Supplementary’ and ‘Advanced’ Levels, or the French Baccalaureate. The study also attempts to develop and define coherent, componential assessment categories for evaluating target-language interchanges, whether oral or written, as produced in ‘high-stakes’, communicative settings. Representing an internationally recognized assessment and evaluation system, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) for Group 2 Languages (IBO, 1996, 2002), a system for discriminating the second and foreign language attainment of school students in multicultural, non-national contexts, has formed the focal point. IB Diploma evaluations are considered both ‘high-stakes’ and ‘international’ in that frequently they form a basis for admission to tertiary education anywhere in the world.

The data was collected by forums, panels, discussions, statistics were also worked on the results of a variety of IB DP schools. For recording linguistic performance in tightly constrained situations, typical of ‘high-stakes’ evaluations (both internal within schools and external in examinations), ontologically based descriptions of authenticity delineate

key qualities in communicative language production. These eschew the ‘specialist’ or traditional approaches of bilingual communication with, for example, typical attendant exercises in translation (an approach still evident for assessment in many a nationally based system, such as the bilingual, English-based AQA ‘AS’ and ‘A2’ curricula or the French Baccalaureat). With either translation or national-language assessment tasks employed as the means of eliciting foreign-language production, preliminary mastery of one standardized language is required (respectively in the cases cited, standard British English, or French as defined by the Academie Francaise).

The results offer description, analysis and critique of IBO Group 2 Languages planning, administration and outcomes, albeit with emphasis on Languages B as an example of a university-recognized scheme for evaluating student attainment at various levels, and accrediting competence in non-national contexts in any given second or foreign language. Two general hypotheses encapsulate the research. First, in any linguistic context, theorizing authenticity may provide a coherent conceptual framework for improving understanding of communicative processes and their products. Second, for assessment and evaluation purposes, the relevant abstractions may guide design of a universally valid template, facilitating reliable, rigorous analysis of communicative language use, whether written or spoken, at varying levels of competence. Thus a positive perspective of assessment underlines the IBO as a mission and vision.

Positivist approaches to assessment In ‘high-stakes’ contexts where students are selected for transition to tertiary education at a range of levels, monolingual, task-based performance has traditionally been evaluated at least partly in positivistic fashion, primarily in the interests of reliability. Less concern has been devoted to central issues of construct validity. In this way, comprehension and performance are often considered discretely, with assessment linked not so much to measurements of communicative effectiveness in ‘purpose’, ‘fluency’, ‘range’, ‘appropriacy’, ‘interactive responsiveness’, ‘immediacy of response’, ‘convincingness’ and so forth, as to the production of a standardized, linguistic ‘accuracy’ and ‘richness’ of expression (see, for example, the mark schemes and baremes de notation’ of English and French national programmes). Productions are matched to exemplars. Positivistic approaches to pedagogy have tended to atomize language learning and production by reducing utterance possibilities to formulaic, explicitly defined structures. Expertise is evaluated by discretely testing structural

components within tightly prescribed situations, in a linear hierarchy of competences and knowledge. (The approach is well illustrated by the national programmes cited, such as the ‘AS’ and ‘A2’ Levels. However, as will be seen, aspects of this positivist tradition remain discernible in the IBO system of task design, assessment and evaluation.) In demonstrating language acquisition for performance purposes, positivists assume a reliable learning of ‘simple’ structures and vocabulary preceding elaboration and sophistication, even if the latter is partially evident and the former remains weak. They frequently advocate reliably easy-to-test, rote memorization of pre-specified, ‘appropriate’ discourse, progressing from ‘basic’ to ‘advanced.’

To conclude, from complex argument, findings are summarized in a typology that has founded the design of an experimental assessment instrument for identifying and measuring features of authentic language-production and thus producing primary data for triangulating research. In this perspective, according to Van Lier, communicative approaches defining authentic, linguistic relations between teachers and learners, for example, may form a further triad, interlinking concepts of ‘curricular’, ‘pragmatic’ and ‘personal authenticity’ and diagrammatically represented as shown in Figure 1 (with all lines representing possibilities for interactions). Understanding the interlinkages is easier when the three latter concepts are broken down into a supplementary triad, isolating the discrete components of authentic expression. That is, ‘curricular authenticity’ resides in an individual’s possibilities for using and creating language, after exposure to models found or received by the individual from the linguistic environment. ‘Pragmatic authenticity’ relates to individual purpose in public language-production, and hence to physical, temporal and sociocultural contexts within which linguistic interactions take place. ‘Personal authenticity’ subsequently emerges from the resultant linguistic processing, establishing ontological, or existential, status for individuals committing themselves to interchanges that take place through intrinsically motivated, endotelic choice. Integrating committed participation in such interchange with inner-sourced, purposeful, or goal-oriented motivation results in what the educational psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has termed an ‘autotelic personality’. As Van Lier claims, these categories may be better understood as criteria supplying evidence for pragmatic authentication, a research concept for further definition, discrete categorization by component and discussion of its practical implications. The connection of Israel John with the present work relates the concept of triangulation of the concepts; awareness, autonomy and authenticity in assessment of

modern languages. These three concepts and the whole rationale of the use of rubrics specifically the standardized by the IBO DP for Language 2 are the main support for the current research.

To make a general conclusion, it is important to state that the six mentioned researches were taken into consideration by the author of the given paper as valuable resources in the field of rubrics as effective tool to improve writing. Definitely, having a wide range of perspectives, stages, resources, methods, and means of gathering data, difficulties, recommendations and conclusions on the use of rubrics, helps a great deal in the conduction of this research and the achieving of the objectives.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework considered in this research is truly believed to be key concepts, ideas, definitions already developed from which this work has been enriched and the rationale behind becomes much stronger.

#### **2.1. Relevant Concepts**

##### **2.1.1. The writing process**

Gardner and Johnson (1997) describe the stages of the writing process: "Writing is a fluid process created by writers as they work. There are different types of writers; the ones who think before writing, the ones who think while writing. Depending on the type the process goes accordingly. Accomplished writers move back and forth between the stages of the process, both consciously and unconsciously. Young writers, however, benefit from following the writing process which most academic researches divide into five stages.

Campbell points out, "there is no single writing process" (1998), there are three basic stages writers go through: prewriting, writing and revising.

Different stages involve different skills, and abilities, some more complex than others. Ron White (1987) states that the stages of writing process consist of planning, drafting, and revising.

Planning is a series of strategies designed to find and produce information in writing planning is any orderly procedure used to bring about a desired result. In this stage, the author/writer just builds basic of a topic that should depend on the writer/author's knowledge, ideas and experiences.

Drafting is a series strategy designed to organize and develop a sustained piece of writing. In here, the writer can explore and improve his/her idea. This stage also concentrates to the content than punctuation, grammar, or spelling. Revising is a series

of strategies designed to re-examine and re-evaluate the choices that have created a piece of writing.

The revising always comes up after giving feedback to the writing.

The feedback is important to tell which the words/sentence should be changed or need correction. Revising writing can be started by making decisions about how much it is desired to improve the writing, looking at the writing from a different point of view, and picking areas where the piece of writing could be clearer, more interesting, more informative and more convincing to the reader.

Appelbe in Mappe (2000) states more complete stages that “there are different views on the stages that the writers go through in producing a piece of writing, but a typically through model identifies four/five stages: pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing and publishing”.

The description of five stage-process is shown as follows:

- **Pre-writing**

It is known that the key to success on writing is the planning stage. In this stage, students have to work on activities, such as reading, brainstorming, mind mapping, discussing, fast writing, questioning, interviewing, all of these help to figure it out what to write about as well as encourage students before they write their sentences in the first draft. A typical pre-writing activity in the process approach would be for learners to brainstorm on the topic being provided; who, what, where, when, how, why, etc. Free writing, the use of journals, use graphic organizers, by this way, students would get motivation to write because they feel that they have something important to say. (Richard & White in Mappe, 2000). There are also some strategies to plan a written outcome; creating a cluster, a diagram or a web. Creating a storyboard, making an outline, identifying pros and cons, listing good arguments to support an essay, etc.



- **Drafting**

In this stage, students would select among ideas during pre-writing and structure. The result of brainstorming session to provide a plan of description of topic. The content might be written without considering the grammatical aspects. Writers should keep referring to their previous notes and the plan determined in stage one. However, it is possible to change the plan if needed. During this stage, writers must focus on getting the ideas written down, organizing the information logically and developing the ideas of the topic with enough detail for the purpose and the audience. Whenever drafting, writers should always keep in mind that: the drafts are for the writer, the brain make connections and links, discovers new ideas as writing. Drafts are not perfect and are always meant for revision. Drafting as part of the writing process takes time and writers must be patient to get a good piece of draft.

- **Revising**

In this stage, the students review a draft to check content and organization based on the feedback from his/her oneself, teachers or peers. Here the writer needs a reader eye. As drafting is for the writer, revision is for the reader, both being sometimes performed by the same writer. When revising the piece of writing is considered and assessed from the target audience's point of view. Sometimes is much better to have someone completely unfamiliar with the piece to review the written paper so the unclear or working aspects are easily identified. What is looked for when revising a paper would be part of the rubrics set previously. Message, content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, transitions, clarity, etc. may be part of the criteria. Audience, purpose and form are also aspects to be consider.

Biaael in Mappe (2000) emphasizes that revision is a process in which writers not only polish their style, but also develop their ideas. In this stage, the teacher helps the students through the revision to shape and reshape the text into final form, and its focused more on audience, mood, voice, length, clarity, completeness and consciousness. Revising then is re-looking, or re-seeing the piece of writing.

- **Editing**

This is where the role of teacher in giving indirect or direct feedback will be applied. In this stage, students check their final written paper looking for mistakes they have made based on the feedback given, such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, and all related conventions of the language.

Shih in Mappe (2000) classifies three stages of editing for grammar: editing at discourse level, sentences level and word level'.

Editing at discourse level is meant the writer needs to make changes in one sentence, such as making the subject plural instead of singular. Editing at sentence level is to find out the errors in sentences, such as: phrase, clause and sentence pattern. Editing at word level, editing morphological errors require checking to see that affixes and grammatical function words, such as: auxiliary verb, articles and preposition correct. The writer needs to focus his/her special attention on the ends of words in order to catch the missing of an incorrect ending: s/es, d/ed, -ing as well an awareness of different points of view.

## **2.2. Feedback**

Feedback is said to be one of the most powerful tools and influences on learning and achievement however this impact can either positive or negative since it can be affected by the type and the way it is given. The researcher of this investigation is mainly focused on effective feedback which involves timing and circumstance.

One of the effective ways to make students able to create a good piece of writing is the teacher providing effective and constructive feedback. In this part the researcher explains the kind of feedback which is relevant to the students' writing, the advantages and disadvantages of the feedback itself.

Feedback is kind of assessment that concern to the giving information about students' writing performance. Ur (1996) says that in the context of teaching in general, feedback is information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of the learning task, usually with the objective of improving their performance'. Positive feedback.

In addition, Roger (2001) says “Feedback is not just about weaknesses. Student will respond if teachers are encouraging as well as allowing mistakes, emerging capabilities, and give ideas for directing further learning”. From these definitions, it is clear that feedback is very useful in the teaching and learning process, besides students learn how to evaluate their own work. (Self-evaluate), it also helps students take greater confidence that their learning is taking place and also improves the students’ performance.

In providing feedback, teacher should encourage students to continue writing, in order students feel good with their writing and carry the activity through completion (Grabe and Kaplan). So, in the process of writing teachers must motivate students to do more toward their writing.

Feedback consists of some types. One of them is teacher’s feedback/correction. Feedback from teacher on the students’ writing could play a vital role especially in teaching process. In this case, teacher recognizes that teachers’ feedback is essential element in helping students improve, and an essential part of the teaching process (Anderson, 1982). It indicates that under teacher’s feedback, students will know the appropriate of the language feature for their composition, how their composition should be arranged and their composition will be better.

There are two kinds of teacher’s feedback; they are direct and indirect feedback. Direct feedback is a technique of correcting students’ error by giving explicit written feedback. While, indirect feedback is when the teacher/tutor alerts students to error using general comments, but gives students the opportunity to fix errors themselves Ferris, (2002). Lee (2005) defines Direct feedback is provided when the correct form is written on student’s paper whereas indirect feedback is provided if the teacher indicates the location of the error indirectly on the paper by underlining, highlighting or circling, or indirectly by indicating in the margins that there is an error on that line but without providing the correct form.

### **2.3. The use of rubrics**

A rubric is a multi-purpose scoring guide for assessing student products and performances. This tool works in a number of different ways to advance student learning, and has great potential in particular for non-traditional, first generation, and minority

students. In addition, rubrics improve teaching, contribute to sound assessment, and are an important source of information for program improvement.

Teachers usually have criteria in mind when assessing their students 'work even if these criteria is not explicitly mentioned or shown. There are some elements looked for along the assessment; spelling, the use of punctuation, grammar, etc. However, it is well-known that learning is best achieved if all the participants in the learning process; students and teachers clearly know about the criteria to be used and the performance expected and the levels at which the students will be assessed. Sometimes, rubrics are created to be used only for one performance and they are basic and simple. However, there are better ways to create better rubrics to be used for longer periods of time and give them a more meaningful use. There are some steps in developing rubrics.

- **Identifying performance criteria**

The first step in developing a rubric is to identify the criteria that define the performance. Suppose the performance task or expected learning outcome is that "students will be able to give an effective oral presentation." What are the key features or criteria of an effective oral presentation? While it depends upon the purpose and context for the speech, four general criteria might be identified: delivery, content, organization, and physicality.

Three to six criteria seem to work best. It is not so many that it overwhelms the memory and not so few that meaningful distinctions in the performance can't be made. Sometimes these criteria can be weighted as well. There may be one or two criteria that are valued more than the others and they could be given a higher value when calculating the overall score for the performance or product. Another important consideration is that the performance to be assessed should be observable and measurable. Some descriptions of learning outcomes or performance criteria are so vague that accurate measurement is difficult. For example, if the criterion is that "Students will know the states of the union," it may not be clear what "know" means. Does 'knowing' mean that students need only to be able to list the states, or be able to fill in the names on a map, or draw a map of the United States, or discuss the history of the state, or ....? The measurement problem can be lessening if the performance to be assessed is described with more specific action verbs where

possible, such as list, identify draw, discuss, explain, compare, critique, and predict, and so on. Often the performance criteria are determined ahead of time by the instructor or a professional organization, but sometimes they can be created by the students in a course, especially if the assignment is new to the instructor. Having students generate the criteria for assessing the performance can serve several purposes. Engaging students in a discussion about “What makes for a good speech” (or essay or model or dance or...) can help them deepen and internalize their understanding of the criteria for a quality performance in that particular area. As well, involving students in this conversation before they begin the assignment or project can help them make more informed choices as they begin to identify the topic for their laboratory study, the medium for their performance, or the design for their model. Another benefit is that students can sometimes offer insights into the performance that the instructor may not have envisioned. When a student asks if their oral presentations can be a video of themselves before a live audience rather than a live in person in class presentation, it can open possibilities the instructor had not considered. An additional pedagogical benefit is that the students’ comments can reveal to the instructor misconceptions that students may have about the topic, and the instructor can adjust his or her teaching of these concepts accordingly. A valuable activity can be to make a list of the assessment criteria that students identify as the project is introduced and another list again after they have completed the project, and then have them compare their pre-and post-lists to see if their understanding of the key concepts have changed or deepened. Even if the rubric has already been developed in advance however, asking students to engage in a discussion about the assessment criteria before the rubric is handed out can still be a valuable activity for many of these same reasons.

