

**NARRATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES AND PORTFOLIO AS PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS
TO FOSTER STUDENTS' ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS.**

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NARRATIVE ACTIVITIES AND PORTFOLIO TO FOSTER WRITING SKILLS.

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The researchers

NARRATIVE ACTIVITIES AND PORTFOLIO TO FOSTER WRITING SKILLS.

Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of the implementation of portfolios along with narrative writing activities, as pedagogical tools, to enhance the lack of English as a foreign language (EFL) writing skills of EFL adult learners from an NGO located in Bogota Colombia. The process to do so was based on a Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) methodology which permitted the classes to progress effectively and the students felt motivated when participating in the activities. Furthermore, this study was a qualitative action research, and the data gathered was analyzed using the triangulation procedure through the compilation of teachers' observations, students' artifacts, and questionnaires. The results evidenced not only the improvement of the participants' writing proficiency and narrative constructions, but also the development on their metacognitive and self-reflection processes in order to avoid previous mistakes. Consequently, the use of portfolio and narrative writing implications are discussed to empower the English teaching and learning processes inside local, regional or national communities.

Keywords: Portfolio, EFL, Narrative writing, Writing proficiency, CBLT.

Resumen

Este estudio analiza el impacto de la implementación del portafolio y actividades de escritura narrativa como herramientas pedagógicas, para mejorar el desarrollo de habilidades de escritura en inglés como lengua extranjera en un grupo de adultos pertenecientes a una ONG ubicada en Bogotá Colombia. El proceso para llevar a cabo esto, se basó en una metodología de enseñanza de idiomas basada en competencias (CBLT) que permitió que las clases progresaran efectivamente y los estudiantes se sintieran motivados a participar en las actividades. Además, este estudio fue una investigación de acción cualitativa, y la información obtenida fue analizada usando el procedimiento de triangulación, a través de la compilación de las observaciones de los profesores, los artefactos de los estudiantes y cuestionarios. Los resultados evidenciaron, no sólo la mejora de las habilidades de escritura de los participantes y construcciones narrativas, sino también el desarrollo de sus procesos de metacognición y autorreflexión con el fin de evitar errores previos. Consecuentemente, el uso y las implicaciones del portafolio y la escritura narrativa son discutidos para empoderar los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje en inglés dentro de una comunidad local, regional o nacional.

Palabras Clave: Portafolio, inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), Habilidades de escritura, Escritura Narrativa, Enseñanza de Idiomas basada en Competencias (CBLT)

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Chapter I

Introduction

Nowadays, writing skills play an important role to communicate effectively, either in the native tongue or in any foreign language such as English. According to Hinds (1987) “writing is a ‘writer-responsible’ language that places the major communication responsibility on the writer rather than the reader” (as cited in Pappamihel, Nishimata, and Mihai, 2008). For that reason, one of the main intentions of writers on their texts is to persuade and convince the reader about their ideas (Dumitrescu, Coman and Nuțu, 2015). Considering this, the development of the writing ability in any language must be guaranteed through the learning process itself. Although an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner is not supposed to master completely the writing skills necessary to produce all kind of written constructions, the learning process should be focused on working these writing skills progressively. As an illustration, narrative writing could be an alternative throughout the lesson plans for students to start identifying the text-parts (beginning, plot, and development) and what it requires to produce them; fostering creativity, understanding of simple and complex language, and improving reading. Regarding these features, narrative writing is a convenient form which allows the development of the writers’ self-expression and personality (Ozer and Tanrıseven, 2016). Having mentioned the narrative writing features, it is remarkable the influence of these constructions on the English written communication.

English as a Foreign Language Pedagogy in recent years has been influenced by the development of different teaching methodologies and techniques. Among these, we could evidence the implementation of the portfolio in the classroom, which has been an alternative to

foster EFL students' learning writing process. As Tabatabaei and Assefi (2012), state: "portfolio technique helps learners to improve expressive and compositional writing ability"

(p.139). Furthermore, the skills needed to develop a better-written communication are being considered with the portfolio implementation; Uçar & Yazıcı (2016), argue: "[...] portfolio technique had a statistically significant impact on improving writing skills, particularly sub-skills of writing such as focus, organization, vocabulary, elaboration and conventions" (p.228). Under these circumstances, portfolios could be well structured pedagogical tools that work on several learning dimensions. According to Tabatabaei & Assefi (2012), "The main goals of the portfolio [...] is to encourage learners to become more autonomous, take control of their learning, make decisions, participate in the evaluation of their own work individually" (p.138). Following the previous statement, portfolios are tools that are not limited by any rule or designed structure, which allows students to become independent in their own learning processes and assessment. In this way, the portfolio is a technique that contributes to the teaching and learning field of EFL. Subsequently, the portfolio is a pedagogical tool in the current educational environment, which promotes the development of writing skills of EFL learners through narrative writing constructions. Throughout the data collection and needs analysis we evidenced: the learners' lack of syntax, proper grammar structures and confusion when conjugating different tenses, which limited their writing skills. This study has the intention to explore the impact of portfolios and narrative writing on EFL adults' writing skills in Bogotá, Colombia. In this way, students are capable to start collecting their own workshops, compare or evaluate them with previous creations and material in order to recognize their learning writing outcomes through this technique. In accordance with this idea, Perry (1997), argues: "Portfolios are flexible, adaptable instruments; to be useful, they must change constantly" (p.189). Considering the previous idea, this tool offers opportunities for improvement in the EFL context, and it allows learners to be

flexible and dynamic enhancing their independent writing skills for their own purposes. Hence, this paper describes the identified problem; then, it presents the theoretical foundation of the study and the teaching methodology applied to collect data. Later, it shows how the information was analyzed and the pieces of evidence collected. Finally, it reports the results of the observation and our respective conclusions about the portfolio's influence on adults with lack of narrative writing skills.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, the importance of writing is essential because it demands a mastery of the topic when writing any type of work from literary to professional. According to Tench (2003), “Writing is one of the foundations [...] and the ability to communicate messages clearly and concisely” (as cited in Wise, 2005). For this reason, the increment of writing skills is significant for this century (Morles, 2003). As a result, this research emphasizes the importance of developing writing skills through the use of narrative writing and portfolio as tools to improve English written communication. Bearing this idea in mind, it is crucial to mention that this study was carried out with a group of EFL adult learners of an NGO in Bogotá, Colombia with a basic English level. In spite of the fact that this population already had English language knowledge, we could notice that they had several difficulties regarding their EFL writing process. Thus, this section describes the observation process of the study; then it presents the participants’ deficiencies regarding writing learning processes and the research proposal. Lastly, it concludes with the presentation of the research question and objective stated.

The instruments applied to collect data in the research process were teachers’ observations, students’ artefacts, and questionnaires, which allowed us to identify the students’ behaviors, interactions, and attitudes toward the activities. In addition, there were some lesson

plans designed with some written activities not necessarily focused on the development of writing skills; for instance, in some activities, the students were asked to produce some simple sentences with an explicit vocabulary. In the same way, there were some other activities in which the learners were required to describe some images in a paragraph that the instructors studied and presented. After all, these instruments were key tools to the observation process of our research study and to identify students' problematic areas.

Consequently, we could analyze that the participants of the study presented writing proficiency weaknesses when developing the activities. This issue was noticed in the lack of syntax, grammar and vocabulary of the structures developed and submitted by the students. For instance, in some of the creations delivered by the participants, verbs were not correctly conjugated with the third singular person, they had errors in terms of tenses and word order and spelling mistakes, aspects which do not allow them to produce narrative structures and modify their writing performance either on academic or ordinary texts, limiting their English writing skills. In sum, the students' deficiencies in regards to these language components affect the students' English learning process significantly.

After analyzing the weaknesses in this language field, we identified the necessity to choose one type of writing and a pedagogical technique to develop grammar, syntax, and vocabulary on the students' creations; in this case, narrative writing and portfolios. In fact, this writing type facilitates learners to share their own life experiences, backgrounds and stories along with the development of their writing skills. Moreover, working on the production of narrative texts with students is significant because it allows them to develop their creativity and their linguistic and intellectual abilities, by communicating their ideas, experiences, and feelings coherently. The learners produce their texts in spontaneous situations throughout all their education process, and their productions are more significant when they are related to their needs

and desires (Chinga, 2012, p.10). In addition, and having in mind the age range of our population, we could take advantage of their experiences and personal stories, to work on the narrative constructions assigned along the use of the portfolio assessment, since this tool can be used by any discipline to evaluate a specific learning process. Besides, it promotes the development of writing skills and the possibility to reflect upon their previous writing errors (Aydin, 2010). Something which contributes to the students' problematic in a meaningful way.

Having established the context of the project, there is the main question that will lead this research process: What is the impact of the implementation of narrative writing activities on adults' EFL writing process? and a sub-question: What is the influence of portfolios on adults' EFL writing process?

Objective

To analyze the effects of the implementation of the portfolio assessment and narrative writing activities on the learners' EFL writing process.

