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CON ÉNFASIS EN INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA PARA ALUMNADO ADULTO

Analysis of the Effect that Current Grammar Instruction and Evaluation Techniques Has on the Tenth Graders' Communicative Written Performance at Perez Zeledón Public High Schools
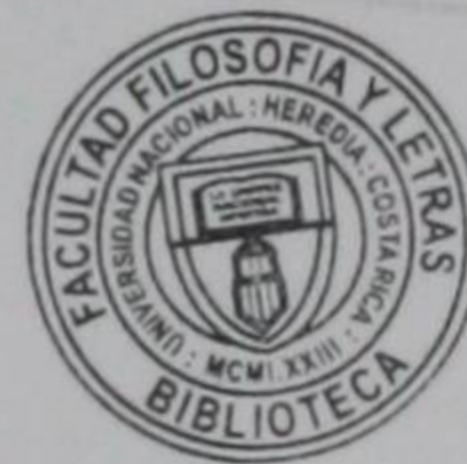
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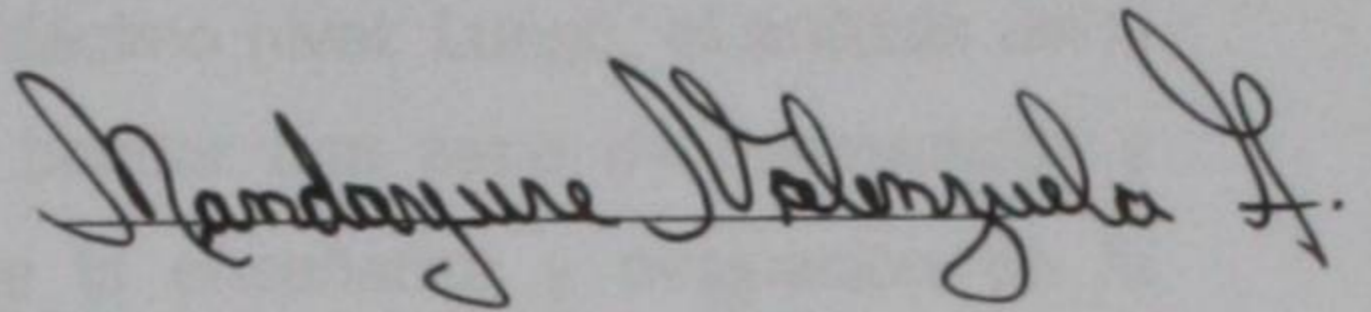992836-3

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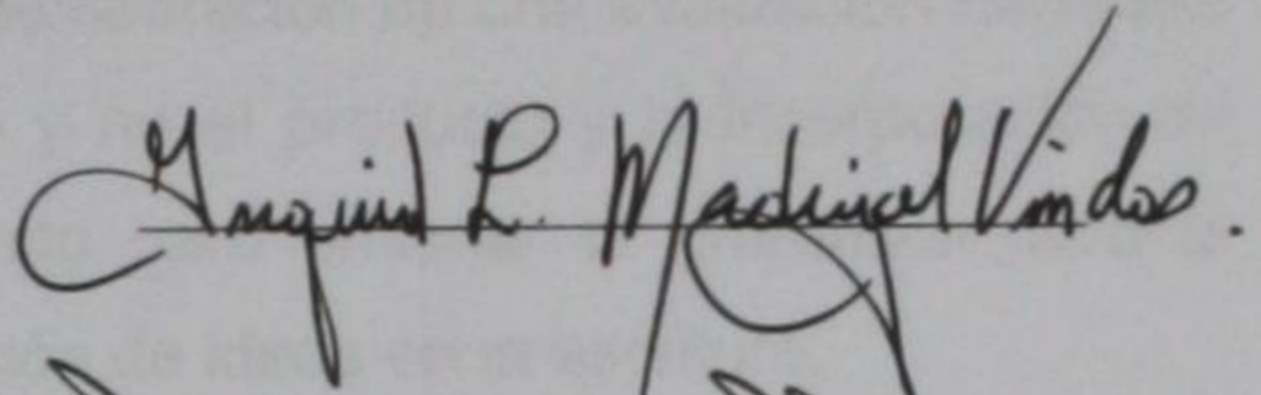Presentado por el sustentante
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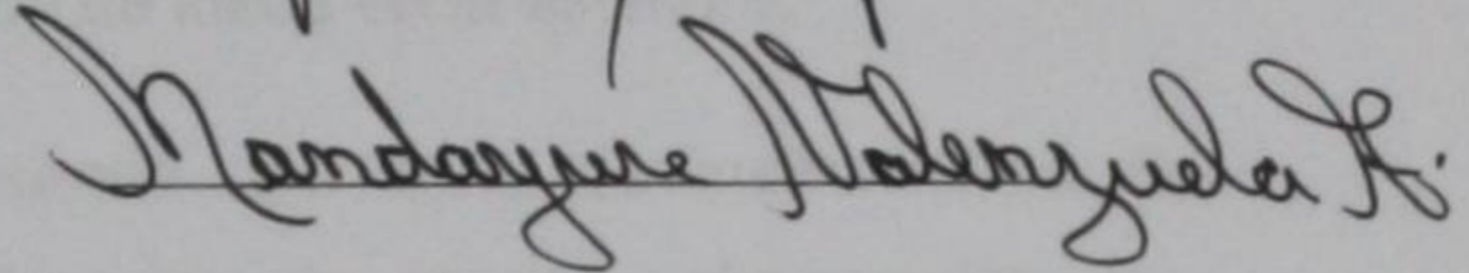4 de setiembre de 2010