**Setting Performance Levels.** The second step in the process is to decide how many levels of performance are appropriate for the assessment. Typically, rubrics have from three to six rating levels. What drives the choice of the number of levels is the purpose for the assessment. If the main purpose is to make summative decisions, such as whether someone will pass or fail a course or an exam for example, then fewer levels are better. The fewer the levels of performance for the rater to consider, the greater the reliability and efficiency in scoring the performance. The more levels, the lower the reliability in scoring and the more time it will take for raters to make the decision. If, however, the primary

purpose of the assessment is formative, or to give feedback to learners to support them in improving their performance, then more performance levels (and more performance criteria) give the learner more specific information about the features of the performance that need attention. The trade-off again is that the greater number of scoring levels and performance criteria, the more time it takes the rater to assess the performance. The headings for the different performance levels can vary depending upon the purpose and contexts for the assessment. For some contexts, developmental language is the best choice, such as “Emerging, Developing, Arrived.” A developmental scale is respectful to the learner and recognizes that all of us are learners in any number of areas. The emphasis is on growth. Other times, more mastery-oriented language is appropriate as in “Below Proficient, Proficient, Above Proficient.” If the purpose of the assessment is to demonstrate whether or not students have met the standards for the course or program or profession, then identifying whether a learner is proficient or not is the key. Sometimes, numbers are used instead of words, while at other times numbers and words are used together.

- **Creating performance descriptions**

The third step in the process is to write a description for each cell in the matrix. For example, “delivery” is described in a brief statement at each of the three performance levels. The challenge in creating these paragraphs is to provide enough information to guide the creation and scoring of the project, but not so much that it overwhelms the reader or the performer. Keep in mind that the rubric is not intended to replace the instructor but instead to guide and support him or her in exercising informed judgment. Parallel structure across descriptions for each criterion (e.g., delivery) is important. The more parallel the descriptions are in form and content, the more dependable and efficient the scoring will be. One way to increase parallelism across descriptions is to identify a set of attributes for each criterion and then build each statement around those attributes. For example, the “delivery” descriptions were developed around three attributes: volume, pacing, and rapport. The same process is then followed for the other three criteria (e.g. content, organization, physicality) until all of the cells in the matrix are completed.

#### **2.4. Direct feedback vs. indirect feedback**

Whenever educators think of feedback two types come to their minds; direct feedback and indirect feedback, the difference between the two of them is that while direct is explicit correction whereas indirect is giving the learner some indication or clues that an error exists in their writing. Frodesen (2001) says that indirect feedback is more useful than direct feedback. Similarly, Fulgor (2006) states that in indirect feedback, students appreciated its beneficial effects on their learning more than in the direct feedback. Often teachers assume that indirect feedback is what should always be used since it requires the students to monitor their own errors and to try to fix the error on their own. Hence, such a strategy promotes learner autonomy.

Direct feedback can be more helpful when revising syntax and vocabulary, whereas they felt that indirect feedback was useful in encouraging them to reflect on aspects of their writing and to develop improvements.

Some research evidence says that indirect feedback is more helpful on students' long-term writing development than direct feedback (Ferris, 2002). The results proved that indirect feedback with student self-editing promote accuracy and quality a lot more than direct feedback. Others have reported that indirect feedback may be more beneficial to students than direct feedback in editing, because indirect feedback can guide learning and help the students solve problem by themselves (Lalande, 1982).

There is a clear distinction between providing instruction and providing feedback. However, when feedback is combined with more a correctional review, the feedback and instruction become intertwined until "the process itself takes on the forms of new instruction, rather than informing the student solely about correctness" (Kulhavy, 1977, p. 212).

Feedback needs to provide information specifically relating to the task or process of learning that fills a gap between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood (Sadler, 1989), it is believed that indirect feedback is about developing and promoting the students' ability in writing and students who get indirect feedback will preserve in their brain what they have noticed for a longer period of time. In other words, it will be much more meaningful. Whereas, direct feedback is more about being kept in the students' mind for a shorter period of time. Providing direct feedback, will be shortening the opportunity

to reflect and correct the errors by themselves; since the one who notices the mistakes, slips or errors are not the student but the instructor or the teacher.

## 2.5. Consciousness - raising

Language is so vast and varied that learners can never be provided with a viable and comprehensive description of the language as a whole. However, they can be provided with guidelines and, more important, with activities which encourage them to think about samples of language and to draw their own conclusions about how the language works. The general term for activities of this kind is consciousness-raising (C-R). C-R activities have been a part of language teaching for a very long time. Indeed, the grammar-translation approach to language teaching certainly embodied C-R. Learners worked from language data to formulate rules for language production. Under grammar-translation, however, there was generally a very restricted range of C-R techniques and the methodology paid a very high price in other ways – by restricting exposure to the target language, for example.

According to Ellis (1991) Ellis (1993) contrasts C-R with practice activities. Among the characteristics of C-R he lists:

The 'attempt to *isolate* a specific linguistic feature for focused attention'. From the wealth of language data to which learners are exposed it can be identified particular features and draw the learner's attention specifically to these.

The provision of '*data* which illustrate the targeted feature'. It is necessary that this data should as far as possible be drawn from texts, both spoken and written, which learners have already processed for meaning, and that as far as possible those texts should have been produced for a communicative purpose, not simply to illustrate features of the language.

The requirement that learners 'utilize intellectual effort' to understand the targeted feature, is a deliberate attempt to involve the learner in hypothesizing about the data and to encourage them to hypothesis testing.

The researcher believes that a successful learner is actively involved in looking for regularities in language data and in drawing conclusions from those regularities, then, there is an obligation to encourage this process. If succeed in this attempt, not only making specific generalizations about language available to learners, but also in inculcating learning habits which will pay valuable dividends whenever and wherever the



learner encounters language. C-R, then, can be seen as guided problem solving. Learners are encouraged to notice particular features of the language, to draw conclusions from what they notice and to organize their view of language in the light of the conclusions they have drawn.

### **2.5.1. Advantages of using consciousness – raising activities**

If the goal of a class is to teach the present perfect, then the most logical way to do it might be to present it, practice it, and then produce it in a freer manner (PPP). This is one type of grammar teaching, and should not be discarded by any means. However, as mentioned above, consciousness-raising tasks help to build other types of knowledge. Here are some reasons to use CR tasks:

1. CR tasks build implicit and well as explicit knowledge. Traditional grammar instruction is focused on explicit knowledge of rules and features, whereas communicative language teaching tends to eschew rules in favor of practice in communicative use, which builds implicit knowledge. CR tasks allow learners to make assumptions and see examples of forms, building implicit knowledge, and then to form rules from the patterns, which builds explicit knowledge.
2. CR tasks work for learners with different learning styles and intelligences. Not everyone responds well to a teacher-fronted lesson in the PPP format. Many learners switch off as soon as the teacher starts talking, or may passively receive information and give appropriate answers without actually processing anything. If the rules are student-generated, then it is par for the course that they are more likely to be remembered and understood.
3. CR tasks present grammar in context. Although CLT does provide a context, it is generally created by the learners themselves. Traditional grammar - and indeed any textbooks organized on CLT principles - present grammar as isolated sentences. Context allows learners to see what other forms typically appear with the TS, and how these forms interact.
4. CR tasks present authentic language. Examples can be taken from the internet, for example, providing they are appropriate for the level of the students. Even the best textbooks tend to include inauthentic sentences teachers would not normally use.

5. CR tasks can present a large amount of input. What EFL learners in particular lack is input. Rather than single sentences, CR tasks can be used to give a larger amount of input and get students used to understanding English in more substantial texts. Japanese high school graduates, for example, are often intimidated by texts longer than a few lines. CR tasks provide fluency reading practice.
6. CR tasks encourage cooperative learning. Rather than individually processing grammatical forms, and then producing them together, learners work together cooperatively to process the language.
7. CR tasks are interesting and fun. Texts can be newspaper articles, gossip columns, horoscopes, even transcripts of on-line chats.
8. CR tasks lower the affective filter. A teacher-fronted classroom can be a relaxing, familiar environment, but many learners do not have fond memories of language classes. Allowing students free reign to work without teacher interference may well make learners feel more relaxed.
9. It is easy for learners to prepare their own CR tasks. Students can find examples of the grammar using search engines or concordances and use set questions to make assumptions. Equally, student-generated texts can be used to help cement knowledge.
10. Skills learnt in CR tasks can be used outside the classroom. Essentially, CR presents a way of analyzing language. It can be applied in any situation; learners simply need enough examples of the target structure.

Another argument to use consciousness raising activities is the development of creative and critical thinking. According to Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols (2008) Creative thinking involves the creation / generation of further development of ideas, processes, objects, relational links, synergies and quality relationships. Critical thinking involves the evaluating of all of the above.

On a practical level, in the context of education, critical thinking can be described as mental processes that learners use “to plan, describe and evaluate their thinking and learning” as described by Moseley in the article published in the ninth volume of the Asian EFL Journal Quarterly in 2007. It is self-directed and, thus,

fundamental to learning. By working to improve the quality of thinking, so learning is improved.

Yet, creative thinking, as well, is an essential element in effective planning or, at the very least, has the potential to improve planning. As learners try to analyze and solve problems in their everyday lives, they often imagine various solutions. Creativity can be used to better explain ideas to others and even to evaluate plans and results from unique perspectives. It is difficult to separate creative thinking from critical thinking. Both are inextricably intertwined.

Moreover, people's values, attitudes and feelings have an impact in the way they think, thus, it is mandatory to examine the influence of these elements in the thinking process. For example, having a negative attitude about a topic will ultimately affect the capacity to learn. Minds are more likely to reject information towards which there are negative feelings.

The emotional state of mind contributes to or hinder learning. Positive emotions enhance the ability to think flexibly, and with more complexity, thus making easier to find solutions to problems. Conversely, when a concept struggles with an emotion, the emotion almost always wins. It is difficult to think rationally when one is overwhelmed with negative feelings or insecurities. Thus, learner in positive, joyful environments are likely to experience better learning, memory, and feelings of self-esteem.

So critical thinking is a tool for extending learning, for helping students to step out of and expand their comfort zone. In so many ways, those strategies are about helping students to operate in what Lev Vygotsky has called the zone of proximal development\_ the zone which lies between current knowledge and that which can be accomplished with the assistance of teachers and peers. These strategies help students to move from their current understanding of content and attitudes to a new level of understanding, and then to take another step forwards right back into the zone of proximal development.

## 2.6. Grammar

According to Penny Ur, grammar is the way a language manipulates and combines words in order to form longer words. For example, in English the present form of the verb be in the third person has two distinct forms, one “is” being used with a singular subject, and the other “are” with a plural; and if the plural “are” is combined with a singular subject, the result is usually unacceptable or “ungrammatical”. Thus, a sentence like: *This is a book* is grammatically correct, whereas *this are a book* is not. There is a set of rules which govern how units of meaning may be constructed in any language: It is possible to say that a learner who “knows grammar” is one who has mastered and can apply the rules to express him or herself in what would be considered acceptable language forms.

### 2.6.1. The place of grammar in language teaching

There is no doubt that a knowledge (implicit or explicit) of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of a language: words cannot be used unless you know how they should be put together. But there has been some discussion in recent years of the question: do students have to have “grammar exercises”? Isn’t it better for learners to absorb the rules intuitively through communicative activities than to be taught through special exercises explicitly aimed at teaching grammar? The fact that a learning process is aiming for a certain target behavior does not necessarily mean that the process itself should be composed entirely of imitations of that behavior. In other words, ability to communicate effectively is probably not attained most quickly or efficiently through pure communication practice in the classroom; not, at least, within the framework of a formal course of study.

In natural learning, such as the learning of a firstly language by a child – the amount of time and motivation devoted to learning is so great that there is no necessity for conscious planning of the learning process: sooner or later the material is absorbed. However, in a formal course of study, there is very much less time available, and often less motivation, which mean that learning time has to be organized for optimum efficiency. This means preparing a program of study – a syllabus – so that bits of the total corpus of knowledge are presented one after the other for gradual, systematic acquisition, rather than all at once. And it also mean preparing organized, balanced plan of classroom teaching / learning procedures

through which learners will be enabled to spend some of their time concentrating on mastering one or more of the components of the target language on their way to acquiring it as a whole. These components may be the things like spelling or pronunciation or vocabulary or grammar.

Grammar then, may furnish the basis for a set of classroom activities during which it becomes temporarily the main learning objective. But the key word here is temporarily. The learning of grammar should be seen in the long term as one the means of acquiring a thorough mastery of the language as a whole, not as an end in itself. Thus, although at an early stage teacher may ask the students to learn a certain structure through exercises that concentrate on virtually meaningless manipulations of language; it is necessary to quickly progress to activities that use it meaningfully. An even these activities will be superseded eventually by general fluency practice and any learning of grammar takes place only as incidental to this main objective.

### 2.6.2. The grammar of class

According to Ellis (1998) Teachers are used to allocating nouns to two classes (countable and uncountable). This is an important distinction to make since the patterns in which these items occur are quite different. The class of double object verbs (*give, ask, send, etc*) is another which is often identified and highlighted for learners. Teachers are, therefore, used to classifying words according to their grammatical behavior. This is a valuable procedure which can usefully be taken a good deal further.

There is, for example, a very important class of nouns which are often post modified by a clause with *that*:

*Please don't get **the idea that** lain a supporter of women's liberation. There was **this theory that** women always pass first time.*

*I got **the impression that** it was trying to get in.*

These words play an important part in highlighting ideas in discourse. They play an important part in all kinds of English from everyday conversation to

abstruse academic discourse. It is important to make learners aware of words like this.

It is not clear in how many ways words might usefully be classified. The grammar of class is much more open-ended than the grammar of structure and orientation. The learner faces two problems. What classes of word are there in English and how are the words of the language allocated to these classes? Learners are obliged to work on these questions simultaneously whenever they meet new linguistic items or become aware of new patterns of behavior.