Rationale

The development of writing skills constitutes a relevant aspect on the EFL learning process of the students since on one hand, it is one of the most difficult skills if we take into consideration the fact that these students must acquire a variety of linguistic, sociocultural and cognitive competencies (Barkaoui, 2007, p.35). On the other hand, these learners should master the cognitive processes involved in the writing production and the significance of acquiring indispensable basic knowledge for writing. Indeed, on the writing productions, it is relevant that the students feel motivated towards writing, identifying the cognitive and linguistic competences that this act demands from them and the value of the writing proficiency as a practice which offers them an effective and cognitive growth (Chinga, 2012, p.18). Taking into consideration our

population problem, this study aims to see the effects of the implementation of the portfolio and the use of narrative writing activities as alternatives to foster the adults' English writing process. Hence, this paper describes the relevance of the participants' life experiences and their influence to enhance their narrative constructions and in this way their writing skills. Furthermore, it explains the contribution to the different teaching techniques that are being used nowadays by pre-service teachers showing the benefits that our proposal offers.

Having mentioned the intention of this study, it is relevant to explain to the reader that this population presents an interest in writing about their life stories and this can be used as a support to work on the desired learning goals. Clark and Rossiter (2008), affirm that: "In the development of adult learning theory, experience plays a central role, but there are several ways in which experience and learners are understood to be connected, and associated with conceptualizations of where the learning is located" (p.4). Following this idea, this project is important for the population, since it allows the learners to share their ideas, feelings, beliefs, thoughts and to explore their creativity facilitating the development of their writing skills. Unifying both concepts, narrative writing skills and personal experiences promote the learners to open their creativity, visualize new places, create a new world and to experience another life. This, enables them to use the words' power to be the narrators of their writings (Vecino, 2006). Bearing the last idea in mind, Cornejo (2016), in his research *study Improving writing skills in the eighth-grade EFL class* affirms that:

Writing in EFL is a skill that every person has to develop, under specific conditions that allow students to achieve a certain level of proficiency. Hence, the duty of the teacher of English is not only assessing students by making mistakes on spelling, punctuation, and grammar; it is also teaching to learn how to write. (p.7)

Concerning this, the content of these research studies mentioned above, helped us recognize some other factors that influence the students' English writing learning process, and the advantages teachers are capable to take in order to teach this topic in a meaningful learning context.

Consequently, this study seeks to deal with the identified problematic, and it desires to be a reference for those future teachers that may find similar trouble in their classrooms by providing samples of workshops and methodologies that are based on the portfolio design and its application, since this gives them a strong guidance to work and follow. In addition, this project pretends to leave a significant mark in the English academic environment contributing to the grounded theory about teaching and learning English as a foreign language, since our research project enriches future studies regarding similar topics. It is significant working on the productive skills of a foreign language, in this case, writing through the implementation of the portfolio as an innovative teaching tool, since it is moldable according to each teaching goal of any educator. Since the desired goal of a teacher is to see their students' application in which has been previously taught, this research might serve as a starting point to work on this mentioned skill.

In conclusion, this research emphasizes the significance of the students' life experiences and background as an incentive to produce narrative constructions and foster writing skills. In addition, it desires to contribute to the existing theory and methodologies that are being applied nowadays in the EFL context, showing narrative writing and portfolios as techniques that elicit the students self-reflection, self- assessment as well as autonomy and ingenuity, which allows them to enhance their writing English learning process. Thus, this research could serve as a starting point for those pre-service teachers who request to implement similar tools to overcome the students' weaknesses in the writing field.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Having established the population and their difficulties regarding the EFL learning process, there are some significant concepts that need to be delved into the reader to have a better understanding of the research intention. It is worthy to mention that these concepts have relevant importance in our study because they represent the foundations of the research process, since they allowed to give objectivity to our project. Considering the proposed goal of achieving the development of adults' narrative writing skills through the implementation of the portfolio as a pedagogical tool in the classroom, it is important to remark that this study proposal is emphasized on three meaningful aspects which were necessary to explore to carry out this project successfully. In consequence, this theoretical framework describes the relevance and connection between Portfolio as Students' Learning Tool, Writing Narrative Skills, and Competency-Based Approach for Adults Learners.

Portfolio as Students' learning tool

In the current educational environment the concept of portfolio is understood as a purposeful collection technique of students' works that presents pieces of evidence, progress, efforts and accomplishments of students' learning process in order to acquire not only teaching and learning skills, but also to develop reflective practices (Sánchez, 2005). Consequently, there is a certain quantity of educators, writers, and researchers that define a portfolio as a learners' effective alternative to writing and assessment, and it is focused on promoting learners' independence, self-reflective capacity as well as the composing processes (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000). However, the use of portfolio in the classroom includes some other important features; for instance, it allows the learners to identify and reach their own learning purposes. It

also provides the learners with possibilities to become more autonomous, giving the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning process and showing evidence of their good work (Yurdabakan & Erdoğan, 2009). Consequently, for many years the implementation of the portfolio in the classroom has contributed to the improvement of the students' learning process. For that reason, this paper explains some authors' insights about the use of portfolio in education; additionally, it describes several features of the portfolio as a metacognitive tool and its influence on learners' writing skills improvement.

Bearing in mind the last idea, the implementations of the portfolio in the classroom is a subject researched from different perspectives by several authors. For instance, portfolios present how students deal with the proposed daily assignments in the class, these may include rough drafts, sketches, works-in-progress, and final products (Syafei, 2012). In addition, it offers the opportunity to analyze and evaluate students' performance in terms of achievements in comparison with the initial works; the collection of these works shows both their effort and their progress in one or more learning areas (Delmastro, 2005). As a result, the Portfolios can be used for different purposes in education, these can be shaped depending on the users' demand (Birgin & Baki, 2007). Hence, there are different insights that present a common view, which states that portfolios are effective techniques that stimulate the students' English learning process.

Furthermore, portfolio assessment is favorable for the learners' metacognition progress, since it helps the improvement of vocabulary, grammar and writing abilities. Also, the students are capable to contextualize their words and produce more complex and fluent sentences. Moreover, portfolios offer information regarding learners' texts structure and facilitate them to learn about feedback strategies through the use of these tools as assessment mechanisms (Burner, 2014). Subsequently, portfolio assessments are transcribed into reflections upon specific learning goals that contain systematic collections of students' works, learners' self-evaluation,

and teachers' evaluation. (Syafei, 2012). Therefore, we could conclude that portfolio as a pedagogical tool influences on the student's' metacognitive progress since it allows the learners to develop a self-assessment process making possible the application and solution of their own mistakes.

Consequently, there are several studies that approve portfolios as tools for the improvement of writing skills. In recent studies, the analysis of quantitative data made evident the positive impact on the development of students' writing skills and grammar aspects such as punctuation, structure, and lexicon (Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli and Ansari, 2010). Accordingly, portfolio takes into account students' needs and preferences in their learning writing process allowing them to have fun by working with their favorite topics or themes (Chung, 2012). In the same way, the portfolio allows students to assess their own writing learning process fostering the development of their writing skills (Ozer and Tanrıseven, 2016). Thus, the implementation of portfolio assessment offers several positive academic outcomes on the development of students' EFL writing skills.

To sum up, there are different assumptions around portfolios from different perspectives, which allow us to strengthen our knowledge giving us solid basis around this topic. Besides, the implementation of portfolios is in accordance with each individual language needs and inclinations. This fact influenced on our insights about this research study, it also contributes to future studies aimed to deal with similar issues, since the portfolio is a tool which could be used from different angles to achieve not only learning but also teaching desired goals in the modern educational context.

Competency-Based language teaching Approach for Adult Learners

Competency-Based Language teaching is an approach that appears at the end of the 1970s for adults, it is oriented to build up the performance of the English learners. This has the purpose of promoting the students' competencies and outputs in all of the four language skills (Mathan, 2018, p.52). It is remarkable to mention that the main concern of this project is to identify the EFL achievements in terms of writing, from an educational perspective throughout the use of the Competency-based approach. According to Shenk (1978), this approach is outcome-based, it is adaptable to the dynamic needs of the students that are oriented to the development of the writing competence (As cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.141). Thus, this paper describes the importance of this approach for EFL adult learners. Then, it mentions how this approach helps out the learners to enrich their writing skills and how the portfolio as a learning tool could be combined with this approach to achieve these goals.

Competency-based education (CBE) is an approach which emphasizes the learning efforts on being able to communicate ideas using the foreign language in real life situations. It also highlights how crucial it is to recognize the adult learners needs to foster their learning as much as possible (Boillos, 2018). Additionally, this approach has been accepted according to Auerbach as "the state-of-the-art approach to Adult ESL teaching" (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Subsequently, we concluded that this approach was the most suitable one to incorporate with the target population because Competency-based language teaching is applicable mainly with adult learners since they are taught and tested on the specific competencies to be fostered.

The writing skills could be greatly fostered by applying Competency-based language teaching activities, which promotes the students to make changes in their writing performance. This development makes the student construct his/her own world, putting into practice the knowledge, competencies, and interests that are defined by a pragmatic and socio-cultural

environment. Indeed, the writing process and the competency-based activities have as purpose to reproduce and offer an image of the writer-student world. (Bravo, 2013, p. 9). Moreover, the focus made on outputs rather than inputs, when relating to writing proficiency, is key from the competency-based perspective of this study.