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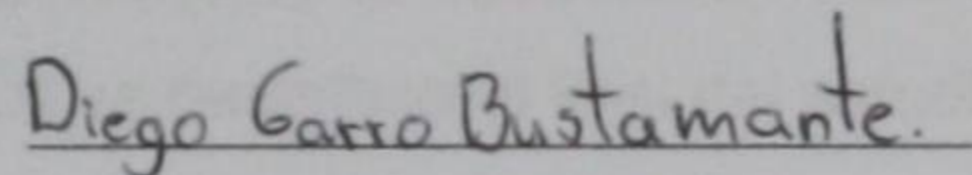Curso de Investigación en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas

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RESUMEN

Este documento reporta los resultados de un estudio llevado a cabo con cuatro grupos de estudiantes de décimo año en cuatro diferentes colegios en Pérez Zeledón. El propósito del estudio fue determinar los posibles efectos que la evaluación y enseñanza actual de la gramática tienen sobre el desempeño comunicativo escrito de dichos estudiantes. Un tipo de investigación híbrido fue utilizado para recolectar la información para así contestar la interrogante de cuál era la relación entre la enseñanza y evaluación de la gramática y el desempeño comunicativo escrito de los estudiantes de décimo nivel. Luego, el análisis de la información recolectada fue la base para brindar una serie de sugerencias y recomendaciones para el mejoramiento de la enseñanza y evaluación de la gramática y la escritura tales como la implementación de una evaluación formativa que oriente la escritura hacia el proceso y no el producto y la incorporación de actividades y estrategias más en contexto para enseñar la gramática para la comunicación y la facilitación de la expresión de ideas en la escritura.

La información fue recolectada usando una serie de instrumentos de recolección de datos tales como cuestionarios de opinión, observación no–participativa, recolección de materiales aplicados por los profesores, entrevistas y un examen de escritura. Una vez que el análisis de los instrumentos se realizó, ellos permitieron al investigador revisar profundamente la información para idear un set de conclusiones y recomendaciones que se describen al final del estudio.

Palabras Clave: Gramática/ escritura/ evaluación formativa/ evaluación/ habilidad comunicativa/ Retroalimentación Correctiva

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the results of a research study carried out with four groups of tenth graders in four different high schools in Pérez Zeledón. The purpose of this study was to determine the possible effects that current grammar teaching and evaluation have on the communicative written performance of those students. A hybrid type of research was used to collect the data to answer the question of what the relationship between grammar teaching and evaluation and communicative written performance of students in tenth grade was. After that, the analysis of the data gathered was the basis for providing suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of the teaching and evaluation of both grammar and writing, such as the implementation of assessment to orient writing to its process and not to its product and the incorporation of more in-context activities and strategies to teach grammar for communicative purposes and to ease the expression of meaning in writing.

The data were collected under the use of data collection instruments such as opinionnaires, nonparticipant observation, collection of artifacts, interviews and a writing test. Once the analysis of instruments was conducted, they allowed the researcher to check each piece of information in depth to come up with a set of conclusions and recommendations described at the end of this study.

Key words: Grammar/ Writing/ Assessment/ Evaluation/ Communicative ability / Corrective Feedback /

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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List of Abbreviations

PES: Public Education system

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

CF: Corrective Feedback

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

I. Introduction

For many years now, English as a Foreign Language has been part of the curriculum for elementary and high schools in Costa Rica's Public Education System (PES). In response to the relevance that the government has attributed to English in the twenty-first century, the Ministry of Education has adopted the Communicative Approach as the guiding method for implementing the English programs in both public elementary and high schools in order to develop the students' capacity to express themselves appropriately in that foreign language.