### 2.6.3. Aspects of grammar to be highlighted (Ellis. 1998)

- **Lexical phrase**

The importance of fixed phrases in language is receiving increasing attention (see Lewis, Paper 2). There are fixed phrases like *as a matter of fact*, which behave like lexical items. There are frames like *as (adverb) as possible; would you mind ...ing*. A fluent speaker of a language has a vast stock of these prefabricated phrases. Some of them are closely related to particular word classes. The nouns post modified by *that*, illustrated above, for example, are often found in frames like:

*The problem/fact/danger is that...*

Teachers can offer learners' hints like this which may help them assimilate these fixed phrases, but the learning task is still very open-ended. Some scholars (e.g. Pawley and Syder 1983) have estimated that there are tens of thousands of such phrases.

- **Collocations**

Collocations are thought in terms of word association. For an English speaker the word *hard* calls up words like *work* and *luck* because it often occurs in their company. It also calls up words like *cold*, again because the two often go together. Words often collocate with their antonyms - *hard* and *soft*. Sometimes several

words build up as seen into lexical phrases. Sets of words and the lexical relations which hold between them contribute to lexical cohesion, for example. An illustration of this can be seen in the C-R activity on page 71, where words to do with aircraft and flight contribute to the cohesion of a text.

- **Frequent words**

It is important to provide good coverage of the most frequent words of the language - prepositions and modal verbs, for example. These words need to be highlighted for the learner thoroughly and systematically, simply because they are so common. They are covered in other perspectives on grammar. Many of their uses are covered under *Lexical phrases*. Prepositions contribute heavily to the structure of the noun group. But these words are of such frequent occurrence, and so central to the meaning and structure of the language, that they need to be constantly recycled.

- **Text structure**

Work on cohesion and coherence (see for example Hoey 1991) and genre analysis (Swales 1990) helps us to identify macro-structures in text.

- **Metaphor**

Metaphors such as those described in Lakoff and Johnson (1980) ('Time is money' you can *spend, save, etc* both; 'Discourse is a journey'- you can go *back to a point, come to the end, reach an agreement, take another approach*) give the learner the power to generate a whole set of new meanings using familiar words.

## **2.7. The importance of language as a criterion**

Language according to the IB Language B guide (primary source of this research) Not all errors have the same importance, and teachers should bear this in mind. Some errors affect the communication of meaning significantly, and others do not. Also, some errors indicate a fundamental lack of command of the language, while others may simply indicate a moment of forgetfulness.

- **Slips**

Mistakes at all levels of difficulty, but erratic and occasional – e.g. the candidate normally forms past tenses well, but occasionally forgets “-ed”.

- **Flaws**

Errors occur more regularly, particularly in certain structures – e.g. past tenses are formed correctly quite often, but are not really reliable, and there may be basic confusions (e.g. past simple versus present perfect).

- **Gaps**

Some structures are rarely correct, or simply don't appear – eg the past tenses are needed, but do not appear.

A good answer will have few language gaps, and slips or flaws rarely affect meaning.

## **2.8. The importance of Message as a criterion**

In rhetorical studies and communication studies, the message is the information conveyed by (a) words (in speech or writing), and/or (b) other signs and symbols.

A message (verbal or nonverbal—or both) is the content of the communication process. The originator of the message in the communication process is the sender; the sender conveys the message to a receiver.

## **2.9. The importance of Format as criterion**

Format is a particular text type with its appropriate conventions.

To organize or arrange text, especially, according to a chosen pattern (Cambridge Dictionary)

This research as mentioned up above, will focused on Paper 2: Written productive skills Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes. Paper 2 is based on the options: cultural diversity, customs and traditions, health, leisure, science and technology.



This paper is externally set and externally assessed. It consists of five tasks requiring different types of texts. Each task is based on a different option, from which the student chooses one. The student is expected to write 250–400 words.

The aim of this component is to assess the student's ability to communicate in writing for a variety of purposes. It requires the student to demonstrate his or her productive skills. Students' factual knowledge of the options will not be tested as such, but can, and should, be used to support what the student wishes to communicate.

Each task requires an answer with a specific text type, such as a formal letter or a report. To this end, students need to identify the purpose(s) of the task in order to use register and style appropriate to the text type.

Students should:

- Use language accurately and appropriately
- Develop and organize ideas relevant to the task
- Produce the features of the required text type correctly. Paper 2 requires students to produce text types from the following list.
- Article
- Blog/diary entry
- Brochure, leaflet, flyer, pamphlet, advertisement
- Essay
- Interview
- Introduction to debate, speech, talk, presentation
- News report
- Official report
- Review
- Set of instructions, guidelines
- Written correspondence

The researcher has already chosen the task for the students written productive skills. It will be based on option: Science and Technology, and the text type will be an e-mail.

The students along with the researcher will keep a journal to record the experiences while the research is being conducted. (See annex 10)

## **2.10. The importance of journals**

Journal writing is defined by Fulwiler as expressive, personal writing in the first person about ideas that the writer perceives to be important. It can be broad in scope or narrow, focusing on response to one academic subject or drawing connections from the whole of the writer's frame of reference.

Considerable research has been conducted on reflective journal writing. Some studies investigated the relationship between journal writing and thinking processes and highlighted the importance of journal writing in developing thinking processes such as: recall, comparison, classification, interpretation, evaluation and others (Zacharias, 1991; Knight, 1990; Barone, 1990; Carswell, 1988; Niles, 1985 and Fulwiler, 1982).

Others tried to find out the relationship between journal writing and reflection and stressed the effectiveness of journal writing as a tool for refining the process of reflection. These studies tried to gain insight into the value of journal writing for the students. They tried to figure out whether students' reflection on their established beliefs made them more amenable to possible changes in those beliefs and more open to new ideas (Carter, 1998; Pajares, 1992 and Richardson, 1990).

Some other studies tackled the relationship between journal writing and learning. These studies investigated the benefits journal writing offers to accommodate diverse learning styles and encourage learners' autonomy. They examined the effect of using journal writing on the students' reading comprehension, literature appreciation, writing quality, attitudes towards writing and obstacles to reflective writing (Kerka, 1996; Strausbaugh, 1995; El-Naggar, 1995 and Cobine, 1995). The role of journal writing in reducing anxiety was also the focus of some studies. Sgoutas-Emch and Johnson (1998) examined the efficacy of journal writing in reducing perceived anxiety and physiological reactivity towards a statistics course required for a major in psychology. The results suggested that journal writing is an effective therapeutic tool in stress management and anxiety reduction. These results were affirmed by the studies of Andrusyszyn & Davie (1997), Adams (1996), Tichenor & Jewell (1996), Cartwright (1996), Hudson (1995),

Kingen (1995), Burt (1994), Payton (1991) and Rabinor (1991). The effect of journal writing on developing professional judgement in teaching was the main concern of some studies lately (Fernandez-Balboa, \_1998; Carter, 1998; Dinkelman, 1997 and Smith & Pape, 1990). But most of these studies adopted qualitative research as an approach to obtaining descriptive information on variables not easily accessed through empirical research. This indicates the lack of empirical studies in this area and the need for further research, which the present study tried to do.

Whereas classroom writing is an essential academic requirement, writing outside the classroom can be a useful tool to enhance writing skill (Chanderasegaran, 2002: 14). One way to practice writing at home is keeping journals which “are notebooks in which writers keep a record of ideas, opinions, and description of daily life.

Journals help writers develop their creativity” Spaventa (2000: 168). Journal writing helps learners write better and better day by day since it provides learners with more opportunities to freely write about what they wish to whenever they feel like writing as Hamp and Heasley (2006:5) advocate: “*The most obvious way you can help yourself become a good writer is by writing*”. It is strongly suggested that in addition to completing the tasks, students also keep a personal own journal. It is easy to get a notebook, and try to write down some ideas in English every day, about something interesting. Learners will be happily surprised by producing pages and pages of writing.

The fact that students are given more chances to write about what is relevant to them is “an active learning technique” (Chickering and Gamson, 1987: 5). By keeping journals, students can record their personal or life activities. The value of personal writing or life writing has been discussed by several scholars such as Artot (1992) quoted in Tin (2000: 49): “*It is a powerful tool to find our own untapped creative power, uncover our family history, learn to see the world more clearly, heal unsolved issues, understand our fears, and explore our motivation*”. Through personal writing, participants can develop both writing skills and awareness, can develop greater awareness and interpersonal understanding, increasing the ability to relate to others.

Students find journal writing an enjoyable experience since the primary aim of keeping a journal is “to encourage students to become involved and interested in writing” (White and Arndt, 1991: 63) without concerning much about errors and time pressure

(Spaventa, 2000: 168). The benefits of journal writing are highlighted in White and Arndt's (1991: 67) discussion: This technique has been found to be an effective and productive means of arousing interest in writing, which, at the same time, develops fluency of expression. It also helps students to become aware of why they wish to communicate their ideas and to regard writing not only as a means of personal expression, but also a dialogue in written language with the reader.

Adding to the benefit that "journal writing provides students with good opportunities to improve their writing skills individually and good chances to record their thoughts and feelings" (Ngoh, 2002: 27) is Spaventa's (2000: 168) observations: There are many rewards about keeping a journal. In addition to the informal conversation that takes place in it between the person and the inner self and the student and the instructor: when the course is done, students will have a record of what they read, what they experienced and what they thought about during that time.

In persuading learners of the merits of journal writing, Lagan (2000: 14) writes: Writing a journal will help develop the habit of thinking on paper and show how ideas can be discovered in the process of writing. A journal can make writing a familiar part of students' life and can serve as a continuing source of ideas for papers.

Looking upon journal writing as a way to develop the habit of transcribing one's thoughts onto paper is by and large synonymous with looking upon journal writing as a way to develop accuracy on paper. Lagan (2000: 3) displays the correlation between clear thinking and accuracy by quoting his ex-teacher's words "If you don't think clearly, you won't write clearly."

It can definitely not be expected that the first pieces of journal writing by an average student are lucid and logical; however, in the long run, with the teacher's facilitation, journal writing can eventually lead to disciplined thinking and increase accuracy. Moreover, as "journal writing can show you how ideas can be discovered in the process of writing" (Lagan, 2000: 14), it observably helps remove the embarrassing situation in which students often find themselves deficient in ideas, and thus encourages fluency. In several author's perspectives, journal writing is deemed to be one type of creative writing that can help students brainstorm ideas and write more competently and accurately as Tin (2004: 6) corroborates: "Creative writing activities can change students' perceptions not merely on

writing but also on themselves and the world they live in, lower their anxiety, and develop their writing proficiency, accuracy and personalities.”

Journal writing can also bring about another benefit that classroom writing can infrequently do. While in-class writing tasks are prone to make students nervous, journal writing can diminish the distance between the students and the teacher, and augment their reciprocal trust. A supportive learning atmosphere will thereby be created along with a high learning motivation, which students more and more integrate into their formal writing (Ngoh, 2002: 27).

The question of correction in journal writing, however, remains vaguely replied to. It is dispiriting if the teacher acts towards the students' writing as a source of errors to be rectified. On the contrary, how can the students know what aspect of language they should improve without error diagnosis and remedial feedback? This issue is handled through White and Arndt's (1991: 172) recommendation: Because writers have to achieve a high degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency, it is very important to promote ways of self-correcting from an early stage .... Inevitably, teachers will want to draw attention to language items which seem to be important to us as readers. Several points should be kept in mind when doing it so:

- Concentrate on language errors which have global rather than local effects. This means attending to formal language errors which interfere with meaning over a broader span than the individual clause or sentence.

Do not attempt to cover too many repairs. It is quite impossible for learners to cope with too many problems simultaneously.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology of the investigation**

In this chapter the methodology applied in the research has been described.

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

The Research Paradigm: the quantitative research process

This investigation has been organized around a quantitative investigation and according to the empiric-analytic quantitative investigation. Hernandez, Fernandez y Baptista, (2013). This research is limited to an explanation, prediction and control of a problem presented in higher secondary level students when writing.

- The underlying assumptions are:
- Cause and effect is real and can explain the world
- Research is context-free
- Believes in detached role of observer
- Uses statistical analysis
- Generalizes from the specific
- Reality exists and can be predicted
- Investigation is neutral
- Theory and Practice are separate 9
- Subject / Object relationship
- Aristotle, Locke, Hume

The first step of the research process is identifying the research topic. The researcher has gone through a broad research area to clarify a precise set of ideas or concepts. At the completion of this previous study, the researcher was able to write the research topic in the form of a question. Followed by proceeded the literature review. During this process the research topic was further refined and a clearer understanding of the research question or problem was obtained. Then, the research was designed.

The basic beliefs of a positivist or quantitative researcher lead the researcher to perceive the world as external and objective, and science as value free. As an observer they are independent and values can be suspended in order to understand. Reality is seen as one and therefore by dividing and studying its parts the whole can be understood. Therefore, in their general approach to research design the quantitative researcher is seeking to deduce cause and effect relationships to predict patterns of behavior. Therefore, the research purpose is likely to be causal or predictive rather than exploratory. The quantitative researcher then develops theory and uses this to explore the world. This theoretical framework identifies key variables and their relationships and associations. It allows initial design clarity but the result may not necessarily contribute to existing knowledge. Martinez Godinez, (2013).

The research sample size in a quantitative approach would be reasonably large, a subset of a larger population and random sample with the same characteristics as that population. There are time economies gained in this approach with documented and tested methods to generate data, while data analysis is of a low complexity through accepted statistical analysis methods. Typically, a quantitative researcher will use secondary data, survey techniques and classic experiments when collecting data, whereas an interpretivist will focus on fieldwork to facilitate the emergence of knowledge. This difference has been termed inquiry from the outside versus inquiry from the inside (Evered & Louis, 1981). Researcher involvement in this stage of the research process is low with the researcher acting as an independent observer.

The stages in data analysis and interpretation are completed after data collection. Statistical measures of association and the development of measurement models are significant at this stage, the language used (Jean Lee, 1992) "becomes the language of variables." Quantitative data analysis and interpretation is primarily deductive, a matter of proving or disproving the hypothesis or an assertion developed from a general statement. Indeed, in any causal or predictive study when the cause and effect relationship has been demonstrated, or not, then the researcher has done their duty (Westmeyer, 1994; 117). Therefore, reporting research results the findings are discussed, in a recognized format, as to the extent to which the data collected either confirms or disconfirms the research question.



This method has been decided, since its aim is a complete, detailed description. the researcher, knows roughly in advance what is being looked for, it is recommended in earlier stages of the research project, the design emerges as the study unfolds, Data will be gathered in the form of words, pictures, objects observation will be used as well as interviews, the researcher will be immersed in the subject matter. Some other instruments used in this research has been:

- Nomothetic (General laws) – agree on general truths
- Survey Verbal or written questions administered to subjects
- Experiment - A test measuring an effect.
- Randomized Sampling - The selection of subjects using a random system
- Pre/post Test - A test given before and after the treatment.
- Statistical Analysis Correlational studies - one variable's change is affected by change in another variable
- Correlational Studies - One variable's change is effected by a change in another variable
- Use of Control Group; a group that is not given the treatment.