Furthermore, the role of the portfolio and its assessment can be combined with a competency-based approach in order to foster learners' writing proficiency. According to Delett, Barnhardt and Kevorkian (2001), portfolio as a tool in English teaching as a foreign language, serves to two main functions; on one hand, it offers opportunities for acquiring language authentically and actively; on the other hand, for evaluating the learners' competencies and processes (As cited in Aidyn, 2010). Under these circumstances, we as researchers could identify the portfolio's help on achieving specific writing skills and general goals on EFL for adult learners through the implementation of the Competency-Based approach. Accordingly, Crosby (1997) argues, the primary purpose of portfolios in EFL context is to increase the level of students' motivation and to give them a sense of autonomous learning in order to foster their writing competencies (as cited in Nezakatgoo, 2010). In this direction, the portfolios' implementation combined with competency-based activities offers benefits from EFL teaching and learning perspectives.

To sum up, we can affirm that these concepts of Competency-Based for adult learners, writing skills and portfolio are the focus of our research proposal. Even though teaching a second language for adults could be a challenge, we worked with their advantages as learners in order to contribute to their pedagogical processes. What we mentioned above, determines the manners in which the writing was stimulated and improved. Indeed, CBLT enabled the learners not only to acquire some linguistic aspects of English as a second language, but also to develop specific skills to promote their writing process.

Narrative Writing Skills

Nowadays, having good writing skills are demanded by the current academic world and for many purposes in general terms. For instance, getting a better job, applying for a scholarship or just having the possibility to be published by any educational journal, are benefits that having great writing abilities offer. However, this definition goes beyond since writing properly is a big challenge because it is a test of language, memory and thinking ability at the same time (Kellogg and Raulerson, 2007). In fact, writing is usually seen as the most challenging skill to acquire, because students are required to have an amount of the L2 knowledge regarding the grammar organization, correct use of language and specific vocabulary which will be used to communicate their ideas to the readers (Tangpermpoon, 2008). Therefore, this paper describes how narrative writing serves to foster learners' writing skills. Secondly, it explains the different sub-skills that narrative writing requires to be developed and its features. Finally, it shows the relation between portfolio implementation and the development of writing skills as a social process that helps them succeed in academic situations.

Correspondingly, writing skills can be well-developed through the construction of narrative texts. According to Nelson (2005), narratives not only transmit cultural values and significance; it also contributes to improving learners' cognitive abilities, memory systems, time representations and the ability to communicate (as cited in Ochoa, Correa, Aragón and Mosquera, 2010). This type of texts is more than producing simple sentences or ideas, these are stories which enable students to share life experiences, this means that students are able to write about what they are most interested in, or something that marked their lives as significant (Dymock, 2007). Thus, narrative writing is an appropriate alternative to apply in students who present weaknesses in terms of written expression, organization, and elaboration of ideas.

Some other important aspects are the different skills that narrative writing requires, which are mentioned by Pappamihel, Nishimata and Mihai (2008), “[...] invention, drafting, and actual writing that includes reviewing and revising” (p.338). Bearing in mind the previous idea, through narrative text constructions students are capable to increase their invention capacity because these particular skills demand from the student to be able to create any circumstance with an introduction, a problem and a respective solution; which includes the organization of their thoughts. Moreover, drafting is a process which allows students to organize or categorize their ideas in a form that they observe what to write before, during and after the ‘plot’ of their narrative creations. At the end of the writing process, there are two skills that need to be addressed: reviewing and revising. These two skills basically help the learners to remind previous topics and check-up what they have written wrong or what they have missed from their narrative creations (Pappamihel, Nishimata, and Mihai, 2008). In brief, the above-mentioned skills are essential when writing narrative texts, since they are an important part of the narrative writing process.

Regarding the last idea, portfolio is a tool to assess and explain the progress of the learners in regards to the writing skills’ development ; as Duff and Hornberger (2008) argue: portfolio is an effective teaching, learning, and assessment tool not only because it provides a formative feedback loop and data about learners’ cognitive operations, but also because it enhances learners’ understanding of writing as a socially-situated process participating in “language socialization” (As cited in Romova and Andrew, 2011). Besides, the portfolio is a technique, which offers a wider sight for the teacher to work on improvements resulting from the analysis of the evaluations’ conclusions. In addition, as the students are supposed to deliver different written creations throughout the classes, each one of those drafts embodies an opportunity for the student to ask the teacher to monitor the progress in the written creations (Cordoba, 2006). Hence,

portfolios' assessment emphasizes on the development of writing skills, which later will contribute to the socialization of the language.

To sum up, we can infer that the stimulation of the writing skills through the implementation of narrative texts allows students to foster their EFL learning process. Taking into account the current importance of written skills, this study seeks to provide an alternative of improvement on narrative texts productions by working on writing skills through the use of portfolio in order to connect the existing gap between having a good writing process and the advancement on the L2 fluency.

In short, the concepts previously discussed allow us to recognize and to take advantage of the different dimensions from which they are contemplated by some researchers and authors, and how these are interrelated. Moreover, these concepts permit that our research goals are supported by other studies, and in this way can be successfully developed. Furthermore, we can demonstrate that there is a great majority of investigations that promote the implementation of the portfolio and Competency-based language teaching as effective alternatives to foster students' EFL narratives writing skills, which means that, the focus of this project is directed to contribute to the theory already established in these fields.

Chapter III

Research design

This study applied the methodology of qualitative research since it describes and analyzes the data gathered from different perspectives to build up a clear description of the problem identified (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013). In addition, the research design enables the interpretation of the data in a systematic and organized manner, based on the model of the practical action research, due to the fact that this model enabled us to observe the students' attitudes, documents, and perceptions over the application of portfolio as a tool to foster their writing skills. In the same way, this allowed us to improve our own professional performance, since throughout this model we look for constant improvement in teaching practices following an organized structure (Creswell, 2015). The qualitative action research design was combined under the influence of the competency-based language teaching approach (CBLT), since it is focused on special language needs, which allowed us to identify their effect on the development of writing skills on EFL adult learners.

Accordingly, this study analyzes the data resulted from the lesson plans based on the procedures of the competency-based approach, and the implementation of portfolio assessment through narrative writing activities. As a result, this chapter firstly describes the type of study conducted through this research process, as well as the context and population. Secondly, it mentions the instruments for data collection and their procedures. Thirdly, it demonstrates the ethical considerations needed for project development. Finally, this section includes the instructional design which contains the type of English language teaching approach, its stages, and the lesson plans organized through a timetable.

Type of Study

During the process of the study, it was necessary to identify a type of research methodology in order to achieve our research proposal goals. For that reason, we concluded that the most appropriate method was a qualitative paradigm; since it allows the researchers to promote the ability to interpret and analyze the principal issue in the setting studied (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013). In consequence and according to Leedy and Ormrod (2013), qualitative research requires to collect data in natural situations, which supposes the natural behavior of the parts immersed. In other words, the students' participation and the researchers' performance in the targeted academic setting. In brief, qualitative research model serves to some procedures needed to achieve the desired goal. It describes, interprets, certificates and analyzes the data established (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013).

Equally important, it was required to choose a type of research design to offer a possible solution to the evidenced problem. As a result, we determined that our study was closely related with action research design, because it is focused on a specific educational issue; it also allows researchers to collect and analyze data, promoting changes based on the results (Creswell, 2015). Furthermore, Mills (2013) states that there are two main procedures in action research design: practical and participatory; the first one is aimed to look for an educational issue in a specific academic setting while the second one is focused on a social problematic (as cited in Creswell, 2015). In this case, we implemented practical action research, because it involves following crucial aspects such as; identifying an area of focus to gather, and analyzing and interpreting data in order to develop an action plan (Creswell, 2015) (see figure 1). Thus, practical action research design facilitated the research design through this proposal in an organized and meaningful manner.

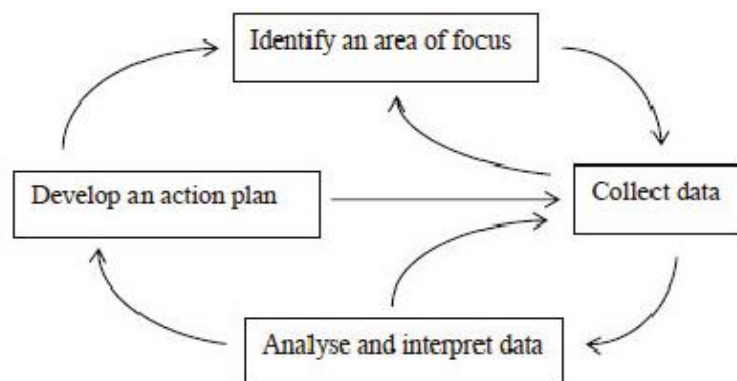


Figure 1. Dialect Action Research Spiral by Mills, 2011. Creswell, J. W. (2015).

Following this path, it is relevant to mention that this study was carried out with adults aged between twenty and thirty years old, these participants attend to a private NGO at the downtown of Bogotá Colombia, this institution is in charge of helping and caring for people who suffer from drug addiction. Moreover, these people live inside this NGO during a certain period of time for them to receive an integral treatment. The reality evidenced with this population was that these students received classes such as math, science, and dance, but they did not have English classes during their stay in there, which means an average of English level from A1 to A2. In terms of gender, there were more men than women participating in the research, they were exposed to two-hour long English classes once a week. In short, the participants accepted to be enrolled in this study mainly because of their desire for learning a second language, which facilitated the development of our study and it permitted the data collection effectively.