To achieve this goal, English instructors nationwide are required to incorporate the formal, functional and cultural components of the Communicative approach in order to enable the students to understand and produce accurate oral and written messages. Nevertheless, those English teachers that are responsible for developing the program in the fourth cycle (10th and 11th grades) face a serious predicament. On the one hand, they must teach their students to communicate effectively by developing all the language skills comprised in the Communicative Approach, as established in the PES syllabus. On the other hand, those same teachers must prepare their pupils to pass the Bachillerato English examination that is exclusively based on reading comprehension and grammar. Because of this dilemma, much of the effort teachers make in the fourth cycle is oriented towards developing their students' reading skill, while other skills are left aside.

This work is divided into five main sections. The first part is an introductory chapter that presents the research problem and its importance along with the objectives of the study. The second part is the framework of reference, which provides a theoretical background that emphasizes on the role of grammar in the development of communicative language ability in the CLT as well as the current methodologies to teach grammar and writing. In addition, the role of error correction in these two areas is also described along with the methodologies to access and evaluate progress and proficiency. The third chapter deals with the methodology followed in the development of the study. The analysis of the data is the fourth chapter of the work, which describes and analyzes the data collected that led to the discoveries made. This chapter analyzes the discrepancies between what is said and what is done in regards to grammar and writing teaching and evaluation, in addition to the agents' beliefs and attitudes toward these two elements of the curriculum. The level of achievement in writing in the target population is scrutinized as well. The last chapter presents the conclusions of the study plus some recommendations for the improvement of the teaching and evaluation of writing and grammar under a communicative methodology

1.1   The Research Problem and its Importance

The striking dilemma noted between being faithful to the Communicative English curriculum, the goals of the Public Education System, and the biased nationwide comprehensive test (which solely evaluates the students' reading skill) leads to a series of problems. Teachers responsible for developing the tenth grade program give little emphasis to writing, as compared to reading, while

grammar—which is so fundamental for achieving proficiency in writing—is only taught deductively, resorting to mechanical exercises deprived of any meaningful context. This focus on reading that teachers give to the program is the result of having to choose between teaching students to communicate effectively in the target language (as established in the tenth grade program) and preparing them to pass the reading-oriented comprehensive test.

The decision teachers make to prepare students for the test leads still to another problem, which is that tenth graders' writing skill is poorly developed, lacking the logic, organization and grammatical accuracy required for expressing their ideas intelligibly. As a final result, students lack the level of proficiency they are expected to acquire in other aspects of the language according to the PES English syllabus.

The problem analyzed in this study is the relationship between the way grammar is taught and evaluated and the development of the writing skill among tenth graders in Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias, Colegio Técnico Profesional de General Viejo, Colegio Técnico Profesional de San Isidro and Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón. This research problem precisely stems from the evident discrepancy between the EFL curriculum and the reality that takes place in the classroom.

The problem approached in this study is important because it will allow discerning important aspects of tenth graders' ability to express their ideas in writing, in connection to the way grammar is taught and evaluated within the model for teaching and learning English in the PES. The study will also set the

basis for establishing a course of action for using grammar as a more effective tool for developing the learners' writing communicative ability in the near future. Additionally, this study may also serve to develop further studies to promote a better application of the communicative syllabus proposed by the Ministry of Public Education.

1.2   Research Question and Purposes of the Study

The main question that this study attempts to answer is: what is the relationship between the teaching and evaluation of grammar in the classroom, and the performance in writing for communicative purposes of the tenth grade students in the four high schools selected?

1.2.2 General objective

To analyze the relationship between the teaching and evaluation of grammar in the classroom, and the performance in writing for communicative purposes of students of 10th grades in four public high schools in Pérez Zeledón.

1.2.3 Specific objectives

More specifically, the study is intended to:

- Describe the methods and activities used to teach grammar and writing to 10th graders in the target high schools.
- Identify the way grammar and writing are tested and assessed.
- Determine the proficiency in writing of 10th grade students in four public high schools in Pérez Zeledón.

- Explore both students' and teacher's attitudes towards grammar.

- Create/Design a set of suggestions to improve the quality of grammar instruction and the students' communicative written performance.