### 3.2. Design of the Investigation

For the purpose of this investigation a research according to the objectives was used following the pattern shown below.

$$GO \left[ \begin{array}{ccc} SO1 & \dots & PC1 \\ SO2 & \dots & PC2 \\ SO3 & \dots & PC3 \end{array} \right] FC$$

Where:

GO = General Objective

SO = Specific Objective

PC = Partial Conclusion

FC = Final Conclusion

Here, the detail of the operational steps which were followed in the design of this investigation:

1. **Deciding on the objectives:** Once the problem was identified as well as the context in which the work was to be done, the general and specific objectives were established. These objectives are explicitly mentioned in Chapter 1.
2. **Revision of data:** A bibliographical review was also conducted to find out the existing antecedents for this investigation. (Chapter 1) All this information gave a great insight on the theoretical framework, as well as the methodology and the instruments for this particular work.
3. **Defining the study sample:** With the purpose of gathering real and necessary data 47 students were chosen. The students were from 4<sup>th</sup> and fifth grade of secondary from El Pinar School. Also two teachers from the same school.
4. **Resources and paperwork:** To be able to conduct this research permission from parents and the school were needed and obtained. The research was also part of the writing skills within the curriculum.
5. **Choosing the questionnaires and techniques for gathering data:** The tests were chosen based on the IB programme assessment of the written productive skills and the questionnaires were particularly tailored for the purpose of this investigation.
6. **Choosing the method and data analysis:** The program to analyze the data was the SPSS 22. The valuable information for this research was indicated by counting answers, percentages, the media, the mode, the maximum, and the minimum, and comparative charts.
7. **Revising the questionnaires:** Since the questionnaires were created and adapted it was necessary to have three colleagues; experts in the matter to revise them and validate them.
8. **Selectin the Sample:** The experimental group consisted of 27 students from el Pinar School and 20 students for the control group. Both from the same school.
9. **Applying the tests and the questionnaires:** The “Entry test” was given to both groups on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2017 and the “Exit Test” on May 22<sup>nd</sup> in the same year. The questionnaires to students were given on March 8<sup>th</sup> and the questionnaires to teachers on the same day. The survey after the workshop was given on May, 26<sup>th</sup>.

10. **Processing the data:** The data was manually processed, according to the variables and later on charted.
11. **Analyzing the results:** First the results were interpreted, then analyzed by comparative charts and using the researcher experience.
12. **Writing the final report:** The report was organized in four chapters; the investigation outline, the theoretical framework, the methodology and finally the results of the investigation.
13. **The investigation Variables:** Two types of variables have been decided on according to the methodological approach; Dependent and independent. Being the independent the use of rubrics and the dependent the quality of the written production in fifth graders.

#### **3.2.1. Investigation questions**

- How does the professional literature reviewed define rubrics?
- What are the benefits, according to the professional literature reviewed, of using rubrics and timely feedback?
- Do using international standardized rubrics with secondary students improve academic achievement in the area of writing?

### **3.3. Variables**

#### **3.3.1. Dependent variable**

Based on the topic and the research question, this research have the quality of written production and the secondary students as dependent variables.

#### **3.3.2. Independent variable**

Based on the topic and the research question, this research have the use of rubrics, and trained teachers as the independent variables.

### **3.4. Population and study sample**

### **3.4.1. Universe**

The universe for this research project was the two groups participating in it; the control group (20 students) and the experimental group (27 students) plus eight teachers; three from el Pinar School and five from different schools. Making a total number of 55 participants.

### **3.4.2. Population**

The students who were the subject of this research project were 20 from the fourth grade of secondary (Control group) and 27 students from fifth grade of secondary (Experimental group) whose level of English was mostly intermediate however not formally framed within the Common European Framework. The age group is between sixteen and seventeen years old. The students of this group have different social, academic and economic backgrounds. They were exposed to English lessons three times a week in segments of 80 minutes each, completing a total of four chronological hours per week.

### **3.4.3. Sample**

The group subject of this investigation is both; the control group (20 students of fourth grade of secondary) and the experimental group (27 students of fifth grade of secondary) a total of 47 students.

### **3.4.4. Individual**

In the control group; there were 20 students whose age was 16 years old. 9 girls and 11 boys.

In the experimental group there were 27 students whose age was 17 years old. 14 girls and 13 boys.

Table 1. Subjects of the investigation

Subjects	Boys	Girls	Total
Secondary students	24	23	47

### 3.5. Techniques and instruments for gathering data

The techniques, tools and instruments used in order to gather important and useful data for the purpose of this research were:

#### 3.5.1. Techniques for gathering data

- **Questionnaires**

Two questionnaires were prepared. One directed to teachers and the other to the students. Tamayo (2014:185), claims that *“the questionnaire is a great tool in the scientific research, since it concretes in a written form the observation, enabling the researcher to focus on particular aspects linked to particular conditions. The questionnaire considers the essential aspects of the phenomenon; allows the researcher to specify problems which are subject of main interest, circumscribe the reality to an essential data, and precise the objective to be studied”*.

Since the questionnaires were elaborated by the researcher, three experts validated the questionnaire for teachers and three other did the same with the one for students.

- **Questionnaire for students**

The questionnaire prepared for the students was a YES/NO containing ten questions related to their writing activity. The purpose was to identify main factors students deal with when writing and to find out how familiar they were with the assessment related to the writing component of their learning and the use of rubrics. The questionnaire was applied to a total of 47 students from El Pinar School in March 2017. All the students were clearly informed about the

reason why they had to answer the questions. The participants are 15-16 years old and it was part of their English class.

The set of questions was first applied to a group of twenty (20) students from the same school with the same characteristics as the control group and the experimental group to prove its validity and reliability. (See annex 4)

- **Questionnaire for Teachers**

The questionnaire prepared for the teachers was also a YES/NO containing ten questions related to the writing activity. The purpose of this questionnaire was to identify main factors teachers have to deal with when teaching and assessing writing and also to find out how familiar they were with the assessment. This instrument helped to clarify the objectives for a future Training workshop for the English teachers in the school.

The set of questions was first applied to a group of fifteen (15) teachers; five, from the same school and ten from another school. Teachers with the same characteristics as the ones involved in assessment with rubrics to prove its validity and reliability. (See annex 5)

- **Training Workshop for the English Teachers**

A 2-week training was delivered to English teachers with the purpose of providing them with the necessary knowledge and tools to further proceed with the research successfully.

The teachers directly involved in this research were only three but the eleven English Teachers in the school were benefited with this workshop. The main focus was on writing as a process and the effects of an aligned assessment to the school aims.

The use of rubrics from an international standardized programme such the IB DP was to be managed by the teachers so the research could be properly conducted. The workshop was divided into 10 sessions along two weeks. Each session lasted 80 minutes. Monday through Friday, a total of 800 minutes.

Each session had its own objectives however all of them completely linked. Only four questions related to their writing activity as well. The purpose was to identify main factors teachers have to deal with when teaching and assessing writing and also to find out how familiar they were with the assessment. (See annex 12)

- **A diagnostic test**

A standardized writing task as an “entry” test, taken from the International Baccalaureate May 2017 examination session (M17/2/ABENG/SP2/ENG/TZ0/XX/M), was given to both groups; the control and the experimental with the same writing task. Only the experimental group set of tests was assessed using rubrics whereas the control group set of tests was assessed using the regular mechanism. The rationale behind this procedure was to gather data obtained with this instrument quantitatively and analyzed the actual quality of the written production of the students, as described above. The researcher decided to collect a quantitative data because a record of the “before” using rubrics and feedback was needed in order to be compared with the group who actually was assessed by the use of rubrics and who got a proper feedback. In the final stage of the research, improvement was definitely shown in the exit test taken by the experimental group. (See annex 7,8)

- **An exit test**

The same standardized test was given at the end of the research project to both groups with the purpose of comparing results with the first “entrance” test to be able to measure the improvement of the students’ quality of their written production.

The task for this test does not need to be validated since it was taken from the IB Mark schemes May 2017, this instrument is attached in the appendix. It must be mentioned that there is a free online access to the IB English B examiner website. This material is (M17/2/ABENG/SP2/ENG/TZ0/XX/M). (See annex 13,14)

- **Direct observations**

Observation recorded in a journal was gathered mainly qualitatively and analyzed with the *categorical approach*. The information collected was related to the students' performance during the development of the writing process and the actual performance of the tasks. The instrument was divided into two four parts: Description of the activity, student's language use, effectiveness of the communicative activity, and additional notes. In addition, to analyze the students' performance, quantitative approach was used following two set of categories:

1. For student's understanding the task: very frequently, frequently, occasionally, and rarely, very rarely, and never.
2. For effective use of time in the activity: very good, good, barely acceptable, poor, and very poor.
3. This instrument was completed weekly. Likewise, the face to face interview/survey.
4. The results are reported.

- **Audio recording**

This qualitative method of data collection was used in the investigation at the end of the research. Audio recording allowed the researcher to capture the participants' final impressions and conclusions in a form of a conversation.

The data gathered by means of audio recording was analyzed inductively. The recording was examined and transcribed to help in the final conclusions and recommendations. . Additionally, the sample was able to express the extent to which the research helped them achieve the improvement in writing expected since the beginning of the present investigation. (See annex 20)

### **3.5.2. Processing data**

The data was manually processed according to the variables and later on charted using a statistical program SPSS 22. The valuable information for the present investigation was the result of counting answers, getting percentages, obtaining the media, the mode, the maximum, and the minimum and comparative charts.



### 3.5.3. Defining the variables

Since rubrics are the independent variable, it was necessary to explain the dimensions, indicators and descriptors, as follows:

Table 2. Rubrics

<b>Rubrics</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Criterion A</b>	<b>Language</b>	How effectively and accurately the students use language; Command of language, range of vocabulary and sentence structure.
<b>Criterion B</b>	<b>Message</b>	How clearly the students develop and organize relevant ideas; Communication of message, relevant ideas, and coherence and effectiveness.
<b>Criterion C</b>	<b>Format</b>	How correctly the students produce the required text types; Appropriate use of conventions, clear and recognizable, effective and evident.

### 3.5.4. Validity and reliability of the instrument (questionnaires)

In terms of construct-related validity, the two questionnaires show a good-enough construct validity since it has been assessed by “experts Judgement.”

The “Expert judgement” and opinion technique, has an instrument; the report of this judgement. It was conducted by six masters with expertise in the field. Prior to the application of the questionnaires, they gave a clear insight on the types of questions and their relevance for the investigation.

Hernández, Fernández y Baptista (2010). In the quantitative process, first the data is collected, to be later analyzed. The analysis is quite standardized. (It follows a logical order; Validity and reliability, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics. (p. 623).

A questionnaire was applied to 47 students to gather information about the use of rubrics and their writing habits in the school. This instrument was assessed by three experts and was validated using the Cronbach Alfa coefficient method.

Two tests; an entry and an exit test was also applied. The written task was taken from the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme given in May 2017. This instrument has been internationally validated by the programme.

All the information gathered was processed using the Statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS); this software stores data, calculate it, and gives the relevant information needed for the research project.

- **Descriptive analysis**, to describe how the variables have behaved, descriptive statistics have been used through charts, tables, and graphics.
- **Analysis linked to the hypothesis**, the formulated hypothesis has been verified. The t student formula was applied to determine the relationship between (hypothesis test) independent variable (using rubrics for assessing writing) and the dependent variable (the quality of writing). For the analysis, inferential statistics has been used.
- **Analysis to validate the instruments**: To validate the both instruments the Cronbach calculation was used.

Table 3. Validation

EXPERTOS INFORMANTES E INDICADORES	CRITERIOS	Mg. Humberto Tejada J.	Mg. Claudia Infante	Mg. Alabel Lavalle T.
CLARIDAD	Está formulado con lenguaje apropiado.			
OBJETIVIDAD	Está expresado en conductas observables.			
ACTUALIDAD	Adecuado al avance de la ciencia y la tecnología.			
ORGANIZACIÓN	Existe una organización lógica.			
SUFICIENCIA	Comprende los aspectos en cantidad y calidad.			
INTENCIONALIDAD	Adecuado para valorar aspectos de la metodología basada en la resolución de problemas contextualizados.			
CONSISTENCIA	Basado en aspectos teórico científicos.			
COHERENCIA	Entre los índices, indicadores y las dimensiones.			
METODOLOGÍA	La estrategia responde al propósito del diagnóstico.			
OPORTUNIDAD	El instrumento ha sido aplicado en el momento oportuno o más adecuado.			
<b>TOTALES</b>		89%	88%	88 %
<b>MEDIA DE VALIDACIÓN 88%</b>				

Table 4. Analysis to Validate Instrument 1 - Questionnaire for Students

ITEMS	I. 1	I. 2	I. 3	I. 4	I. 5	I. 6	I. 7	I. 8	I. 9	I. 10	TOTAL
EXPERT 1	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	26
EXPERT 2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	27
EXPERT 3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	27
TOTAL ROW	9	9	9	6	6	9	7	8	9	8	80
AVERAGE	3	3	3	2	2	3	2,33	2,67	3	2,67	26,67
STANDARD DEVIATION		0	0	0	0	0	0,58	0,58	0	0,58	0,59

**CALCULATION OF CRONBACH ( $\alpha$ )**

$$S_i^2 = 1,74$$

$$\alpha = \left[ \frac{k}{k-1} \right] \left[ 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k S_t^2}{S_i^2} \right]$$

$$S_t^2 = 0,35$$

$$\alpha = \left[ \frac{10}{10-1} \right] \left[ 1 - \frac{0,35}{1,74} \right]$$

$$K = 10$$

$$\alpha = 0,88 \text{ (VALIDEZ BUENA)}$$

Table 5. Analysis to Validate Instrument 2 – Questionnaire for Teachers

ITEMS	I.1	I. 2	I.3	I.4	I.5	I.6	I.7	I.8	I.9	I.10	TOTAL
EXPERT 1	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	26
EXPERT 2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	27
EXPERT 3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	27
TOTAL ROW	9	9	8	7	7	9	7	8	9	7	80
AVERAGE	3	3	2,67	2,33	2,33	3	2,33	2,67	3	2,33	26,67
STANDARD DEVIATION	0	0	0,58	0,58	0,58	0	0,58	0,58	0	0,58	0,59