Instruments for Data Collection

Bearing the last idea in mind, the procedures for data collection were carried out using three main instruments: teacher observations, students' artefacts and questionnaires. These methods played a significant role in our study since they enabled us to collect and identify data regarding the development of their writing skills, and how their learning process was impacted by

the implementation of portfolios and the lesson plans designed with a narrative writing emphasis. Besides, it is relevant to mention that these three instruments allowed us to collect data and go beyond the issues observed in the field studied, which resulted in a depth reflection upon the study proposal and our role as teachers on it. Hence, these instruments were crucial in the process of recognizing ourselves as inquirers and the participants in the setting analyzed (Patton, 2015).

In order to achieve the goal, it was necessary to take into account the teachers' examinations inside the inquiry setting, for this, we implemented the teachers' observations. According to Creswell (2014), it is a common method of a documenting pattern; in this case, the researcher notices patterns that can be addressed in particular aspects such as behavior, expressions, feelings, among others. Additionally, researchers are able to take notes by recording them in an unstructured or structured manner, because these types of observations are open-ended which permit the investigators to formulate questions and the participants to answer freely their perspectives (Creswell, 2014). In Accordance with the reasons mentioned above, it was necessary to create a teacher observation format to have clear parameters, this also allowed us to know what to observe and how to take notes with specific criteria (see Appendix 1 and 2). In brief, this method was convenient in order to catch useful warnings that were significant for our research proposal; providing us different data about participants' behavior, beliefs, and perceptions, which guided us to carry out the analysis of data.

Consequently, it was required the collection of students' artifacts, such as, letters, activities, papers or diaries that the investigator collected during the research process (Hopkins, 2008). They were collected every session in order to analyze the students' progress in terms of knowledge and identify their grammatical-spelling mistakes and their errors in terms of tense conjugation because this permitted to have a better panorama of the areas to be fostered. Moreover, these artifacts allowed us to analyze not only the participants' problem in terms of

learning, but also their progress throughout the implementation of the Competency-Based approach. Thus, the information gathered allowed us to interpret accurately students' performance and views in detail.

The last instrument used were questionnaires because they allowed researchers to recognize different aspects such as class procedures or students' insights, fostering the development of future sessions. They also help teachers to provide feedback and improve their own performance (Hopkins, 2008). Subsequently, these questionnaires were developed through open-ended questions that were focused on the reflection of students' metacognition, which is part of a self-reflection form that enables the understanding, inquiry, and management of thought processes (Kuntz, 2014). Taking into account the previous idea, they were applied each session, after the first meeting during the whole project with the purpose of making the student mulling over the progress of their learning process; in this way, they could notice what aspects they had improved and which ones they were supposed to foster (see Appendix 3). In short, the questionnaires were alternatives that granted the participants' self-reflection upon their own learning progress.

For this qualitative action research study, the data analysis was based on the triangulation procedure. The analysis of the data collected through the three instruments mentioned above permitted the research study to obtain a stronger validity and it helped to the objectivity over the results. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), the validity of the research project, is one of the strengths of qualitative research and it is made of the accuracy of the findings from the researcher, participant and the reader's insights (as cited in Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, triangulation was a key strategy in order to analyze the evidence obtained during the data collection process, and in this way, it provided objectivity to this research project.

Equally important, it was crucial to design some consent forms in order to obtain access to the data collection and to keep the participants' anonymity. These forms contained the study implications and requirements, which allowed both, the institution and participants to be informed about the investigation process. Additionally, the consents specified the period in which the study was going to take place and the right for the participants to leave the study whenever they decided. Thus, these approvals were indispensable for the project development because, without them, it would not have been possible to obtain the necessary information to give credibility to our project (see appendixes 4 and 5).

Instructional Design

This research project was based on a competency-based teaching approach CBLT taking into account our population features and needs regarding the development of their EFL writing skills. In addition, this approach serves to work on some specific language needs for particular situations; teaching students the basic skills they need in order to prepare them for situations they commonly face in everyday life (Richards, 2005). On the other hand, Auerbach (1986), provides a summary of aspects presented in the implementation of CBLT approach in EFL classes: A focus on making the students functional for society, a focus on everyday communicative skills, performance-centered orientation which means to provide personalized guidance, modularized instruction, outcomes that are established in advance so that the learners know what is expected from them, continuous and progressive assessment throughout the classes, assessment based on the demonstration of prespecified behaviors; and finally, individualized student-centered instruction (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Overall, this approach correctly fits our research proposal since we pretended to make the students aware of their writing skills

development, through a more personalized and student-centered instruction which is a benefit that could be fostered by implementing portfolios as learning tools.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), Competency-Based Teaching approach requires that the participants go through three crucial stages in order to successfully finish the course. These three steps are crucial on the development of CBLT approach, the original order of this approach goes from stages one and two in which the language competencies are developed to the stage three in which the students are grouped based on their competencies development level and proficiency (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). However, it was necessary to change the order of the stages for this research project interest, since the rearrangement of the stages was beneficial to achieve our proposal goals. Subsequently, in the first stage, the students are organized on the basis of their learning goals and the competencies to be developed are defined.

Additionally, Mrowicki (1986) suggests that in the second and third stage the students must deal with some competencies which are related to general language: following instructions to perform any task; responding appropriately to the professor's comments about their performance quality; requesting teacher to check their work; reporting to the supervisor when the work is completed; reading charts, labels, formats or written instructions to perform a task and responding appropriately to work interruption or alteration (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001). These competencies are going to be specified in the lesson plans below (see Appendix 6). In short, these procedures provided a clear direction for planning and designing each one of the classes and allowed us to look for the goals stated at the beginning of the research proposal.

Under these circumstances, the stages mentioned above were developed through the pedagogical strategy of Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) and CASAS lesson plan model. According to Tomlinson, the definition of the PPP model emerges as an approach to teaching language items which follows a sequence of presentation of the item, the practice of the

item and then the production of the item (as cited in Criado, 2013). In addition, there were added some other phases such as the type of competence and skill, warm up, evaluation and resources based on the CASAS model, since this one measures the accomplishment of basic writing skills in contexts that learners would expect to encounter in daily life situations (CASAS, 2008). In brief, these models are completely fit with our study since they facilitate the proper application of each one of the lesson plans to achieve the goals proposed by the study.

Bearing in mind the last idea, it is significant to explain the lesson plans' organization and the competencies to be developed throughout the research implementation. The ten lesson plans were divided into two main groups; being the first group focused on present simple structures and the second one focused on past simple structures; the first five lessons were classified according to each one of the skills expected to be fostered in order to construct a narrative text, in this case; invention, drafting, reviewing, revising and final outcome, suggested by (Pappamihiel, Nishimata, and Mihai, 2008). In the same way, the competencies postulated for CBLT approach by Mrowicki (1986) were worked based on the narrative writing skills order; for instance, in the first class, the narrative writing skill worked was "invention", so the corresponding competencies to be developed according to CBLT approach were "following an instruction to perform any task and requesting professor to check students' work" (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In brief, each narrative writing skill was connected with a competence proposed by Mrowicki as it is visible in the following chart (see chart 1).

Teaching syllabus Timetable Lesson Plans

Chart 1 <i>Syllabus</i>						
TIMETABLE						
N. LESS ON	TOPIC	STAG E	SKILL	COMPETENCY /IES	TEACHIN G OBJ	RESEARCH OBJ
1	Daily Routines	1, 2 and 3	Inventio n	Following the instruction to perform any task.	To provide clear instructions , provide needed resources and offer guidance.	To identify the learners' English level and stimulate motivation for the whole study.
				Requesting to check their work.		
2	Adverbs of frequency	1, 2 and 4	Draftin g	Requesting to check their work.	To presents a clear example of	To analyze students mistakes and

				Responding appropriately to the professor's comments about their performance quality.	how to use the adverbs of frequency with their daily routines.	weaknesses. To start organizing their portfolio documents.
3	Description of people, situation or objects	1, 2 and 5	Reviewing	The following instruction to perform any task.	To explain how an adjective modifies the intention of a sentence	To offer proper comments and ask for improvement if necessary.
				Responding appropriately to the professor comments about their performance quality.		
4	Hobbies	1, 2 and 7		Reporting to the supervisor when	To evaluate students'	To analyze the outcomes and

			Final Outcome	the work is completed.	progress through a writing about a hobby.	benefits of the portfolio implementation .
				Responding appropriately to the professor comments about their performance quality.		
5	Connecting my ideas or thoughts	1, 2 and 6	Revising	Reading charts, labels, formats or written instructions to perform a task.	To explain the correct use of linking words in a text, in order to combine them correctly in a narrative text.	To investigate the progress made after the teachers' comments over their performance.
				Responding appropriately to work interruption or alteration.		