1.3   Contribution of the Study to the Field of Applied Linguistics

The development of an important production skill such as writing needs to involve learning and practicing grammar in context as an aid for helping learners to express their ideas accurately. However, no significant progress can be made in teaching students in the PES how to write appropriately if reliable data on the current state of affairs in that area is not readily available to administrators and teachers. That is why this study represents an attempt to respond to this need, and constitutes a meaningful contribution to the development of MEP's English program and to the agents involved in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in the public school system of Costa Rica. As a final product of this inquiry, a set of suggestions will be proposed for improving the instruction and evaluation of grammar and writing in the tenth grade.

II. Theoretical Framework of Reference

There has been a lot of controversy about how grammar should be taught when using the Communicative Approach for teaching a second language. Some English instructors favor teaching it explicitly; while others think it should not receive that kind of attention when teaching English for communicative purposes. What needs to be considered; however, is that grammar is a fundamental aspect of the language that needs to be taught and evaluated.

This theoretical framework discusses the role of grammar in the Communicative Approach to language teaching, as well as its usefulness for the development of all communicative abilities, including writing. Likewise, it delves into current methods for teaching grammar and writing, and the evaluation of these aspects of the language. A special focus is given to the relevance of grammar in connection to the communicative needs and experiences of the learner. The last part of the chapter approaches current methods for evaluating and assessing the students' progress and level of proficiency, especially focusing on the importance of resorting to tasks that require combining form and meaning for real communicative purposes.

2.1 Communicative Language Teaching

The Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT) is "more a cluster of approaches than a single methodology, which grew out of the dissatisfaction with structuralism and the situational methods of the 1960s" (Nunan, *The Leaner-Centred curriculum* 24). In regards to theory and practice, David Nunan

establishes that "a basic principle underlying communicative approaches is that learners must learn not only to make grammatically correct propositional statements about the experiential world, but must also develop the ability to use language to get things done" (25). Thus, the fundamental purpose of this approach, which is officially endorsed by the Ministry of Public Education, is to help the learner to be able to take part in communicative events related to the real world where he/she can use the language in order to satisfy basic needs.

Furthermore, Sandra S. Savignon also points out that, "there is general acceptance of the complexity and interrelatedness of skills in both written and oral communication and of the need for learners to have the experience of communication, to participate in the negotiation of meaning" (15). Thus, communication as accomplished through the negotiation of meaning is the main aim. Moreover, the integration of skills is a characteristic of the communicative approach to language teaching and learning. All of the skills are integrated for the students to be capable of socializing in an environment where the means used for satisfying basic needs is the language.

Grammar, then, plays a very important role in communication because it provides the linguistic knowledge that the learners need for expressing meanings accurately, clearly and fluently. Nevertheless, its role in CLT depends on the version of the CLT that the teacher may implement in accordance with the instructors' beliefs in regards to communication.

Actually, there are two versions of the CLT approach that go along a continuum. On one end one can place its shallow or weak version, and on the other, is the more holistic or deep-end version. The weak version promotes a communicative view of language teaching, while structural practice and grammar teaching is in some way incorporated to the language class. On the contrary, the strong version promotes the development of language skills by means of activities that resemble real-life situations (Nunan, *The Leaner-Centred curriculum* 26). This is to say that the weak version of CLT focuses on learning to use, while the deep-end version focuses on using to learn. Richards and Rodgers describe the two versions of CLT as follows:

> The two versions of CLT, the deep end and the shallow end of CLT, offered a continuum on which communicative classrooms were conducted. The weak version of CLT has been standard practice by providing learners with opportunities to use English for communicative purposes by integrating such activities in a larger language program. Therefore, the focus is on "learning to use." The deep-end version of CLT, such as Prabhu's Bangalore Project, claims that language is acquired by stimulating the language system itself through using it for communicative purposes. In the deep-end version the focus is on "using to learn." (qtd. in Lee 14)

Many English programs follow the CLT as their guiding approach for implementing their syllabus, which is the case of Costa Rica's public school system. The syllabus for tenth grade that the Ministry of Public Education in

Costa Rica implements clearly states that its aim is to "develop the ability to communicate for practical purposes" (*Programa de Estudio* 13). The syllabus also specifies that, "The Communicative approach provides the methodology used in the English Classroom" (24), and based on the basic components of English teaching described in that document: formal, functional, and cultural, it is clear that the approach teachers must put into practice is the CLT. Likewise, communicative competence is explicitly considered as part of the assessment of the language in the summary chart included in the syllabus (25). Consequently, this is what teachers must seek to develop in the learners.