**CALCULATION OF CRONBACH ( $\alpha$ )**

$$S_i^2 = 3,48 \qquad \alpha = \left[ \frac{k}{k-1} \right] \left[ 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k S_t^2}{S_i^2} \right]$$

$$S_t^2 = 0,35 \qquad \alpha = \left[ \frac{10}{10-1} \right] \left[ 1 - \frac{0,35}{3,48} \right]$$

$$K = 10 \qquad \alpha = 0,98 \text{ (VALIDEZ MUY BUENA)}$$

- Analysis to determine the “reliability” of the instruments 1 and 2 (Questionnaire for Students and Teachers)

Table 6. Analysis to determine reliability of instruments 1

Instrument 1 Questionnaire to Assess Students' level of knowledge about the use of Rubrics											Método a)
Nº	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	TOTAL
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	9
2	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	5
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
4	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	6
5	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	6
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
8	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	6
9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
10	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	7
11	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
13	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	6
14	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
15	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	7
16	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	7
17	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
18	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	7
19	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	5
20	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	6
Total	15	13	12	15	15	15	11	14	16	15	141
Varianza	0.20	0.24	0.25	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.26	0.22	0.17	0.20	5.00
Desviación Estándar	0.44	0.49	0.50	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.51	0.47	0.41	0.44	2.24

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Table 7. Analysis to determine reliability of instruments 2

Instrument 2 Questionnaire to Assess Teachers' level of knowledge about the use of Rubrics													Método a)
Nº	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	TOTAL		
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	9		0.4753
2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	4		0.4603
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10		0.6634
4	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	5		0.4753
5	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	7		0.4603
6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10		0.9175
7	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	4		0.4327
8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10		0.9175
9	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4		0.3546
10	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	8		
11	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10		Método b)
12	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	4		0.7710
13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10		
14	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	6		
15	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	8		
Total	9	12	12	9	12	12	9	11	9	14	109		
Varianza	0.26	0.17	0.17	0.26	0.17	0.17	0.26	0.21	0.26	0.07	6.50		
Desviación Estándar	0.51	0.41	0.41	0.51	0.41	0.41	0.51	0.46	0.51	0.26	2.55		

### **3.6. Procedure of the investigation**

#### **3.6.1. Part 1. The research. Identifying and analyzing the causes of failure in writing**

The objective of Part 1 is to identify the most common factors and difficulties encountered when facing writing tasks. The grading books from 2016 provided great deal of information which were used for the purpose of the investigation. (see annex 18)

#### **Review of literature**

A review of literature was conducted in order to define rubrics, identify the benefits of using rubrics, and learn the steps suggested in developing successful rubrics for the classroom.

While it was difficult to formulate one common definition of rubrics, most were focused on two essential elements: a statement of criteria and a scoring scheme based on gradations of quality for each criterion (Peat 2006). According to Anson and Dannels (2002), rubrics were used by both teachers and students. They indicated that the main purpose of using rubrics was to provide feedback as well as instructional guidance during an assignment. Rubrics had three basic elements that included evaluative criteria, quality definitions, and scoring schemes (Popham 1997).

Next, the literature reviewed identified four major benefits of using rubrics. The benefits discussed were increased objectivity, the use of rubrics as instructional tools, peer and self-assessment, and saved time (Andrade & Saddler, 2004; Goodrich, 1997; Moskal, 2000).

Finally, the literature reviewed suggested six steps in developing rubrics for the classroom. These steps included using models, developing criteria, revising criteria, developing levels of quality, creating a draft, and revising a draft (Andrade, 2000). In addition, the literature reviewed asserted that rubrics should be developed with a great deal of thought and should not be rushed (Goodrich, 1997).

- **Defining the study sample**

The school grading books from 2016 gave a great deal of information about the groups which obtained the lowest scores in writing that year. The school also provided with information about the specific needs they have regarding the upper secondary students who are highly likely to take international exams and one of the components is writing.

- **Preparation and application of questionnaires to students and teachers**

The application of questionnaires to both teachers and students help narrow down the causes of negative results in the academic achievement in the area of writing. The results showed the negative attitude towards writing teachers and students had. Each questionnaire had a total of ten questions all relevant for the present investigation. The questionnaires were validated and reliable through the “judgment of experts.” The project was presented to the school principal for her support. Parents were also noticed about the procedure. (See annex 2, 3)

- **Identifying and analyzing the causes of failure in writing.**

Data was collected and analyzed in order to identify the main cause of failure in secondary students. Assessment was then identified as one of the concerns. The researcher, next, plan the intervention. Students were to complete two writing assignments. One in a form of diagnostic and the other as an exit.

### **3.6.2. Part 2 The intervention**

The intervention for this study was the use of rubrics for instructional and evaluative purposes for two specific writing assignments. For each writing assignment, the researcher worked on the selection of writing tasks and rubrics which were both reliable and valid had to be implemented. An IB Diploma Programme English B Standard Level paper 2 available online was chosen due to its viability and practicability. The topic was familiar to the students; science and technology, the number of words and the time given for the completion of the task were within the students abilities. (See annex 6, 16)



- **Score Collecting Chart**

A chart was designed by the researcher to keep record of the students' progress. The chart was filled weekly. (See annex 11)

- **Diagnostic test**

This writing task was applied with no modeling of the use of rubrics. The test demanded a fully completion on the following prompt:

“You downloaded a new application (or “app”) for your mobile phone that you enjoyed but it had some problems. Write an email to the app creator in which you describe your experience of the app and what improvements you would recommend”. (250- 400 words).

The criteria considered three aspects; language, message, and format. No grammar was to be explicitly assessed however feedback on this aspect was given.

When the writing assignment was introduced, the rubric was not introduced neither explained to the students. The researcher did not model the use of the rubric so the students work free of use of the rubric. Students completed their free rubric-assisted writing assignment during a two-week period. The researcher evaluated the writing assignments based on the rubric chosen. The application of a diagnostic test contributed to identify the main problems students encountered when given a writing task.

- **The exit test**

For the second and last writing assignment, the rubric A for grading rubric was introduce and explained to students using teacher-led discussion. The researcher also modelled use of the rubric for students. Student essays were graded students wrote about the same topic used in the diagnostic test. Consequently, students knew what was expected form them and received positive feedback so they were ready to perform much better. The students' written production was assessed using this rubric.

In order to find out if using rubrics with secondary language students improve academic achievement in the area of writing, an action research project began in February 2017. To gather data, the researcher chose and IB DP English B SL which

was used to evaluate students on two specific writing assignments. Data was collected and analysed to determine if scores (academic achievement) improved. (See annex 19)

### 3.6.3. Timetable

Table 8. Timetable of the Research Process

<b>PART 1: THE RESEARCH TIMETABLE</b>			
<b>SEMESTER I 2017 Jan- July</b>	<b>WEEKS</b>	<b>PROJECT/TASK</b>	
Jan 2017	3	Designing the research project	
Jan-Feb	3	Review of research literature	
	1	Selecting the problem	
Feb	1	Defining the study sample	
March	1	Preparing a questionnaire	
	1	Conducting the questionnaire	
	1	Analysing the results of the questionnaire	

Table 9. Timetable of the Research Process (continuation)

<b>PART 2: INTERVENTION</b>				
<b>SEMESTER</b>	<b>WEEK</b>	<b>PROJECT/TASK</b>	<b>EXPERIMENTAL GROUP</b>	<b>CONTROL GROUP</b>
March	2	Preparing the material and resources		
March- April	2	Diagnostic test and Data collection	Applied	Applied
April		Analyzing the results		
May-June	May, 22 July	Post testing, data collection, Analyzing the results		
June-July		Presenting the results		
July		Final audio recording; concluding conversation.		

## Chapter 4

### Discussion of results

In this Chapter the researcher presents the analysis of the data collected as well as the interpretation of the results based on the application of the instruments used while the research was conducted. (February to July 2017).

#### 4.1. The intervention results

##### 4.1.1. Pre testing results

The experimental and the control groups were exposed to writing pretesting at the beginning of the intervention when the rubrics were not neither introduced nor used.

The results of the previous year were taken as a starting point and are also compared.

The objective of the pre-testing was to identify the problems of not having a clear frame within the students can work. The three criteria which was absent at that point was: message, language and message. Also, to get the average score in each group. The benefit of the pre testing was to get the individual score as well.

**Chart 1: Showing the writing skill in the production capacity Term IV – 2016 Third Grade Students taken as starting point.**

Range	xi	fi	xi fi	Fi	hi	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2 f$
[09;12]	10,5	24	252	24	0,86	86%	0,86	0,74	17,76
[13;16]	14,5	2	29	26	0,07	7%	-3,14	9,86	19,72
[17;20]	18,5	2	37	28	0,07	7%	-7,14	50,98	101,96
TOTAL		28	318			100			139,44

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{318}{28} = 11,36$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left(\frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2}\right)C = 09 + \left(\frac{24}{24 + 22}\right)4 = 11,09$$

$$Mediana = L_m + \left(\frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m}\right)C = 09 + \left(\frac{\frac{28}{2} - 0}{24}\right)4 = 11,33$$

$$\text{Standard deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{139,44}{28}} = 2,23$$

### Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 11, 36.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 11, 09.

The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 11,33 and that the other 50% got a grade over 11,33.

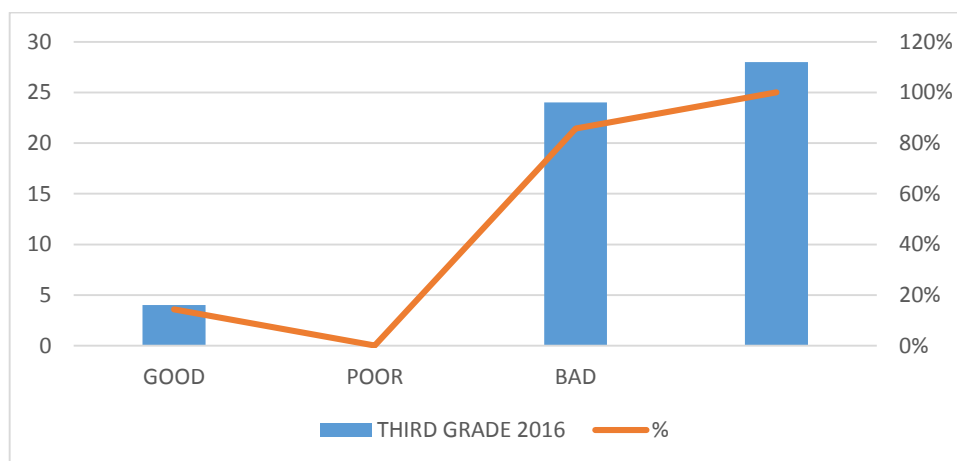
The standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 2, 23 in relation to the mean.

Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart; 86% of the students got grades between 09 and 12; 7% got grades between 13 and 16 and only 7% got grades between 17 and 20 out of a maximum score of 20.

Table 10. Writing skills in the production capacity Term IV 2016 of Third grade students of El Pinar School

	<b>Xi</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>GOOD</b>	4	14%
<b>POOR</b>	0	0%
<b>BAD</b>	24	86%
	28	100%

**Table 10** shows that only 14% of the students have a good level in the written outcome and the 86% has a bad level.



Graphic 1. Third grade students writing skill 2016 results.

**Chart 2: Fourth grade students' 2016 grading book term IV starting point**

Range	xi	fi	xi fi	Fi	hi	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2_f$
[09;12]	10,5	14	147	14	0,82	82%	1,18	1,39	19,46
[13;16]	14,5	1	14,5	15	0,06	6%	-2,82	7,95	7,95
[17;20]	18,5	2	37	17	0,12	12%	-6,82	46,51	93,02
TOTAL		17	198,5		1	100%			120.43

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{198,5}{17} = 11,68$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left(\frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2}\right)C = 09 + \left(\frac{14}{14 + 13}\right)4 = 11,07$$

$$Mediana = L_m + \left(\frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m}\right)C = 09 + \left(\frac{\frac{18}{2} - 0}{14}\right)4 = 11,57$$

$$\text{Standard deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{120,43}{17}} = 2,66$$

### Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 11,68.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 11,07.

The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 11,33 and that the other 50% got a grade over 11,57.

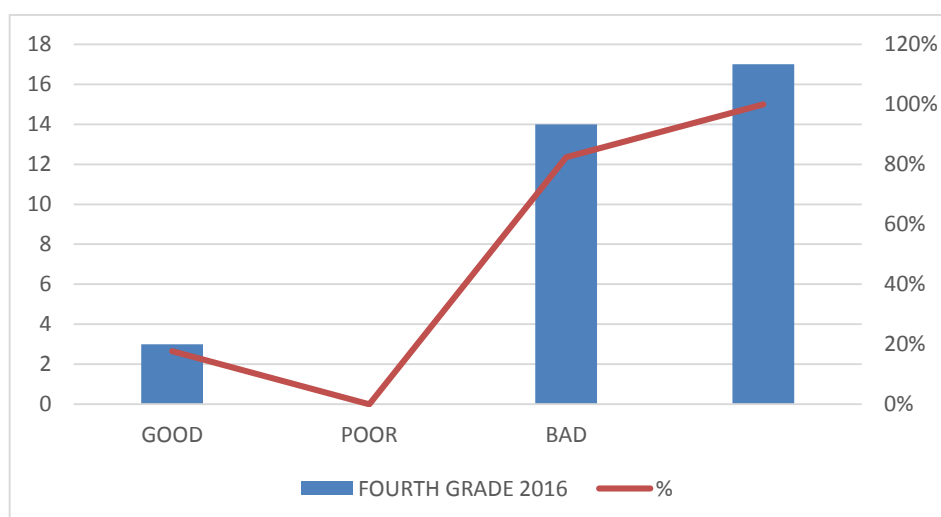
The standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 2, 66 in relation to the mean.

Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart; 82% of the students got grades between 09 and 12; el 6% got grades between 13 and 16 and only 12% got grades between 17 and 20 out of maximum score of 20.

Table 11. Writing skills in the production capacity Term IV 2016 of Fourth Grade Students of El Pinar School

	Xi	%
GOOD	3	18%
POOR	0	0%
BAD	14	82%
	17	100%

**Table 11** shows that only 18% of the students have a good level in the written outcome and the 82% has a bad level.



Graphic 2. Fourth grade students writing skill 2016 results

Table 12. Results of Third and Fourth Grade in the written skill of 2016 of El Pinar School

RESULTS 2016				
	THIRD GRADE		FOURTH GRADE	
		%		%
GOOD	4	14%	3	18%
POOR	0	0%	0	0%
BAD	24	86%	14	82%
	28		17	

**Table 12** shows that between third and fourth grade students 32% of the students have a good level in the written outcome whereas the 168% have a bad.