6	Regular and Irregular verbs	1, 2 and 8	Invention	Following instructions to perform any task.	To help students to increase vocabulary about regular and irregular verbs.	To analyze the effect of narrative writing on the learners writing process.
				Requesting to check their work.		
7	Narrative expressions	1, 2 and 9	Drafting	Requesting to check their work.	To promote the use of visual aids for making knowledge meaningful.	To compare the initial drafting process with this one.
				Responding appropriately to the professor comments about their performance quality.		
8	My childhood		Reviewing	Following the instructions to	To have a good	To analyze the students'

		1, 2 and 10		perform any task.	managemen t of the class throughout the developmen t of different activities.	perception or insights regarding the use of portfolios.
				Responding appropriately to the professor comments about their performance quality.		
9	My young hood	1, 2 and 11	Revisin g	Reading charts, labels, formats or written instructions to perform a task.	To get better time managemen t of each controlled and semi- controlled activity.	To reflect upon the students' self-assessment process.
				Responding appropriately to work interruption or alteration.		

10	My Autobiography	1, 2 and 12	Final Outcome	Reporting to the supervisor when the work is completed.	To explain the meaning and purpose of writing an autobiography.	To validate the influence of portfolio and narrative writing on the final results.
				Responding appropriately to the professor comments about their performance quality.		

To conclude, the research design, the type of study and the instruments for the data collection helped us to organize, analyze and interpret the evidence gathered. In fact, the practical action research guided us in the implementation of portfolio and narrative writing tasks in order to prove the influence of this pedagogical tool in the students' writing skills. Moreover, the qualitative method provided us not only with knowledge outcomes but also with perceptions and comments from the students about the research application. Finally, the instruments selected to collect the data needed informed us a series of patterns that were identified in the research development, from attitudinal responses to language mistakes correction.

Chapter IV

Data analysis and findings

This study aims to evaluate the influence of portfolio assessment and narrative writing activities on the development of adult learners' EFL writing process, who belong to an NGO located in Bogotá, Colombia. To achieve this, the researchers designed ten lesson plans based on the PPP methodology and CASAS lesson plan model (CASAS, 2008). These classes were divided into two main groups; the first five lessons were focused on present structures and the other five classes were focused on past structures. All of these manuscripts and activities were collected on individual portfolios. The project dealt with the fact that the target population presented weaknesses in regards to writing constructions, such as verb conjugation misunderstandings, spelling mistakes, and punctuation. This issue led us to incorporate the portfolio and narrative writing during the classes in order to foster students' metacognition and self- assessment processes upon their writing performance. Therefore, the learners were able to collect, share and analyze their performance through a co-evaluation process. In the same way, they were capable to see not only their own but also their partners' mistakes, something that provided them with a great panorama over the teacher's feedback. To carry out the data collection process, the investigators implemented three main instruments; Teachers' Observations, students' artifacts and questionnaires in order to gather information about participants' opinions, performance and teachers' insights towards this project. Taking this into account, we elaborated a triangulation process which "has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources" (Carter, Nancy, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Alba, Blythe and Alan, 2014, p. 545). Based on the triangulation process of the data collected, there were some relevant patterns identified in the data

analysis that will be explained into three particular categories. The first category is related to the implementation of teachers' feedback on the students' manuscripts; the second one is the engagement of students through the application of writing activities based on their personal experiences, and the third one is the use of portfolio as a metacognitive tool to foster students' EFL writing process through self-reflection.

Implementing teachers' feedback on the students' manuscripts.

The main objective of this project was for students to be able to enhance their writing skills through the development of narrative writing activities and the use of portfolio assessment as learning tools. However, it was evident that some learners presented some doubts in regards to different aspects of writing; such as the spelling of some words and the grammar structures of the sentences. Consequently, the teachers' feedback given on the students' manuscripts played an important role in the students' EFL writing process. In fact, a greater part of the participants asked the teacher to check their work and creations when they wrote in English, they also asked for clarification on how to write correctly. As a result, when the learners received the teachers' feedback and comments, they made an effort to correct their own writing mistakes avoiding their repetition in future creations. Thus, this section first describes how teachers' feedback is seen and understood by the researchers, and the type of feedback implemented during the project ; then it explains how students tried to foster their writing performance by taking as a starting point the teacher's feedback, and finally it explains how the teachers' assessment was a means for the students to reflect upon their own learning processes.

In order to provide a clear panorama of this category, it is crucial to explain how teachers' feedback is seen in this study. First of all, we need to mention that feedback is directly related with correction and it demands cognitive processes that are oriented to perform things properly

by implementing corrective actions (Price, Handley, Millar & O'Donovan, 2010, p. 278). These corrective actions mentioned above imply both the content and the form of the writing that the teacher provided to each learner, taking into account a measure and an appropriate type of feedback for students' learning development (Paulus, 1999, p.273). Hence, teachers' feedback promotes the learners to be immersed in constant improvement in their writing skills.

Bearing in mind the last idea, the type of feedback implemented every single session was teachers' written feedback. This type of feedback usually is given after a task which informs the students what they are doing right, what they need to change or improve, and the possible next steps. It is also necessary to have a mechanism which serves as a proof whether the students execute changes on the feedback or not (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p.84). This type of teacher's feedback was suitable not only with the research goals but also to foster the interaction between the teacher and the students, especially in these writing classes.

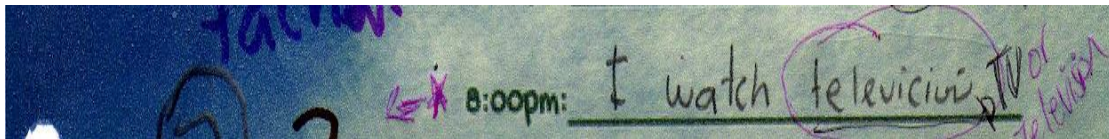
Along the following evidence, the investigators could identify that the students tended to ask for teachers' feedback on their narrative creations. In order to clarify doubts about the spelling of the words and the structures used in the phrases, some students first finished the activities in the way that they considered was the correct one and then asked for revision; some others were asking for revision during the development of an activity when they did not feel confident about what they were writing. After receiving feedback, the students avoided repeating the same mistakes in the next activities, which enabled them to enhance their writing skills throughout the classes. In short, the paragraphs and excerpts below show the patterns gathered from the triangulation process, through students' artifacts, teachers' observations and questionnaires in which we could evidence the relevance of implementing teachers' feedback on students' manuscripts.

Accordingly, it was possible to identify the students' responses towards the teachers' feedback. Each student took advantage of the written feedback given by the teacher and applied the corresponding corrections to the mistakes previously made. According to Williams (2003):

Written feedback is an essential aspect of any English language writing course. This is especially true now with the predominance of the process approach to writing that requires some kind of second party feedback, usually by the instructor, on student drafts.
(p.1)

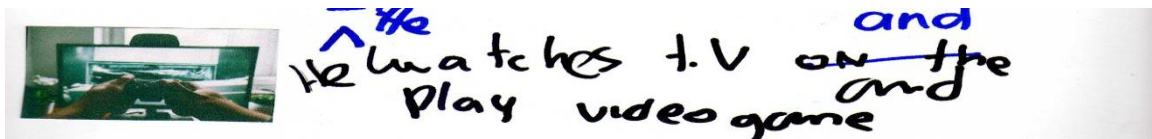
For instance: a participant wrote the word “televisión”, thinking that the spelling of this word was the same as the word in Spanish, which proves that some students lacked vocabulary to complete the tasks, (see excerpt 1). However, after having received feedback by the teacher, the student rewrote the word correctly in another activity (see excerpt 2)

Excerpt 1 (A1P7S1D08142018):



“I watch televisión”

Excerpt 2 (A4P7S4D09042018):

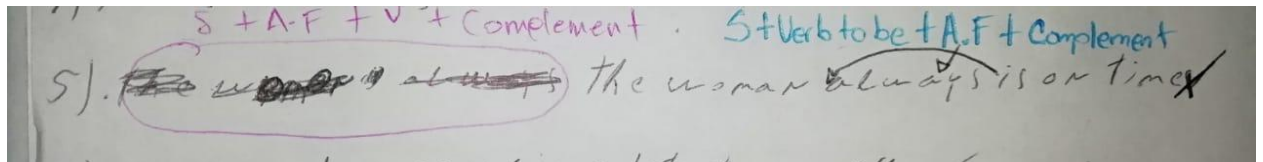


“He watches tv”

According to Ott, spelling is the ability to relate speech sounds to the letters that represent them, as well as the ability to remember the letters that represent them and use them when writing (Ott, 2007, p.15). In accordance with the author and the evidence previously shown (excerpts 1 and 2), it is clear that having a good spelling is a paramount competence to improve on writing skills, and this process was possible through the teacher's feedback.

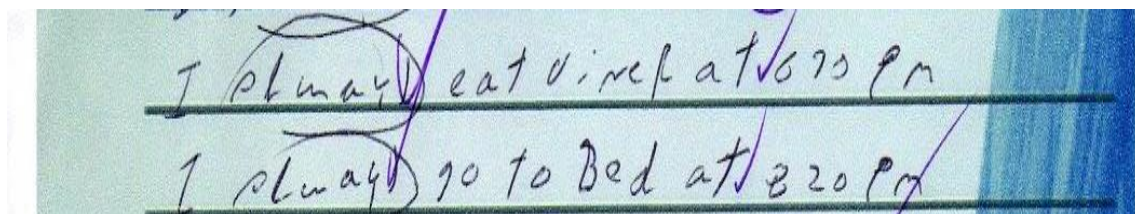
On the other hand, one of the students, having previously seen the teacher's feedback, crossed out a sentence that he had written with grammar mistakes and made the necessary changes in order to write this word properly (see excerpt 3). Subsequently, in another activity the learner wrote more sentences with the correct grammar structures putting into practice the teachers' corrections (see excerpt 4).