If the purpose of the CLT is to develop communicative competence, then the students in the PES should be achieving this goal. This is, by the end of the tenth grade, they should know when to say what to whom and how. Nevertheless, throughout the history of English teaching in the public school system, and more specifically, the history of CLT in Costa Rica's public schools, the meaning of the concept *communicative competence* has been intensely debated, and for that reason it is important to understand it fully. "For Chomsky, 'competence' refers to mastery of the principles governing language behavior. 'Performance' refers to the manifestation of these internalized rules in actual language use" (Nunan *The Leaner-Centered curriculum* 32). Nunan explains that competence refers to what a person knows about a language, while performance alludes to what a person does with it.

More recently, both terms have been combined, giving origin to *communicative competence*, which refers to the "knowledge of the rules of use and appropriacy and includes linguistic competence" (32-33). Nowadays, however, the term 'communicative competence' has extended further to include some other competencies. In her account of how and why CLT developed, Sandra S. Savignon states that after Canale and Swain's study, the framework for communicative competence comprised three components; namely, strategic competence, grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence (16). All of these play a significant function in the development of the learner's communicative competence, and must work interconnectedly to guide the student towards mastering the language for carrying out the communicative functions that will allow him/her to function appropriately in the second language.

Regardless of the above, many teachers have paid more attention to communication per se, neglecting grammatical accuracy. Savignon also mentions that, "the perceived displacement of attention to morphosyntactic features in learner expression in favor of a focus on meaning has led in some cases to the impression that grammar is not important, or that proponents of CLT favor learner self-expression without regard to form" (24-25). The author even emphasizes that, "for the development of communicative ability, research findings overwhelmingly support the integration of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience. Grammar is important, and learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences" (25). This means that teachers must provide pupils with grammar instruction, which may range from

drills to more functional uses in communicative contexts, where they can use it as a tool for achieving an active and appropriate performance in real and concrete communicative events.

2.2 The Role of Grammar in CLT

Over the years, the role of grammar in teaching and evaluation has shifted from a complete and sole focus on linguistic forms to a more peripheral aid to communication as discussed above. Traditionally, approaches to language teaching and learning were focused "on the language as a structured system of grammatical patterns" (Nunan, *The Learner-Centered Curriculum* 26). However, in communicative language teaching, the role of the teacher is to help the learner develop skills and strategies for using language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations. "[The learner] must learn to use feedback to judge his success, and if necessary, remedy failure by using different language" (Littlewood 6). Unfortunately, this goal is far from being reached because the learner does not acquire the necessary structures for expressing meanings, and without these structures, the learner cannot monitor his production.

Grammar is a tool for the apprentice to bring into play the linguistic ability to satisfy communicative needs. Jack Richards also comments on the role of grammar in language proficiency when he states that:

> Grammar is seen not as the central organizing principle of communication [as in traditional language teaching], but rather as an

important component of communication. Its importance, however, varies according to the type of communicative task the learner is performing and according to the learner's level of proficiency. (148)

Furthermore, Henry Widdowson proposes an integrated approach when he states that, "the teaching of language as communication calls for an approach which brings linguistic skills and communicative abilities into close association with each other" (144). Clearly, they are complementary, and students should acquire linguistic abilities and communicative skills in an integrative manner.

Specifically addressing the writing skill, Savignon emphatically notes that, "CLT is not exclusively concerned with face-to-face communication. The principles of CLT apply equally to reading and writing engaged in the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning..." (27). Therefore, grammar and writing appear intrinsically connected, and this is perhaps why so many high school learners have so much trouble expressing their ideas in writing. Such limitations could be attributed to the adoption of a communicative model that assumes that providing students with comprehensible input is sufficient for them to acquire the language. Scarcella ascertains that, "the effects of this instruction have been especially unfortunate for students who need advanced level writing proficiency for academic work or careers" (qtd. in Frodesen 234). Furthermore, Jan Frodesen also provides the example of Lightbown who first adopted this kind of teaching and who, "after seeing the results of deemphasizing corrective feedback and limited form-focused instruction, now believes that students need input on structure" (234). Consequently, it is clear that

grammar is an important component for the development of writing and that both are interwoven.

Accordingly, there have been some studies showing the benefits of integrating grammar into writing instruction to improve the written communicative performance of students. For example, Professor Reima Al-jarf at the King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, has shown a positive correlation between teaching grammar explicitly and improving writing skills. The researcher carried out a study in which two groups were analyzed. The results evidenced that the experimental group showed significant gains in writing.   Professor Al-Jarf demonstrated that using a combination of writing and grammar instruction by the same instructor was significantly more effective than receiving writing instruction alone, even when using the same textbook.