Graphic 3. Third and fourth grade 2016 results

**Chart 3: Fourth grade of secondary diagnostic test results control group 2017**

Range	xi	fi	xi fi	Fi	hi	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2 f$
[0;5]	2,5	2	5	2	0,1	10%	11,2	125,44	250,88
[6;10]	8	0	0	2	0	0%	5,7	32,49	0
[11;15]	13	11	143	13	0,55	55%	0,7	0,49	5,39
[16;20]	18	7	126	20	0,35	35%	- 4,3	18,49	129,43
TOTAL		20	274			100			385,7

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{274}{20} = 13,7$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left( \frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2} \right) C = 11 + \left( \frac{11}{11 + 4} \right) 4 = 13,93$$

$$Mediana = L_m + \left( \frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m} \right) C = 11 + \left( \frac{\frac{20}{2} - 2}{11} \right) 5 = 14,64$$



$$\text{Standard deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{385,7}{20}} = 4,39$$

### Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 13,7.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 13,93.

The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 14,64 and that the other 50% got a grade over 14,64.

The standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 4, 39 in relation to the mean.

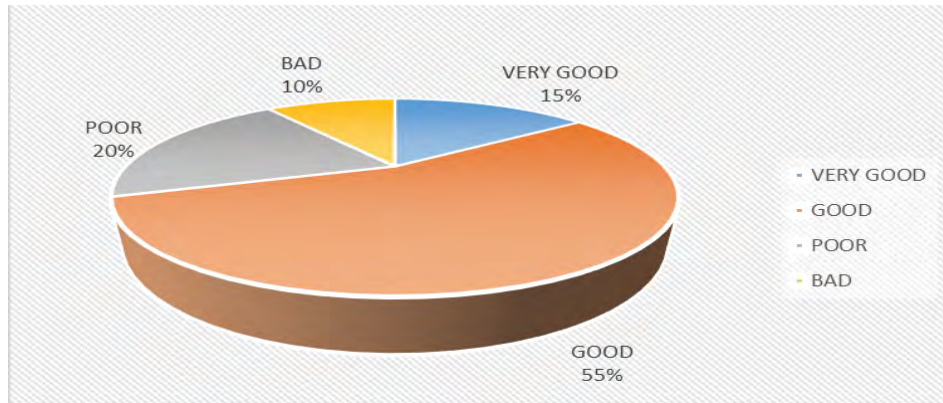
Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart; 10% of the students got grades between 0 and 5; el 55% got grades between 11 and 15 and only 35% got grades between 16 and 20 out of maximum score of 20.

Table 13. Fourth grade students control group diagnostic test result of El Pinar School – 2017

FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS 2017		
	Xi	%
VERY GOOD	3	15%
GOOD	11	55%
POOR	4	20%
BAD	2	10%
	20	100%

Source: Entry Test

**Table 13** the application of the diagnostic test to the control group to measure the written outcome of the fourth grade students of El Pinar School.



Graphic 4. Diagnostic Test results Control Group 2017. It shows the results of the Entry Test of the control group, 55% of the students have a good outcome in the written skill, whereas 20% of the control group present a poor level, 15% a very good level and 10% a bad level.

**Chart 4: Fourth grade of secondary exit test results control group 2017**

Range	$x_i$	$f_i$	$x_i f_i$	$F_i$	$h_i$	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2 f_i$
[09;12]	10,5	7	73,5	7	0,35	35%	3,2	10,24	71,68
[13;16]	14,5	10	145	17	0,5	50%	- 0,8	0,64	6,4
[17;20]	18,5	3	55,5	20	0,15	15%	-4,8	23,04	69,12
TOTAL		20	274		1	100			147,2

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{274}{20} = 13,7$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left( \frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2} \right) C = 13 + \left( \frac{3}{3 + 7} \right) 4 = 14,2$$

$$Mediana = L_m + \left( \frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m} \right) C = 13 + \left( \frac{\frac{20}{2} - 7}{10} \right) 4 = 14,2$$

$$\text{Standard Deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{147,2}{20}} = 2,71$$

## Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 13,7.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 14,2.

The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 14,2 and that the other 50% got a grade over 14,23.

The standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 2,71 in relation to the mean.

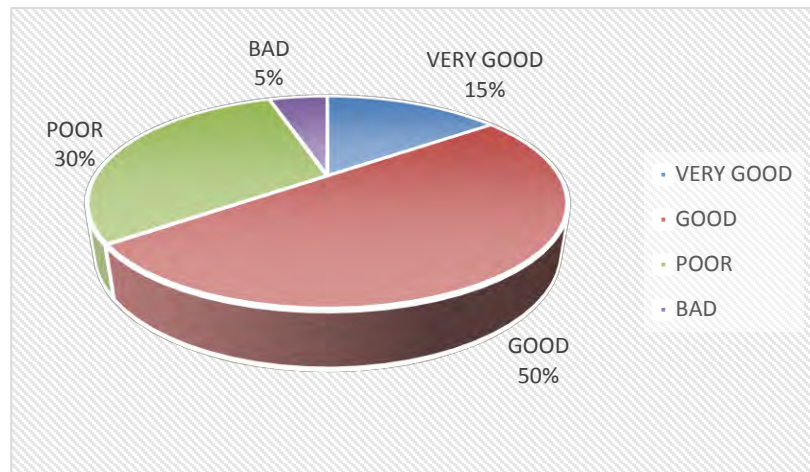
Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart; 35% of the students got grades between 09 and 12; 50% got grades between 13 and 16 and only 15% got grades between 17 and 20 out of a maximum score of 20.

Table 14. Fourth grade students control group exit test result of El Pinar - 2017

FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS 2017		
	Xi	%
VERY GOOD	3	15%
GOOD	10	50%
POOR	6	30%
BAD	1	5%
	20	100%

Source: Diagnostic Test

**Table 14** the application of the exit test to the control group to measure the written outcome of the fourth grade students of El Pinar School.



Graphic 5. Exit Test Results Group Control 2017. It shows the results of the Exit Test of the Control Group, 50% of the students have a good outcome in the written skill, whereas 20% of the control group present a poor level, 15% a very good level and 10% a bad level.

#### 4.1.2. Post-testing results research conducted in March – May 2017 Control Group

An entry test was applied on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2017 it was important for the research to collect data as close in time as possible. Having the possibility of not only comparing with the “exit test” but with the previous year as well. These students received the traditional feedback and the assessment was the usual teachers provided.

**Chart 5: Comparative table; diagnostic test and exit test march-may 2017 control group**

Range	xi	fi	xi fi	Fi	hi	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2 f$
[09;12]	10,5	6	63	6	0,3	30%	3,4	11,56	69,36
[13;16]	14,5	11	159,5	17	0,55	55%	- 0,6	0,36	3,96
[17;20]	18,5	3	55,5	20	0,15	15%	-4,6	21,16	63,48
TOTAL		20	278			100%			136,8

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{278}{20} = 13,9$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left(\frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2}\right)C = 13 + \left(\frac{5}{5+8}\right)4 = 14,53$$

$$Mediana = L_m + \left(\frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m}\right)C = 13 + \left(\frac{\frac{20}{2} - 6}{11}\right)4 = 14,45$$

$$\text{Standard Deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{136,8}{20}} = 2,62$$

### Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 13,9.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 14,53.

The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 14,45 and that the other 50% got a grade over 14,45.

The standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 2,62 in relation to the mean.

Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart; 30% of the students got grades between 09 and 12; 55% got grades between 13 and 16 and only 15% got grades between 17 and 20 out of a maximum score of 20.

Table 15. Result of the Diagnostic and Exit Test of the written outcome of the Control Group of El Pinar School – 2017

CRITERIA	DIAGNOSTIC TEST	%	EXIT TEST	%	DIFFERENCE %
VERY GOOD	3	15%	3	15%	0%
GOOD	1	55%	10	50%	5%
POOR	4	20%	6	30%	10%
BAD	2	10%	1	5%	5%
	20	100%	20	100%	

Source: Application of Diagnostic and Exit Test



Graphic 6. Comparison between Diagnostic Test and Exit Test Control Group 2017. It shows that only 75% of the students of the control group have a good written outcome in the Diagnostic Test and in the Exit Test 65% have achieved a good written outcome, it means that there was 10% drop.

**Chart 6: Consolidation table; diagnostic test and exit test march-may 2017 control group**

Range	xi	fi	xi fi	Fi	hi	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2 f$
[09;12]	10,5	7	73.5	7	0,35	35%	3,2	10,24	71,68
[13;16]	14,5	10	145	17	0,50	50%	-0,8	0,64	6,4
[17;20]	18,5	3	55.5	20	0,15	15%	-4,8	23,04	69,12
Total		20	274			100%			147,2

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{274}{20} = 13,7$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left( \frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2} \right) C = 13 + \left( \frac{3}{3 + 7} \right) 4 = 14,2$$

$$Mediana = L_m + \left( \frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m} \right) C = 13 + \left( \frac{\frac{20}{2} - 7}{10} \right) 4 = 14,2$$

$$\text{Standard deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{147,2}{20}} = 2,71$$

## Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 13,7.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 14,2.

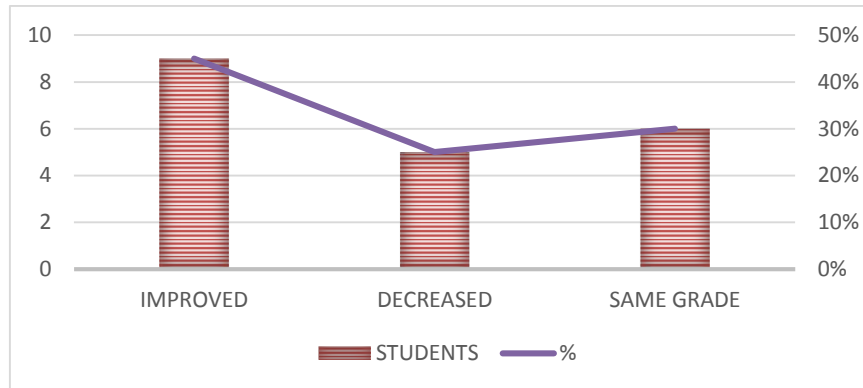
The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 14,2 and that the other 50% got a grade over 14,2.

The standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 2,71 in relation to the mean.

Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart; 35% of the students got grades between 09 and 12; 50% got grades between 13 and 16 and only 15% got grades between 17 and 20 out of a maximum score of 20.

Table 16. Consolidation of Results of the Control Group of El Pinar School – 2017

	STUDENTS	%
IMPROVED	9	45%
DECREASED	5	25%
SAME GRADE	6	30%
	20	100%



Graphic 7. Consolidation Chart – Control Group 2017. It shows that 45% of the students of the control group improved their written outcome, where as 30% of the students got the same grade and 25% decreased.

### Results of the research conducted in March – May 2017 – Experimental group

A diagnostic test was applied on March 20th 2017 it was important for this research to collect data as close in time as possible. Having the possibility of not only comparing with the “exit test” but with the precious year as well. These students received the traditional feedback and the assessment was the usual teachers provided.

**Chart 7: Fifth grade of secondary diagnostic test results experimental group 2017**

Range	$x_i$	$f_i$	$x_i f_i$	$F_i$	$h_i$	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2 f_i$
[09;12]	10,5	14	147	14	0,52	52%	2,96	8,76	122,66
[13;16]	14,5	6	87	20	0,22	22 %	-1,04	1,08	6,48
[17;20]	18,5	7	129,5	27	0,26	26%	-5,04	25,40	177,80
Total		27	363,5			100%			306,94

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{363,5}{27} = 13,46$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left( \frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2} \right) C = 09 + \left( \frac{14}{14 + 8} \right) 4 = 11,55$$



$$Mediana = L_m + \left(\frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m}\right)C = 09 + \left(\frac{\frac{28}{2} - 0}{14}\right)4 = 13$$

$$\text{Standard Deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{306,94}{27}} = 3,37$$

### Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 11,46.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 11,55.

The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 13 and that the other 50% got a grade over 13.

The Standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 3,37 in relation to the mean.

Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart; 52% of the students got grades between 09 and 12; 22% got grades between 13 and 16 and only 26% got grades between 17 and 20 out of a maximum score of 20.

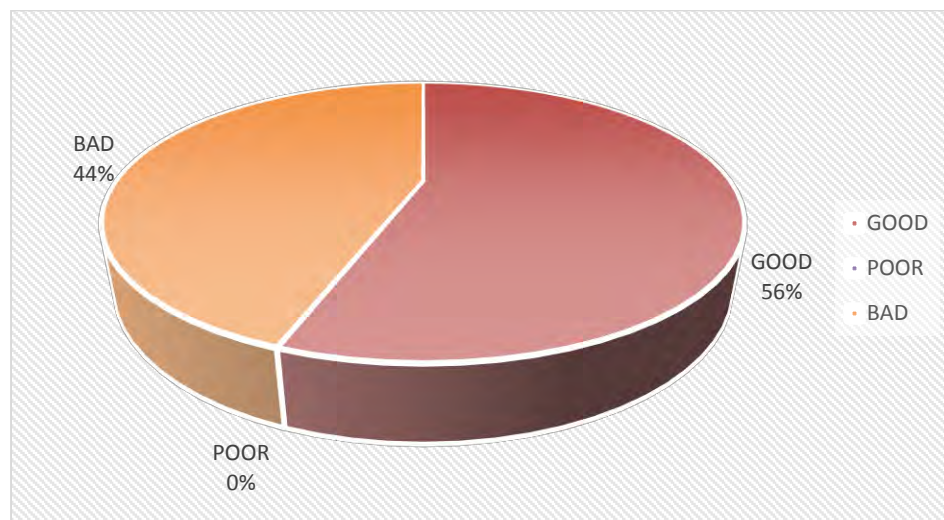
Table 17. Fifth Grade Students Experimental Group Diagnostic Test Result of El Pinar School – 2017

#### FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS 2017

Xi	%	
GOOD	15	56%
POOR	0	0%
BAD	12	44%
	27	100%

Source: Diagnostic Test

**Table 17** the application of the Diagnostic Test to the Experimental Group to measure the written outcome of the Fifth Grade students of El Pinar School.



Graphic 8. Diagnostic Test Results Experimental Group 2017. It shows the results of the Entry Test of the experimental group, 56% of the students have a good outcome in the written skill, whereas 44% of the experimental group present a bad level.

**Chart: 8 Fifth Grade of Secondary Exit Test Results - Experimental Group May 2017**

Range	Xi	fi	xi fi	Fi	hi	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2 f$
[09;12]	10,5	9	94,5	9	0,33	33%	4,15	17,22	154,98
[13;16]	14,5	8	116	17	0,30	30%	0,15	0,02	0,16
[17;20]	18,5	10	185	27	0,37	37%	-3,85	14,82	148,2
Total		27	363,5			100%			306,94

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{395,5}{27} = 14,65$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left( \frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2} \right) C = 17 + \left( \frac{2}{2 + 10} \right) 4 = 17,67$$

$$Mediana = L_m + \left( \frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m} \right) C = 13 + \left( \frac{\frac{28}{2} - 9}{8} \right) 4 = 15,5$$

$$\text{Standard deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{303,34}{27}} = 3,35$$

### Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 14,65.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 17,67.