Excerpt 3 (A2P5S2D08212018):



"The woman always is on time" - Teacher's comment: (S+Verb to be+A.F+Complement)

Excerpt 4 (A3P5S2D21082018):



"I always eat dinner at 6:00 pm", "I always go to bed at 8:20 pm"

Following this path, Mart suggests that: to be an effective writer, the students should study grammar because grammatical skills help students to organize words and build better sentences, making them understandable and meaningful (Mart, 2013, p.124). In accordance with Mart and the pieces of evidence presented (excerpts 3, 4), grammar plays an important role on the writing process of the students and this aspect can be fostered through teacher's feedback, otherwise, mistakes would be repeated by the learners. In other words, we can suggest that the teachers' written feedback is an important aspect on the development of the students' narrative sketches.

During the sessions, we observed the constant request from the learners to check their works and creations by the instructors. Basheer, Tang and Ahmad (2016) argue that through close observation of the students' learning process, and the collection of constant feedback on students' learning, teachers are able to learn a lot about the way students learn and more specifically how students respond to particular teaching approaches taking into account their learning styles, which could be used to promote an specific language competence (Basheer, Tang and Ahmad, 2016, p.515). This fact can be demonstrated in the data below (see excerpts 5,6)

Excerpt 5

(SOS2D21082018):

DATE/SESSION	WRITING SKILL	COMPETENCE CBLT	YES	NO	COMMENTS
August 21 st , 2018 Session 2	Drafting	-Requesting to check their work. -Responding appropriately to the professor comments quality.	✓		The students constantly asked the teacher to check their work moreover, the students checked the teacher's feedback and corrected

"The students constantly asked the teacher to check their work. Moreover, the students checked the teacher's feedback and corrected."

Excerpt 6 (GOS3D28082018):

Session/Class Number	Description of the lesson (Teacher Notes)	General Comments	Student's Responses
3	The learners saw the topic as interesting for them. The participation improved according to what the teacher had planned.	The students felt more motivated towards the class. They also liked to listen music when they were working on the activities	There was an improvement on the writing skills of the students because I noticed that they have corrected their own works used in previous classes.

“The learners saw the topic as interesting for them. The participation improved according to what the teacher had planned”

“The students felt more motivated towards the class. They also liked to listen music when they were working on the activities”

“There was an improvement on the writing skills of the students because I noticed that they have corrected their own works used in previous classes”

In light of the previous excerpts (5 and 6), it was evidenced that the participants frequently asked for teacher's revision in order to recognize their mistakes and apply changes, which means that the students presented active participation and a high level of interest during the lessons. Indeed, the students' awareness was visible regarding the importance of teacher's feedback over their manuscripts.

Moreover, during the process of the study, the students asserted on the fact that receiving feedback from the teacher was always necessary, since they analyzed what they needed to improve on writing. This was visible in the questionnaires applied during the sessions (see excerpts 7,8)

Excerpt 7 (Q2P6S3D28082018):

3) Los “feedback” dados por el profesor fueron provechosos y aportaron en mi aprendizaje:

a) Siempre b) Casi siempre c) Muy poco d) Nunca

Justifique: El docente es muy interesado en que aprendamos de una muy buena manera. También es muy respetuoso.

“El docente es muy interesado en que aprendamos de una muy buena manera. También es muy respetuoso”.

Excerpt 8 (Q2P4S3D28082018):

Porque puedo ver lo que tengo y lo que me falta y así puedo avanzar.

“Porque puedo ver lo que tengo y lo que me falta y así puedo avanzar”.

As excerpts 7 and 8 show, the teacher’s feedback was seen and perceived by the learners as an essential observation for them to start applying changes according to what they required to foster in regards of their EFL writing performance. Hence, most of the participants agreed on the fact that the teachers’ feedbacks provided in classes were meaningful for their writing process, since it enabled students to remember their weaknesses in the writing field and they turned these weaknesses into strengths.

To conclude, we can affirm, based on the triangulation procedure and as it was remarkable in the previous excerpts, that these learners have demonstrated an enhancement in terms of spelling of the words and grammar; this progress was possible through the application of teachers’ written feedback. The teachers’ revision of students’ constructions and manuscripts allowed the learners to analyze their own mistakes in order to apply not only the corresponding

corrections, but also avoiding to repeat mistakes in future creations. Thus, teachers' feedback had a meaningful contribution to the development of the pupils' EFL writing skills.

Engaging students through the application of writing activities based on their personal experiences.

Currently, in EFL classes, it is difficult to catch the students' attention as well as to expect high interest from them. In this way, we wanted to look for a strategy that allowed the learners to promote the students' engagement in this study. Under those circumstances, this category intends to explain the way students' engagement succeeds in the classroom thanks to the implementation of narrative activities, in which the learners were asked to type some personal stories or memories and collect them in their portfolios. Indeed, when the learners faced narrative tasks that had been planned to know their personal experiences, we noticed their interest increased. This section firstly describes how the concept of "engagement" is understood in this study; secondly, the type of engagement evidenced in the students, and finally, it explains how students' engagement through personal experiences promotes their writing process.

It is significant to make clear how the concept of students' engagement is perceived in this research project. Students' engagement is related to the "behavioral intensity and emotional quality of a student's active involvement during a learning activity" (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010 p. 588). This active involvement could be reflected in the participation intensity, attitude and responsibility of the learners inside the class. In fact, this was evidenced during the period of time in which the study took place, since the majority of these pupils presented positive responses when sharing their personal stories, which means that the students' engagement was an outcome of the implementation of these specific narrative tasks.

In light of the previous idea, the type of engagement identified during the sessions was “emotional engagement”. Based on Finn and Marks’ statement: This type of engagement is normally characterized by the students’ feelings about learning, their positive attitude and an interest presented towards the activities (As cited in Moreira, Dias, Matias, Castro, Gaspar, & Oliveira, 2018, p.68); this was evidenced in the questionnaires applied, since the learners felt comfortable talking about their own personal experiences. Moreover, they thought that through the execution of this type of activities, they acquired more vocabulary (see excerpt 1, 2).

Excerpt 1 (Q5P1S6D18092018)

13) ¿Cómo se sintió durante la clase y desarrollando las actividades propuestas por el profesor?

Bien. Jugamos y aprendí vocabulario.

14) ☒ Te gusta escribir acerca de tus experiencias personales?

☐ No
¿Por qué?

porque me ayuda a recordar vocabulario.

“Bien. Jugamos y aprendí vocabulario” (“Bien. Jugamos y aprendí vocabulario”)

“Porque me ayuda a recordar vocabulario” (“Porque me ayuda a recordar vocabulario”)

Excerpt 2(Q4P5S5D09112018)

13) ¿Cómo se sintió durante la clase y desarrollando las actividades propuestas por el profesor?

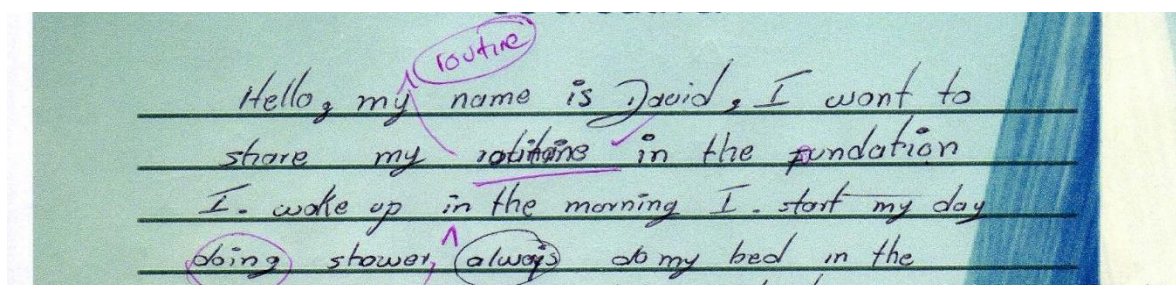
Me sentí bien cada clase aprendo algo nuevo y me retroalimenta en lo visto anteriormente

“Me sentí bien cada clase aprendo algo nuevo y me retroalimenta en lo visto anteriormente”

In accordance with the prior excerpts, the pupils were asked about how they felt during the class and they were also asked about how they perceived working with their personal experiences, something in which the majority of the students agreed on the fact that this type of activities allowed them to feel comfortable and excited to write about their personal backgrounds. In short, implementing personal experiences or stories in the narrative activities, potentialized students' emotional engagement and consequently their interest in participating in this study.