Another case, more relevant to the Costa Rican context, was a study by Professor Annabelle Hernández Herrero at the Universidad de Costa Rica. In her study, she concludes that, "in order to become good readers and writers, students should be aware of the importance of building a large vocabulary, and extensive reading is one of the best ways to achieve this goal. They also have to produce grammatically correct sentences. This means that grammar structures must be used accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately" (6). The statement indicates that the integration of grammar favors the learning and teaching of writing.
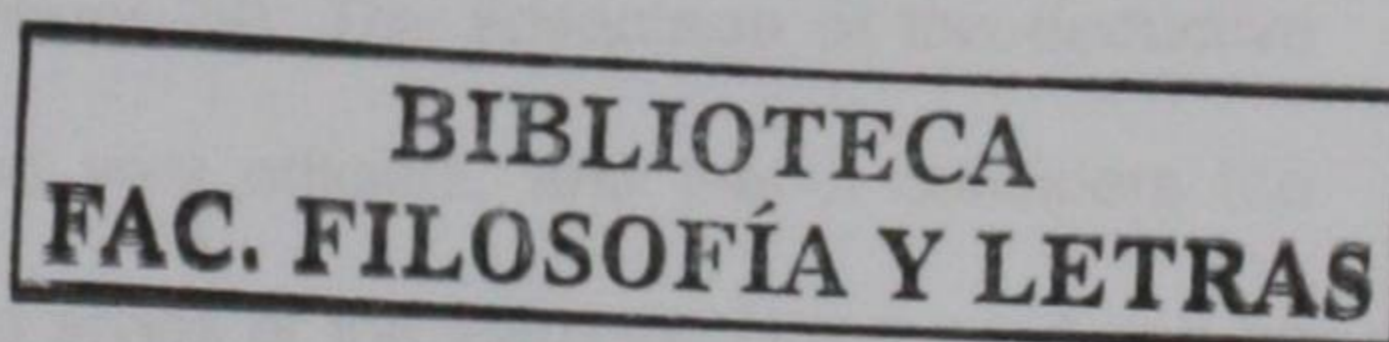
2.3 Current Grammar Teaching Methods

Presently, there is a plethora of approaches for teaching grammar and writing. Nevertheless, grammar should be used as a resource for enhancing the student's precision in communicating meanings. Richard Cullen, in his article "Teaching Grammar as a Liberating Force" states:

> Language researchers such as Swain (1995) and Skehan (2002) have argued strongly that output tasks which are both system-stretching, in that they push the learners to use their full grammatical resources, and awareness-raising, in the sense that they allow learners to become aware of gaps in their current state of interlanguage development, are crucial elements in a pedagogy designed to provide the required focus on form. (223)

This quotation clearly suggests that the main function of grammar is to ease the communication of meaning. Students can employ different grammatical structures to carry out different communicative functions, but they would hardly be able to do this if they lack grammatical competence.

There are, therefore, different ways to teach grammar currently. Grammar can be taught based on its rules, deductively or inductively. "A deductive approach starts with the presentation of a rule and is followed by examples in which the rules are applied. An inductive approach starts with some examples from which a rule is inferred" (Thornbury 29). The advantage of the deductive approach is that it is very direct and very efficient, and that it considers the intelligence, expectations and learning styles of the learners. However, it can be

perceived as overwhelmingly technical and thus, not very motivating to the student. Likewise, it leads to the belief that learning a language is just learning a set of grammatical rules (47).

The inductive approach is viewed as a portrait of the process by which learners learn their first language because it is modeled on first language acquisition. The inductive approach can be described as a process of rule discovery. The advantages include the likelihood that rules will become meaningful to the student, due to the discovery process in which they are involved, the cognitive depth they acquire because of the mental effort invested, and the application of pattern-recognition and problem-solving abilities. Nevertheless, learners may end up believing that the objective of language learning is the mastery of rules. It is also important to consider that students can make wrong generalizations of rules that could be either too broad or too narrow in their application, which can frustrate learners who prefer to be told the rule (Thornbury 54-55).

Another approach to teaching grammar is context-based. As Thornbury notes, "Language is context-sensitive; which is to say that an utterance becomes fully intelligible only when it is placed in its contexts" (89). Context is made up of the co-text, the surrounding text, the context of situation, the situation in which the text is used, and the context of culture—the culturally significant features of the situation. This implies that grammar is best taught and practiced in context, and that whole texts are used as the context for grammar teaching (89-90). Therefore,

grammar can be learned and used better and more properly when a context is used for its presentation and practice.