The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 15,5 and that the other 50% got a grade over 15,5.

The standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 3,35 in relation to the mean.

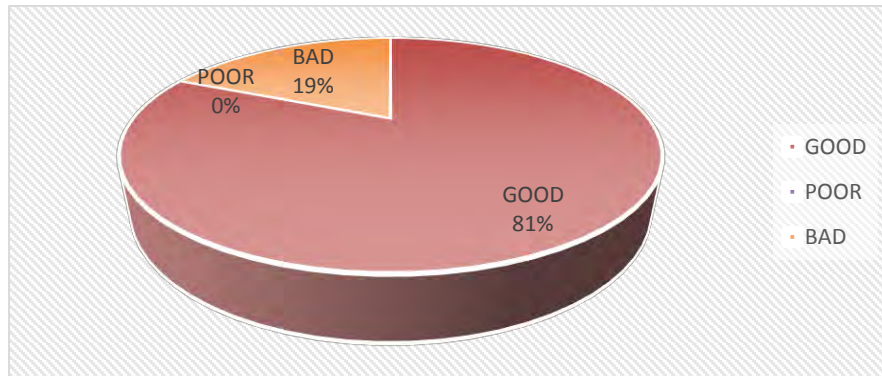
Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart 33% of the students got grades between 09 and 12; 7; 30% got grades between 13 and 16 and only 37% got grades between 17 and 20 out of a maximum score of 20.

Table 18. Fifth Grade Students' Experimental Group Exit Test Result of El Pinar School – 2017

FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS 2017		
	Xi	%
GOOD	22	81%
POOR	0	0%
BAD	5	19%
	27	100%

Source: Exit test

**Table 18:** The application of the Exit Test to the experimental group to measure the written outcome of the fifth grade students of El Pinar School.



Graphic 9. Exit Test Results Experimental Group 2017. It shows the results of the Exit Test of the experimental group, 81% of the students have a good outcome in the written skill, whereas only 19% of the experimental group present a bad level.

### Comparative Chart, Entry and Exit Test 2017 – Experimental Group

It is important to mention that the experimental group set of tests was assessed strictly following the **ID DP SL** Criteria. The grades are graded all based on a total of 25 marks however for the purpose of this project they were converted to the vigesimal system so the comparison was fair and valid.

**Chart 9: Comparative table, Diagnostic and Exit Test 2017 Experimental Group**

Range	$x_i$	$f_i$	$x_i f_i$	$F_i$	$h_i$	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2 f_i$
[0;05]	2,5	2	5	2	0,07	7%	9,35	87,42	174,84
[6;10]	8	10	80	12	0,37	37%	3,85	14,82	148,2
[11;15]	13	7	91	19	0,26	26%	-1,15	1,32	9,24
[16;20]	18	8	144	27	0,30	30%	-6,15	37,82	302,56
TOTAL		27	320		1	100%			634.84

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{320}{27} = 11,85$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left( \frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2} \right) C = 06 + \left( \frac{8}{8+3} \right) 5 = 9,64$$

$$Mediana = L_m + \left( \frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m} \right) C = 11 + \left( \frac{\frac{28}{2} - 12}{7} \right) 5 = 12,43$$

$$\text{Standard deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{634,84}{27}} = 4,85$$

### Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 11,85.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 9,64.

The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 12,43 and that the other 50% got a grade over 12,433.

The standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 4,85 in relation to the mean.

*Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart; 7% of the students got grades between 0 and 05; 36% got grades between 6 and 10; 26% got grades between 11 and 15 and only 30% got grades between 16 and 20 out of a maximum score of 20.*

Table 19. Comparison between the Entry and Exit Test of the written outcome of the Experimental Group of El Pinar School - 2017

CRITERIA	DIAGNOSTIC		EXIT		DIFFERENCE %
	TEST	%	TEST	%	
VERY GOOD	7	26%	10	37%	11%
GOOD	2	7%	6	22%	15%
POOR	6	22%	6	22%	0%
BAD	12	44%	5	19%	26%
	27	100%	27	100%	



Graphic 10. Comparison between Diagnostic Test and Exit Test – Experimental Group 2017. It shows that only 33% of the students of the experimental group have a good written outcome in the Diagnostic Test and in the Exit Test 59% have achieved a good written outcome, it means that there was an increase of 26%.

**Chart 10: Consolidation table Diagnostic and Exit Test 2017 Experimental Group**

Range	$x_i$	$f_i$	$x_i f_i$	$F_i$	$h_i$	%	$\bar{x} - x_i$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2$	$(\bar{x} - x_i)^2 f_i$
[0;5]	2,5	0	0	0	0	0	11,98	143,52	0
[6;10]	8	5	40	5	0,19	19%	6,48	41,99	209,95
[11;15]	13	9	117	14	0,33	33%	1,48	2,19	19,71
[16;20]	18	13	234	27	0,48	48%	-3,52	12,39	161,07
TOTAL		27	391						390,73

$$M.A. = \frac{\sum x_i f_i}{n} = \frac{391}{27} = 14,48$$

$$Moda = L_i + \left( \frac{d_1}{d_1 + d_2} \right) C = 16 + \left( \frac{4}{4 + 13} \right) 5 = 17,18$$

$$Mediana = L_m + \left( \frac{\frac{n}{2} - F_{m-1}}{f_m} \right) C = 11 + \left( \frac{\frac{28}{2} - 5}{9} \right) 5 = 16$$

$$\text{Standard deviation} = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{390,73}{27}} = 3,80$$

### Interpretation

The M.A., shows that the average grade gotten by the students is 14,48.

The Mode, shows the most frequent grade gotten by the students and is close to, 17,18.

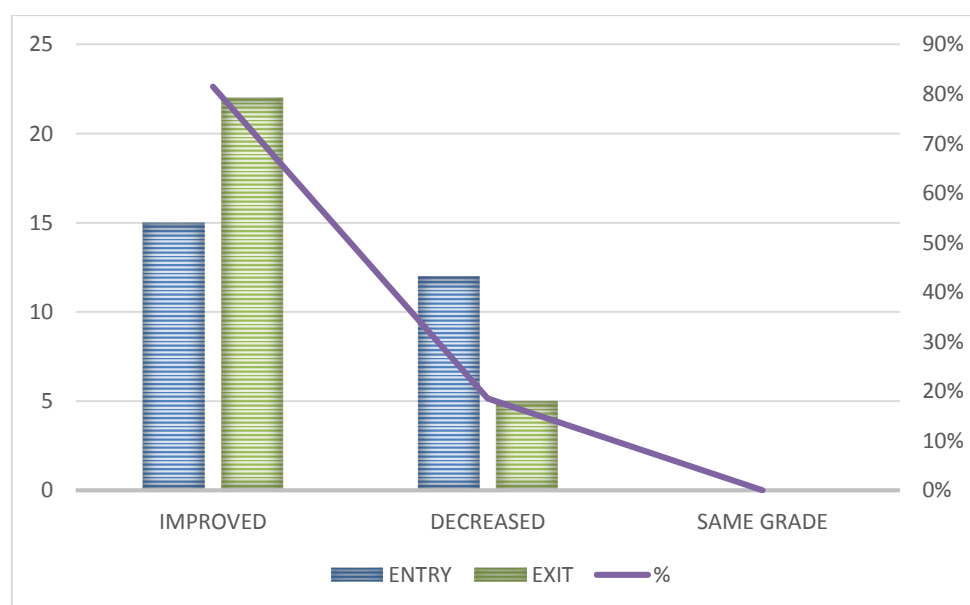
The Median, shows that 50% of the students got a grade below 16 and that the other 50% got a grade over 16.

The standard deviation measures the level of dispersion or variation of the grades gotten by the students in relation to the arithmetic mean. In this case, the standard deviation, shows that the average grade varies in 3,80 in relation to the mean.

Row 6, shows the percentage. In this chart; 19% of the students got grades between 06 and 10; 33% got grades between 11 and 15 and only 48% got grades between 16 and 20 out of a maximum score of 20.

Table 20. Consolidation of Results of the Experimental Group of El Pinar School – 2017

	ENTRY	%	EXIT	%	DIFFERENCE	STUDENTS
IMPROVED	15	56%	22	81%	+25%	+7
DECREASED	12	44%	5	19%	-25%	-7
SAME GRADE	0	0%	0	0%	0%	0
	27	100%	27	100%		



Graphic 11. Consolidation table – Experimental Group 2017. It shows that 81% of the experimental group experienced an improvement in their written outcome compared to only 56% in the diagnostic test. There is a 25% difference of 7 students, there is also an improvement of 7 students compare to 12 in the diagnostic test.

#### **4.1.3. Results of the questionnaires applied to teachers of the fourth and fifth grade of secondary**

The questionnaire applied to the five school teachers involved in the research was also given to five other teachers from different schools to get a wider perspective of how they approach writing as major skills in their teaching experience. This tool which reliability was proven by applying to 15 teachers prior to the research ones. (see annex 15)

- **Question 1**

Are teachers familiar with the Rubric assessment method for grading students?

Even though the question was a yes/no teachers found difficult to answer positively since they argue not having been properly trained and they think that students are not reading enough these days which makes their teaching more complex task.

- **Question 2**

Are rubrics used when assessing writing?

Teachers who are familiar with some criteria answered “no”, while others said “yes”. They mentioned that again the proper training affects their performance and the lack of communication and collaborative work makes impossible to have a set of standardized rubrics to follow.

- **Question 3**

Are students given a copy of the Rubrics to guide their work?

Teachers answered that for them the way they assess not always reflects the students ‘real performance since the students work under pressure and against time when writing however they basically assessed “by rules of thumb” and they trust in what they do.



- **Question 4**

Only Rubrics can exactly ensure what a teacher expects from a student?

Ten teachers were asked and only two of them answered “yes”. The others mentioned that have heard about them and they can be worked out with the help of internet. But again they were the ones who wanted to prepare their own assessment criteria. Two teachers claimed to be familiar with the IB organization.

- **Question 5**

Rubrics must be included in all forms of writing.

Teachers agreed upon the use of rubrics for all types of writing except for creative writing which they considered to be free and not bound to formality.

- **Question 6**

Feedback must be “mandatory”

The vast majority of teachers asked about Feedback agreed that feedback must be mandatory so the students get to know what their strengths are as well as their weaknesses. Teachers ‘comments on the students’ work is a great source of improvement.

- **Question 7**

Is there enough writing in English classes?

Most of the teachers considered that the amount and frequency of writing is not enough. They think it is pointless to have students write more and more frequently because of the lack of rubrics is an issue.

- **Question 8**

Students are able to produce better quality of writing.

Teachers completely agreed that students are capable of producing much better quality of writing but the use of rubrics is necessary as well as feedback and much practice is required. Teachers are also positive about the need of training in the implementation if rubrics.

- **Question 9**

Rubrics are easy to apply

Teachers had mix feelings towards the ease of the use of rubrics. Since they are not very familiar with the assessment through rubrics they feel it can be easy to use them but at the same time they are aware of the need of training.

- **Question 10**

Would you recommend the use of rubrics to other teachers?

The vast majority of the teachers asked answered positively to the question and they only highlighted the necessary training as part of the implementation of the use of rubrics in the curricular system in the schools.

To sum up

The most valuable and useful information obtained from these initial questionnaires applied to teachers was the lack of formal training on assessment regarding to the use of rubrics.

The researcher identified that the key factor for teachers to not assess properly is because they have not been given the necessary tools. It was certain then that the next step was to provide them with a workshop so they were ready to embark the project along with the researcher.

#### **4.1.4. Results of the questionnaires applied to the fourth and fifth grade of secondary students**

All students involved in this research were given a set of ten questions. Students from fourth and fifth grade answered mostly in the same pattern. They showed reluctance to writing. The set of questions was proved to be reliable by prior setting the questions to other 15 students with the same characteristics and background in the same school.

- **Question 1**

Only Rubrics can exactly ensure what a teacher wants from a student?

Students from both groups answered that their teachers communicate vaguely what is expected in their writing. This situation does not really help students understand what they have to do when writing.

- **Question 2**

Use of rubrics produce better performance?

Students in general mentioned they do not enjoy writing since they find it complex or difficult to get the teachers exact expectations and they think rubrics can clarify the expected product.

- **Question 3**

Rubrics must be included in all forms of writing?

Students answered that even though they were not familiar they feel that the effectiveness of using rubrics is unquestionable so they should be included for all types of writing to ensure high performance and good quality.

- **Question 4**

Rubrics must be mandatory in the school?

Students think their writing being assessed equally by all teachers following the same criteria would do just good to their written production as well as their grades.

- **Question 5**

Is there enough writing in English classes?

The 47 students participating in this project showed enthusiasm about improving their writing skills through the massive production of writing however they did not feel that assessment was being well-conducted so they did not see the benefits of writing much in improving their grades. They associated the writing production to grades.

- **Question 6**

When you write, do you enjoy it?

This question was made to identify factors other than the use of rubrics affecting the students' written production. Students just did not enjoy writing since the outcome (grades) was constantly low and little improvement was seen and in long periods of time.

- **Question 7**

Are the grades awarded to the writing tasks "fair"?

Unsurprisingly, most of the students agreed that their grades were not fair and they also expressed their frustration with having to write more often without understanding their teachers' expectations. The implementation of rubrics was clearly the solution to the situation.

- **Question 8**

Do teachers give positive feedback to help improvement?

This question was designed to understand the little progress students showed during the last term in the final term of the school year 2016. Students referred that teachers made negative comments on their work and it did not help them whatsoever.

- **Question 9**

It is possible to write more and better?

This question was designed to measure the extent to which students were willing to participate in the research by expressing their own expectations. All the participants ticked "yes" to this questions which clearly showed the need of improvement.

- **Question 10**

Are rubrics simple to use?

Almost 50% of the participants answered "yes" and obviously the other 50% said "no". Which showed the need of implementation and use of rubrics as the primarily means to improve the written production in the upper secondary students at el Colegio El Pinar.

To sum up

The answers students gave confirmed that they were not familiar with the way their written production was assessed and the use of rubrics were absent from their evaluation and assessment system. The opportunities for writing were few therefore the poor results they got were in their opinion fair.

## **4.2. Discussion of results**

### **4.2.1. Findings related to the first research question: how does the literature review define rubrics?**

The school provided with the records from the previous term IV Term Oct-Dec 2016 from which it was possible to see that a large number of students for third and fourth grade of Secondary failed. All papers produced were “below Standard” quality since teachers did not use any type of formal criteria to assess nor did they give positive feedback.