According to the previously discussed, it was possible to identify how students' engagement through personal experiences promoted their writing process. Following this path, Lo and Hyland (2007), express that one manner of improving learners' interest and involvement to write is to offer chances for them to be involved in activities that are relevant to their social, cultural and personal backgrounds (Lo and Hyland, 2007 p.221). This is visible in the following data, in which the students were asked to write about the daily routine and hobbies that they used to have, before coming into the NGO (see excerpts 3,4).

Excerpt 3 (A3P3S2D21082018)



"Hello, my name is David, I want to share routine in the fundation I. wake up in the morning I. start my day doing shower always do my bed in the morning 8:00 am. eat the breakfast 8:30"

Excerpt 4 (A7P3S4D04092018)

“I am David, I have equally good days, I am funny and practice swimming two hours. Also sports extreme two hours then I am photography reading and writing notes according with my profession I have writing hours to work with naked models I am security in the bar for the camera finish my day I like to sleep in the night”.

According to Dawson (2009), “Engaging in authentic writing activities helps students develop writing practices that extend beyond an individual piece of writing” (p.70). Even though these participants have a basic English level, they always tried to finish up with all the tasks given. In this way, they demonstrated their willingness to participate and their engagement to complete the narrative tasks.

Furthermore, the activities and tasks related to the learners’ life experiences helped them get involved with the class content as it is noticeable in the teacher’s observation formats. Besides, the collection of personal background not only provides a comfortable environment for learning but also, it makes the students more willing to write and develop the skills needed (Kahu & Gerrard, 2018, p75). This is visible in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 5 (GOS6D18092018)

Session/Class Number	Description of the lesson (Teacher Notes)	General Comments	Student’s Responses
6	Past simple structures and grammar were explained to the learners.	Motivation still being high from the learners and this fact facilitates the class progress.	Class Commitment is evident through the development of activities related to their background.

“Past simple structures and grammar were explained to the learners”

“Motivation still being high from the learners and this fact facilitates the class progress”

“Class commitment is evident through the development of activities related to their background”

Excerpt 6 (SOS6D18092018)

DATE/SESSION	WRITING SKILL	COMPETENCE CBLT	YES	NO	COMMENTS
September 18 th 2018 Session 6	Invention	-Following instruction to perform any task. -Requesting to check their work.	✓		The learners made evident the importance of using their personal experiences.

“The learners made evident the importance of using their personal experiences”

The observations carried out by the teacher, revealed the students’ participation, their motivation and the significance of working with their personal experiences, since these stories encouraged the students to talk about their memories and in this way generated a deeper engagement with the activities. In brief, the learners’ experiences played an important role in the development of the narrative writing activities, since they presented a high level of engagement when writing about their personal anecdotes.

To sum up, it can be stated that based on the triangulation procedure and as it was demonstrated through the previous evidence, personal experiences used in the tasks allowed the learners to generate a positive involvement with the study, and this fostered their English writing process. We could see how the learners’ writing skills were gradually improved by the influence of using life experiences in the study, since these activities offered the students the opportunity not only to create authentic manuscripts, but also to express different emotions in regards to their

life experiences. The above, granted us the advantage of working with learners' writing preferences as their personal backgrounds, engaging them with the class content.

The use of portfolio as a metacognitive tool to foster students' EFL writing process through self-reflection.

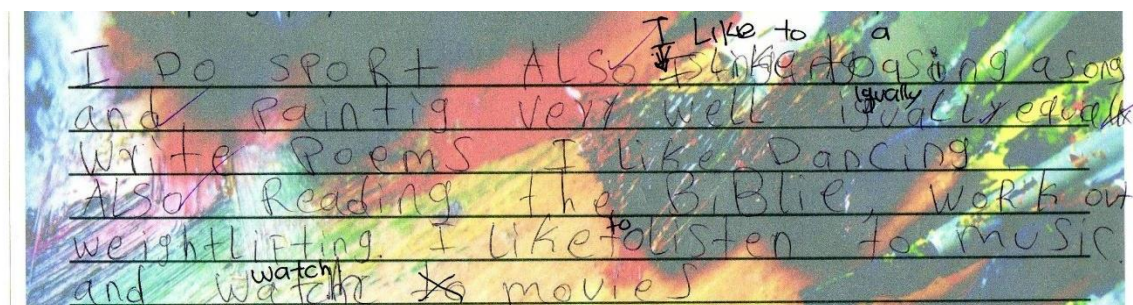
This research project required a pedagogical resource to collect the students' creations and written texts made throughout the whole process. It was paramount not only for the researchers but even more important for the students, to have access to all of their manuscripts and tasks, since it allowed them to revise what they had already done and what they needed to foster in their EFL learning process. In this way, the portfolio served as a metacognitive tool, which led the students to carry out an implicit self-reflection process, facilitating an improvement in their writing tasks, since portfolio is a purposeful mechanism which enables not only to show the students' efforts, advancement, and accomplishments, but also to construct meanings as a result of the students' own emerging understanding (Rolheiser & Schwartz, 2001, p.283). Hence, in this category, we first describe the concept of metacognition and its relationship with self-reflection. Secondly, we explain how the metacognitive process enhanced the students' English written manuscripts, and finally, we evidence how portfolio served as a metacognitive tool for students to promote their EFL writing process.

In order to establish a clear purpose of this category, it is significant to mention that metacognition is the capacity to think or reflect upon one's own thoughts and ideas (Fox and Riconscente, 2008, p.379). This process of metacognition is closely related to self-reflection, since it includes mental working structures such as planning, following, and arranging thoughts (Gencel, 2017, p.294). This results in an incentive on students' cognitive processes, when developing specific tasks. In this particular case, the students made an implicit self-reflection

process upon their writing tasks, this metacognitive process was not a requirement of the course per se, but it was an action emerged from the learners. The above was possible, since the self-reflection process upon the students' own actions, allowed them to understand the aspects that influenced the outcomes in the accomplishment of a task (Sigal, 2007, p.303). Thus, self-reflection as a metacognitive process prompts learners to perform better in their learning process.

In accordance with the previous idea, the metacognitive process fostered the students' English written production throughout an implicit self-reflection process since, if the learners become aware of their grammatical and conjugation mistakes, they have the opportunity to fix or change these mistakes in their future productions (Gorlewski & Annable, 2012, p.89). For instance, a participant in the fourth session of the study wrote a paragraph with different mistakes (spelling, grammar) and constantly repeating the connectors: *and* and *also* (see excerpt 1).

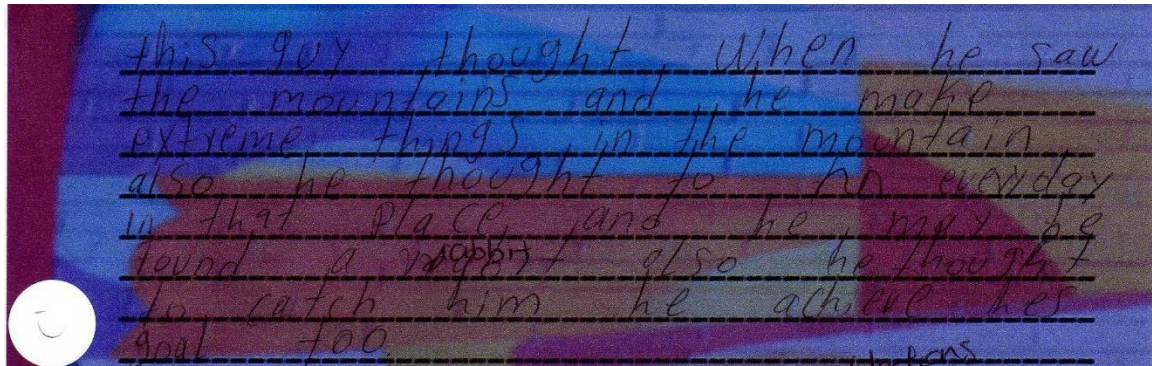
Excerpt 1 (A7P4S4D21082018)



"I do sport also I like to sing a song and painting very well usually equally write poems. I like dancing also reading the bible, work out weightlifting. I like to listen to music and watch movies."

Once the participant saw his mistakes, he was able to correct them through an implicit self-reflection process carried out during several classes, showing an improvement in the quality of his writing style (see excerpt 2).

Excerpt 2 (A13P4S8D02102018)



“This guy thought when he saw the mountains and he make (made) extreme things in the mountain also he thought to run everyday in that place, and he may be found rrabit (rabbit) also he thought to catch him he achieve (achieved) hes (his) goal too”.

In fact, after four sessions, this student presented a better structured and organized draft, which included less grammar and spelling mistakes and a variety of connectors. Therefore, it is evident that the self-reflection process was carried out from the learner, since there is an improvement comparing the initial tasks with the final ones. Hence, it is possible to state that along with the portfolio, the student went through a self-reflection process regarding his mistakes and this resulted in an enhancement of his manuscripts.

Subsequently, it is important to mention that portfolio served as a metacognitive tool for the students to promote their English writing process. According to Fitch, Peet, Reed & Tolman (2008), “Portfolios can foster self-reflection” (p.37), since students are able to collect evidence of their learning through a series of activities, which can be designed to meet the intended learning outcomes. The work gathered in the portfolio provides material for the student to review and reflect upon their learning process, and this reflection can be used as a basis for improvement (Grant, Vermunt, Kinnersley and Houston, 2007, p.2). As an illustration, in the teachers’

observations, the advancement in regards of writing skills that the students presented, was evident (see excerpt 3, 4).