In this regard, David Nunan, in his article "Teaching Grammar in Context," provides some suggestions for teaching this aspect of language. He presents language teaching as a set of choices, providing opportunities for learners to explore grammatical and discoursal relationships in authentic data; teaching language in ways that make form/function relationships transparent, encouraging learners to become active explorers of language, and encouraging learners to explore relationships between grammar and discourse (104). He concludes that "[w]hat we need is an appropriate balance between exercises that help learners come to grips with grammatical forms, and tasks for exploring the use of those forms to communicate effectively" (109). All of these are possible ways of linking the teaching of grammar with the student's ability to communicate.

2.4 Methods for Teaching Writing

In addition to grammar, writing has undergone big changes in focus, moving from "the exclusive emphasis on product to an emphasis on process writing and interactive learning between teachers and learners with a focus on meaning" (O'Malley and Valdez 138-139). From this perspective, the process of writing takes more importance than the product as was the case in traditional views of writing instruction. As a process, writing may involve guiding the learner through a number of steps, as O'Malley and Valdez propose. They include:

> (1) prewriting, or motivation, discussion, and concept development,; (2) writing, which takes place in classrooms or at home so students can

rely on both teachers and other students for feedback and support; and (3) postwriting, in which students share their writings with others, read aloud what they have written, or exchange writing with other students. (139).

This theory is expanded by other authors who explain that the writing process involves 4 basic steps, which include planning, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. In planning, the writer explores ideas, plans the writing and outlines the possible route of the composition or piece of writing. In drafting, the writer puts the ideas, which were set out in the outline in writing. When revising, the writer checks the draft to include new ideas, discard irrelevant thoughts and organize the piece of writing though it may require rewriting. And finally, in editing and proofreading, the writer checks grammar, spelling and punctuation to polish the writing (Powell, Valenzuela and Alvarez 27-29).

Therefore, instructors should approach writing as a process which students may implement combining work in and outside the classroom. But in the implementation of the writing process, it is also indispensible to follow: 1) The "integrated" teaching approach to writing, involving listening, reading and speaking as previous steps to writing; 2)The reflective component of writing; and 3) Intellectual honesty, which involves avoiding plagiarism (and how the instructor can keep track of and identify it). All of these should be integrated in the context of a communicative setting that promotes the development of written communicative performance.

Additionally, Jan Frodesen suggests a series of activities for incorporating grammar into writing instruction. These activities are advantageous because they help learners express meaning. The author states that, "learners can benefit from activities that help them understand how grammatical choices contribute to shaping meaning and put these insights into practice" (237). However, Frodesen cautions that the teacher needs to pay attention to learner variables such as age, proficiency level, educational background, abilities, and learning style, as well as to situational variables such as formal written and spoken discourse, specific objectives of a writing class, and kinds of writing. The variables mentioned are those that teachers need to be aware of and reflect on in making decisions about the role of grammar in teaching communicative writing (235-237). Taking those variables into consideration, the instructors can incorporate grammar into writing instruction through activities that include text analysis, guided writing activities, text conversion, guided paraphrase, text elicitation, dictation, text completion, error diagnosis and correction, and editing strategies and techniques. If teachers implement those various activities, the learner will achieve significant gains in their communicative ability because grammatical accuracy will become an essential component of their written communication.

It is thus clear that grammar needs to be an important part of writing instruction for the latter to be accurate and appropriate. Of course, teaching grammar should not follow the traditional role but help the learner express his/her ideas in writing. As Jan Frodesen puts it, "the teaching of [grammar] should mean: helping writers develop their knowledge of linguistic resources and grammatical

systems to convey ideas meaningfully and appropriately to intended readers" (233). Diane Larsen-Freeman also points out that "[g]rammar is about form and one way to teach form is to give students rules; however, grammar is about much more than form, and its teaching is ill served if students are simply given rules" (251). For this reason, students must learn principles of grammar in context even though a focus on grammar appears to be necessary to some extent in second and foreign language learning. Jan Frodesen also explains that, "second language writers need attention to form in developing writing proficiency and that attention to form is not just about error but about resources for communicative goals" (246).