There was no formal training for teachers, which made difficult for teachers to understand the need of formal assessment in writing.

A questionnaire was given to both teachers and students with a well-chosen set of questions in order to evaluate the level of awareness and knowledge they had about the use of rubrics.

Teachers and students were given a workshop on the use of rubrics and were assign to do literature review on tools of assessment, especially, the use of rubrics therefore, they got familiar with the concepts and benefits of rubrics as tools of assessment.

Both the Diagnostic and the Exit tests for the control group also supported and confirmed the consequences of not using rubrics, since the groups were not aware of the benefits of the concept of rubrics.

All this information fulfilled the purpose of being the basis from which this research was to be built upon but more than anything the teachers and the students

realized later on the valuable tool rubrics are and the benefits they bring to a well-organized and planned curriculum as well as the assessment.

#### **4.2.2. Findings related to the Second research question; what are the benefits, according to the professional literature reviewed, of using rubrics and timely feedback?**

The two sets of tests (diagnostic and exit) applied to both groups as well as the rubrics used and the training (workshop) given to the teachers helped out with the purpose of finding out how the quality of the students writing was improved with timely feedback. It was necessary to apply the tests in order to get current information to be used in the research. The control group was not affected by the use of rubrics or effective and timely feedback. The assessment was the same teacher had been using for the past years. Using editing symbols and a “very good” “Good, “Poor” “Bad” criteria.

The comparison showed that aspects such the quality of feedback timely given of positively affected the quality of the academic achievement in the experimental group.

Not only had the quality of the written outcome but also the quantity of the students whose work was assessed through the use of criteria and timely feedback was improved.

It must be said that the writing task given to the students meant to be formally assessed was carefully chosen from a selection of tasks from the IB DP 2015 guide and the IB 2017 Mark band Scheme which also provided meaningful feedback to be timely given. The number of words required in the writing tasks was reasonable and achievable as the records show.

#### **4.2.3. Findings related to the third research question: Do using international standardized rubrics with secondary students improve academic achievement in the area of writing?**

The two set of tests given along the research, the set of rubrics given to students and as well as the training to teachers in the proper use of international standardized rubrics proved the benefits of this implementation in the the academic achievement in the area of writing.

A survey about how beneficial the workshop was for the teachers was also applied in order to verify the positive impact of the training in terms of reinforcing their understanding and comprehension of the assessment through the use of standardized rubrics to high up the quality of the students' written outcome. A final conversation with participants was also conducted to agree with the hypothesis.

#### **4.2.4. Hypothesis test to prove the use of international standardized rubrics with secondary students improve academic achievement in the area of writing**

##### **Null hypothesis**

The use of rubrics does NOT improve the quality of writing in the upper secondary students in the Control Group.

##### **Alternative hypothesis**

The use of rubrics does NOT improve the quality of writing in the upper secondary students in the Control Group.

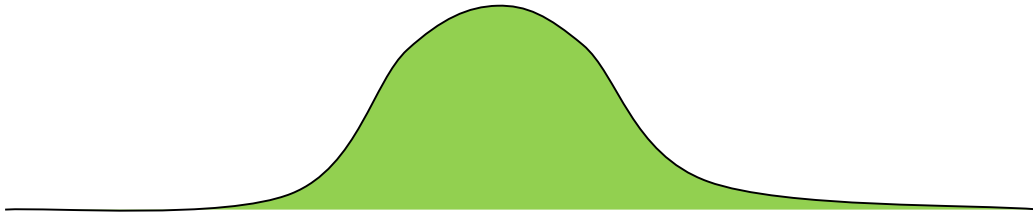
**SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL OF:**  $\alpha = 0.05$

**STATISTICS TEST:** *T de student*

$$T_c = \frac{\bar{d} - D}{S_d / \sqrt{n}} = \frac{0.25 - 0}{2.27 / \sqrt{20}} = 0.493$$

Degree of freedom  $n-1=20-1=19$   $chart = 1.729$  level of significance of 5%

### REGIONS



$$1-\alpha = 0.95 \quad RA \quad \alpha = 0.05 \quad RR$$

---


$$Tt = 1.729$$

**DECISION:**  $H_0$  is Accepted, therefore the use of rubrics do not improve the quality of the written outcome in upper secondary students in the Control Group, through the statistical test T de Student to a level of significance of 1 5%. (with a p equal to 0.628)

### Prueba de muestras emparejadas

		Diferencias emparejadas					t	gl	Sig. (bilateral)
		Media	Desviación estándar	Media de error estándar	95% de intervalo de confianza de la diferencia				
					Inferior	Superior			
VAR02	-	,25000	2,26820	,50719	-,81155	1,31155	,493	19	,628
VAR01									



#### 4.2.5. Hypothesis Test to prove the use of international standardized rubrics with secondary students improve academic achievement in the area of writing

##### Null hypothesis

The use of rubrics does NOT improve the quality of writing in the upper secondary students in the Experimental Group.

##### Alternative hypothesis:

The use of rubrics does NOT improve the quality of writing in the upper secondary students in the Experimental Group.

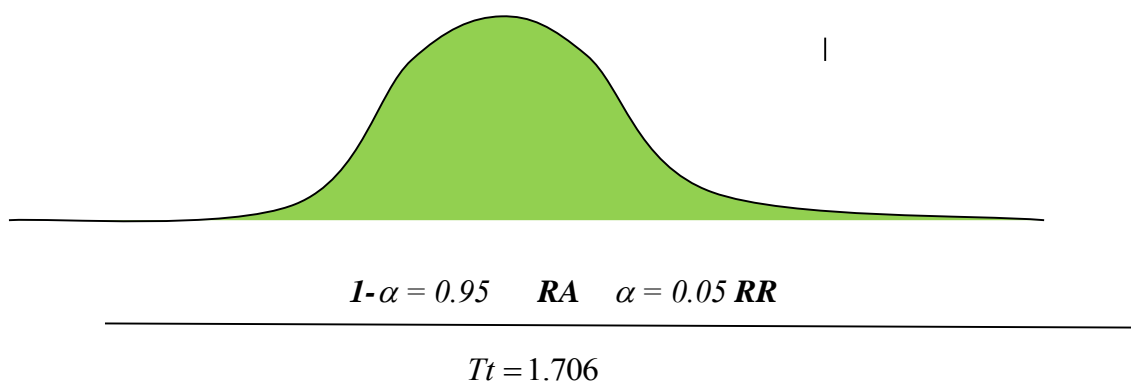
**SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL OF:**  $\alpha = 0.05$

**STATISTICS TEST:** *T de student*

$$T_c = \frac{\bar{d} - D}{S_d / \sqrt{n}} = \frac{2.89 - 0}{4.35 / \sqrt{27}} = 3.45$$

Level of freedom  $n-1=27-1=26$  chart=1.706 with a level of significance of 5%

##### REGIONS



**DECISION:**  $H_0$  is rejected, therefore, the use of rubrics DO IMPROVE the quality of the written outcome in the upper secondary students: Experimental

Group through the statistical test T de Student to a level of significance of 5%. (With a p equal to a 0.002).

**Prueba de muestras emparejadas**

	Diferencias emparejadas					t	gl	Sig. (bilateral)
	Media	Desviación estándar	Media de error estándar	95% de intervalo de confianza de la diferencia				
				Inferior	Superior			
VAR02 - VAR01	2,88889	4,35301	,83774	1,1668 9	4,61088	3,44 8	26	,002

#### 4.2.6. Pedagogical Implications of the investigation

This research started with the formulation of the problem which was the main concern and an issue to be solved in El Pinar School in Huaraz: Is assessing through rubrics and effective tool to improve upper secondary students writing? The next step was to state a general objective for this research: To implement the use of rubric along with the indirect feedback to improve students' written productive skills. Then the three specific objectives were stated:

- To describe the problem of not using rubrics
- To compare the quality of the writing in the two groups; Control and Experimental.
- To implement the use of standardized rubrics in the high secondary students.

The process followed was planned to answer the question and the hypothesis as well as to achieve the investigation objectives.

Many tools were applied, two questionnaires whose validity and reliability were proved by the statistical means mentioned in Chapter 3.

The standardized rubrics used for this particular research project was the one given by the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme for its paper 2 examination 2017, This sets of valid and reliable rubrics were applied to a total of 47

students at El Pinar School. The basis however was given by the records of the writing tests in the final term of the previous year by the same two groups.

The discussion of the results to the light of the theoretical framework as well as the antecedents is presented.

The results gotten in terms of the description of the problem which is the first objective is that 82% third grade and 86% fourth grade got a very poor results in the writing task in 2016. This situation is backed up by the lack of use of rubrics the upper secondary teachers. Only 14% and 18% of the students got a “good level” or passing grade according to the untrained teacher in 2016. All this information is shown in chart 1 and figure 1. As Prof. Dr. Filip Dochy says *“the benefits of using rubrics will be seen as soon as we assess without them”*. The problem in the school in 2016 and the experience as an IB DP examiner of paper 2 written productive skills were the precise opportunity for the researcher to demonstrate the relation between poor grades and not using rubrics.

The results obtained in the control group without using rubrics, in which 20 students participated showed that only 35% got decent grades over 16/20. The students within this group were assessed with the teachers’ own assessment criteria but the feedback was present. The formative assessment was being conducted with the use of positive feedback.

These results were predictable and supported by a previous research conducted by Ernesto Paradero and Anderson Jonsson in 2013 “The use of scoring rubrics for formative assessment. As rubrics allow students to get self-aware of the need of improvement and the steps to achieve the expected.

The results obtained by the Experimental group given the IB DP paper 2 to rubrics in advance and assessed within that frame proved to have better understanding of the criteria and took actions towards achieving the expected showing proactivity and independence.

The experimental group given the writing criteria closely followed their own improvement. According to Heidi L. Andrade and Yin Du, students use rubrics to support their own learning and academic performance to constantly check their progress and writing improvement.

The final results; comparison between the control group and the experimental in both years, 2016 and 2017 proved the need of the implementation of standardized rubrics in El Pinar school. The training given to teachers in a form of a ten-day workshop was the first formal form of implementing the use of international standardized rubrics. 100% of the participants agreed on how useful tool rubrics are. Israel, John a writer and researcher on the use of international standardized rubrics, defines authenticity by componential concepts common to spoken and written communication. One of them is assessment which must be authentic, valid and reliable. The IB DP guarantees these three components in its mark schemes. The same set of criteria must be used when assessing students in different geographical areas. That is what the International Baccalaureate pedagogy advocates.

## **Conclusions**

This research was conducted with the aim of finding out to what extent the use of standardized rubrics improves the quality of the upper secondary students' written outcome as well as their writing skills as an immediate effect of indirect feedback. Hence considering the problem, the researcher decided to use the rubrics provided by the International Baccalaureate organization in its Diploma Programme for Language B at the Standard Level in an experimental group, leaving the control group without this component of the assessment.

The steps in each stage of the research implicated actions to be taken and a plan to be implemented. As mentioned before two groups were considered for this work. Both groups belonged to the same school having the same problem; their written outcome was in need of improvement. This issue was shown in the records the school provided as well as the test the researcher elaborated for this purpose. The grades were below standard and improvement was a "must".

Writing activities done with the experimental group with the aim of exposing them to a greater written input and writing skills proved to be useful and beneficial for the students. The activities definitely widen the students' vocabulary and organization of their ideas. The criteria used focused on Language, message and format therefore the students were trained on these aspects of a written work.

This research involved training for the English teachers as well. Being the IB DP a well-structured programme the teacher participating in this research were to receive the necessary tools to be able to carry out the project successfully. The teachers were willing to apply what they had learnt and they actually did it successfully.

While conducting this study, the researcher realized the significant importance of a close follow up to the process and the role of what academic support has in a project. The supervising process is essential when conducting an investigation like the one conducted in this paper.

The researcher must highlight the role of the students who actively participated in this research work. They learned strategies for writing based on the feedback given by

teachers supported by the IB DP criteria which explicitly places the students on the right track for their future development. Now, the conclusions are presented following the lead of the research problem, the hypothesis and the objectives.

The three specific objectives were fully met by the means used in this research and the hypothesis verified.

a. First Specific Objective “To describe the problem of not using rubrics”

The 2016 IV Term grading book for the upper secondary students, provided by the school led the study along the proper way to clearly see the t problem of not using rubrics. A great number of the students had failed their writing and there was the need to take the necessary steps or actions to redirect the students’ efforts, to consolidate their writing strategies and the management of its process. Teachers were completely unaware of the existence of international standardized rubrics to be freely used.

b. Second Specific Objective “To compare the quality of the writing in the two groups”

The two groups were given two sets of tests; an entry and an exit. The results showed that whereas in the control group the improvement was little in the experimental group the improvement was very significant. The use of rubrics when assessing the written production in upper secondary students to better the quality of their production fairly works.

c. Third Specific Objective: “To implement the use of standardized rubrics in the high secondary students’ assessment”

Along with all the steps described up above the researcher must say that the workshop given to the teachers as part of the training to begin the implementation of standardized rubrics has been a key factor for the successful results in the experimental group.

The highly importance of using rubrics when assessing students written outcome is an effective tool to significantly improve writing in upper secondary students. The students improved the components measured; Message, organization and format. The three components aimed to be worked in the written production. The school is now aware of the benefits that implementing rubrics brings up to the school curriculum and quality in the upper secondary students. The school will apply to become and IB DP

this year, so the entire school community benefits of the standardized rubrics the IB offers as part of the Diploma Programme. Students will finally be assessed within the international standardized criteria-rubrics umbrella.

d. Proven hypothesis

The hypothesis has been vastly proved since the use of rubrics in the Experimental Group has been completely accepted as shown in chapter IV. The use of rubrics do improve the quality of the written outcome in upper secondary students of “El Pinar School” and the collateral benefits of positive feedback contributes to the students formative assessment.





## **Recommendations**

Based on the conducted research, its results, and conclusions, a few recommendations can be made:

- a. A system to record the students' progress in their written production should be implemented to make students aware of the quality of their work.
- b. Constant comparison and contrast of the students' written outcome should be done by teachers and students themselves. Positive feedback using the strategies learnt during the training has to be implemented.
- c. As part of the implementation of the use of international standardized rubrics. Permanent training to teachers is also highly recommended. Teachers need to possess the necessary tools when assessing their students writing. Taking the students along the writing process carries more than the willingness they already have shown.
- d. As part of the implementation of the use of international standardized rubrics, the school should provide teachers with the opportunity to a wider spectrum of strategies, methodological approaches, and critically reflexing about their teaching.
- e. Collaborative planning, including rubrics as an assessment tools and its standardizing them is also suggested. Hence, all teachers manage the same assessment tools, leading to a fair and valid feedback.



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## ***Annex***