Excerpt 3(GOS8D02102018)

Session/Class Number	Description of the lesson (Teacher Notes)	General Comments	Student's Responses
8	Narrative expressions were explained to the students. they felt comfortable and willingness to learn.	As the class topic was about narrative expressions, the learners regularly checked their portfolios to remind vocabulary or structures.	The manuscripts are visible better structured and written since some of the portfolios with this purpose.

“Narrative expressions were explained to the students. They felt comfortable and willingness to learn”

“As the class topic was about narrative expressions, the learners regularly checked their portfolios to remind vocabulary or structures”

“The manuscripts are visible better structured and written since some of the portfolio with this purpose”

Excerpt 4(SOS8D02102018)

DATE/SESSION	WRITING SKILL	COMPETENCE CBLT	YES	NO	COMMENTS
October 2 nd 2018 Session 8	Reviewing	instruction to perform any task. -Responding appropriately to the professor comments about their performance quality.	✓		previous topics and mistakes that the learners could have had, they were constantly revising their creations saved on the portfolios.

“In order to remind previous topics and mistakes that the learners could have had, they were constantly revising their creations saved on the portfolios”.

The excerpts above present the use of portfolio not only to remind and check previous topics, but also to reflect upon students' progress as writers. According to Wade, Abrami & Sclater (2005), “Portfolio allows students to reflect on their procedures, strategies, and accomplishments so that they can improve and correct them and ultimately succeed; [...] encourage students to reflect on their strengths, needs, errors, interests, challenges, and objectives” (p.2). Therefore, the metacognitive process of self-reflection allowed learners to develop manuscripts, since they were constantly periods of revision of their EFL writing process.

Furthermore, by analyzing the questionnaires handed over to the learners, it was possible to evidence that portfolio was a significant tool for them to revise previous topics and put them into practice in the following creations. For example, participants manifested that the use of portfolio facilitated their learning process, since it was easier to learn through its applicability (see excerpt 5,6).

Excerpt 5 (Q7P5S8D02102018)

- 12) ¿En escala de 1 a 5 (en donde 1 es nada importante y 5 es lo más importante) Que valor consideras que tiene el uso del portafolio en tu metodología de trabajo y aprendizaje? ¿por qué?

1) Poco importante 2) moderadamente importante 3) Bastante importante

☒ 4) Muy importante 5) Totalmente importante

Justifique:

*Para repasar el porta es indispensable
hay que tenerlo ordenado*

- 13) En tu opinión ¿Revisar lo que has hecho con anterioridad (correcciones, vocabulario visto, frases, etc.) en tu portafolio es importante para realizar las actividades propuestas para cada clase?

Justifique:

*Si es importante lo que todo esto de lo revisarlo
y ponerlo en practica*

“Para repasar el porta es indispensable: hay que tenerlo ordenado”

“Si es importante porque todo visto debo revisarlo y ponerlo en práctica”

Excerpt 6(Q7P3S6D25092018)

12) ¿En escala de 1 a 5 (en donde 1 es nada importante y 5 es lo más importante) Que valor consideras que tiene el uso del portafolio en tu metodología de trabajo y aprendizaje? ¿por qué?

1) Poco importante 2) moderadamente importante 3) Bastante importante

4) Muy importante ☒ 5) Totalmente importante

Justification:
Por su facilidad de aprendizaje y de manejo

“Por su facilidad de aprendizaje y de manejo”

As it is evident in the previous excerpts, some of the learners expressed that the portfolio is partially or totally important on their work methodology since portfolio, according to Rea (2001), can inspire the students to think of their learning process and to analyze their own weaknesses and strengths in terms of writing (as cited in Abhakorn, 2014, p. 48), which shows the self-reflection process carried out by students in the development of the writing activities, since they presented advancements as the classes were progressing. In short, this pedagogical tool offers the benefit of being aware of their own mistakes and its respective corrections.

To sum up, the triangulation process of the collected data, made evident that the majority of the students developed a metacognitive process denominated “self- reflection” thanks to their portfolio as the main tool in order to foster their EFL writing process. Since students were constantly checking their portfolio in order to avoid repeating previous mistakes, they were able to remember vocabulary and previous topics, which allowed them to write better drafts in comparison with the previous classes. In this way, students’ writing production was directly influenced by the application of the portfolio as a metacognitive learning tool, which enhanced students’ self-reflection process.

As a general conclusion, the analysis of these three categories provided us with the data needed to establish different aspects of this project and how they had an explicit influence on the participants EFL learning process. Subsequently, we could see the importance of teachers' feedback on the learners' sketches and how they felt engaged when writing about their own personal experiences, and using the portfolio as a self-reflective tool which elicited their metacognitive processes. Therefore, we could evidence improvement in the overall students' writing proficiency, according to the progress demonstrated during the study. This was discovered thanks to the implementation of narrative writing activities and the portfolio as a metacognitive tool.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

This research attempts to identify the effects of the implementation of narrative writing activities on the writing performance of adult EFL learners. It also aims to find the outcomes of using the portfolio as a pedagogical tool on the improvement of the writing process of this population. The analysis of all the data collected was carried out through three main instruments; class observations, students' artifacts and questionnaires. These instruments went through a triangulation procedure which enabled to set three main results categories; the first category is the implementation of the teachers' feedback on the students manuscripts, the second category is the students' engagement through the application of writing activities based on their personal experiences; and finally, the last category is the use of the portfolio as a metacognitive tool to foster the learners' EFL writing proficiency through a Self-reflection process. These categories indicated that there was a positive impact derived from the implementation of the portfolio and the narrative activities implementation on the students' writing proficiency. The results will be carefully explained and argued in the following paragraphs of this chapter. Then, the challenges presented during the study setting due to the students' background, socio-economic status and drug addiction issues will be discussed. Finally, further research questions and recommendations will be stated as well.

First of all, it is necessary to express that the teachers' feedback implemented along the sessions permitted an improvement in the students' writing performance. This is evident since the students learned how to avoid mistakes presented on the previous classes by seeing and applying the teachers' comments, pieces of advice, corrections and suggestions stated on every single feedback provided on each individual student's portfolio. This pedagogical tool served as a

mechanism to keep and save the teacher's comments and all kind of academic statements. In this way, the students were able to go over the corrections whenever they needed it, in order to avoid this type of mistakes again.

Secondly, the significance of the writing activities based on the learners' personal experiences, ideas and stories; not only demanded the learners' attention but it also students' interest and enthusiasm allowing them to promote their writing skills considerably. The above was possible since the learners were able to produce authentic sketches and model their own preferences and likes in terms of design and style. The previous matter permitted the research to be a more dynamic and enriching process since the students presented a better attitude and more commitment within the project. In short, it is possible to state that working with the learners' personal experiences fostered English writing proficiency throughout all the activities stated.

Thirdly, there was an evident metacognitive development from the students thanks to a self-reflection process, which elicited their learning awareness. As a clear example, the students made an improvement in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation, coherence, redaction and some other aspects of the writing process, by applying all the language concepts that they had been learning during the lessons. In addition, the fact that the portfolio was designed and organized by the students, it gave the students a sense of "personalized work", since they were able to decorate their own portfolio according to their preferences. It is significant to mention that this metacognitive process was not a requirement assigned by the teacher, but it emerged as an autonomous decision from the learner, which in fact made the participants' learning process a more enjoyable and fun activity.

The fact that this population was a group of young people who had suffered from addiction difficulties throughout their lives, and because of plenty of different personals causes, made the study a bit particular. We as instructors faced a different kind of situations in every

single class, such as lack of attention, bad attitude or even rude behaviors from some of the students. Besides the drug addiction is a concern that has become more common in the current academic institutions. Therefore, the teachers' role must be oriented to deal with this kind of difficulties and offer alternatives for the learners to enhance their learning. Despite the previously mentioned, these did not interrupt the study purposes and the main objective though. Instead, they helped us come up with diverse pedagogical strategies and tools to make these more appropriate for the study.

Regarding further research and studies in this field, it is important to notice that this study focused its attention mainly on the development of the students' writing process and proficiency. For this reason, there is a chance for future research to apply pedagogical tools as the portfolio and the implementation of personalized activities to foster not only the other productive language skills such as speaking but also the listening and reading skills. It is also important to remark the special features of this population; on this way, further researches can be also focused on populations with similar characteristics and social difficulties as the ones mentioned above in this chapter. Therefore, future studies can offer not only an academic service but also a social treatment for students who presented issues as drugs addiction.

As one of the main conclusions on this research, we experienced not only the improvement on the writing skills from the students but also a contribution to our pedagogical strategies and performance as the developers of the research. This academic project led us to recognize some of the different problematics and weaknesses in the EFL learning field and fill these gaps by using the portfolio in a more innovative and meaningful way. In addition, it was possible to evidence that a portfolio is a flexible tool that teachers can use to work on different learning fields and EFL performance weaknesses. We do expect that this research; its characteristics, procedures, instruments, tools, activities, and results might be at some point

helpful to other EFL learning researchers and practitioners that seek for possibilities to deal with a specific academic problematic.

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