Also, James Muncie in his article "Finding a Place for Grammar in the Composition Classes" summarizes what Rod Ellis believes as follows:

> Ellis in particular notes a number of studies, which demonstrate how formal instruction can have a positive effect in learners' ability, and concludes that the answer to whether formal instruction works is a tentative ' yes' (Ellis 1990: 165). One reason why it can work, he argues, is that explicit instruction is necessary for learners to be able to notice features in the input which they receive, which can then become part of their acquired knowledge. (183)

Consequently, teachers have to adjust their teaching style to favor the teaching and evaluation of grammar for the development of communicative competence, thus, following the communicative language teaching trends. Ellis, in "Current Issues in the Teaching of Grammar: An SLA Perspective," goes on to

say that task-based instruction is possible with complete beginners and that it can be complemented with an approach that draws attention to some grammatical features (91). The educational system in Costa Rica, especially in the area of EFL, has to promote innovative methods to make students more motivated and proficient in the use of the English language.

2.5 Error Correction

Another aspect involved in teaching composition, together with its grammar component, is the treatment of errors. One can agree that errors in general ought to be corrected, and especially those that obscure meaning and communication deserve special attention. In correcting errors, both explicit and implicit feedback is required. Explicit feedback should be given, where correction is intended to point out what is done well and what needs to be improved, while implicit feedback ought to be provided to the learner by giving them hints to trigger self-correction (by means of correction symbols). More precisely, the learner must reflect on and review grammar textbooks or dictionaries to figure out how to say things correctly. Additionally, feedback can be provided by means of clarifications, requests, and reformulations. In any of the cases, feedback must be a significant part of instruction to avoid fossilization; namely, "the relative permanent incorporation of incoherent linguistic forms into a person's second language competence" (Brown 217). However, there must be a balance in providing feedback because depending on the way it is formulated, feedback may have a negative effect on the learner and may refrain them from making the extra effort required.

With no doubt, error correction in writing is important for students to learn the language accurately. In the process of learning a second language, learners make hypotheses, as they add to their linguistic knowledge: its structure and meaning. Sang-Keun Shin showed this in a study this scholar developed in relation to this issue. This researcher affirms:

> Grammar correction is one of the few ways we can help L2 writers with language issues. Theoretically speaking, while producing papers, they are forced to pay attention to the forms with which their intended meaning is expressed and thus make a great number of hypotheses about the structure and the meaning of L2 (Swain 1985). Grammar correction represents one of the most crucial forms of feedback for the verification of these hypotheses. (364)

This evidences that learners need to receive feedback on their use of the language so that they can continue to advance their interlanguage development. Interlanguage refers to "separateness of a second language learner's system, a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target languages" (Brown 203). Some arguments against this idea, nonetheless, state that even after a grammatical feature has been corrected, students may fail to use it accurately in their own writing. However, this does not mean that error correction is useless.

In this regard, Sang-Keun Shin states that, "we need to remember that second language acquisition is sustained deep learning (Schumann 1997), and it is characterized as sustained because of the extended period of time that is

required to achieve it" (364). He also establishes that further work is needed to understand the value of error correction in L2 composition classrooms. Notwithstanding the above, there are many different ways in which corrective feedback can become effective.

Douglas Brown recommends that teachers keep a balance between the types of feedback they give their students. They should allow learners to communicate, overlooking some errors, but pointing to some crucial errors to call attention to them, and at the same time, avoiding discouraging the learner from attempting to speak at all (220). The author makes this recommendation specifically for speaking, but it also applies to writing. Instructors must make careful decisions about when to be selective and correct the errors that really cause a breakdown in communication. Sometimes, errors that are not that serious can be overlooked, allowing the learner to complete the communicative task he/she is performing.

Rod Ellis provides a typology of the different kinds of corrective feedback (CF) available to teachers and researchers. He divides them into 1) the teacher's provision of CF and 2) the students' response to this feedback. For the first division, he includes direct CF; indirect CF with a) indicating and locating the error and b) indication only; metalinguistic CF with a) use of error code and b) brief grammatical descriptions; the focus of feedback with a) unfocused CF and b) focused CF; Electronic feedback; and reformulation. For the second division, he mentions revision required and no revision required with a) students asked to study corrections and b) students just given back corrected text. (98-99).

This typology is also useful to recognize the type of CF teachers use to promote learning that can be turned into acquisition. For instance, in a study by John Bitchener and Ute Knoch, results point to a positive effect of focused corrective feedback on written accuracy when given on one or two linguistic error categories at a time rather than feedback on too comprehensive a range of features (210). These aspects are important for the implications they have on both the teaching of grammar and writing.

Another type of feedback in writing that is closely related to assessment is conferencing. Michael O'malley and Lorraine Valedez describe it as a procedure in which, "teachers meet with students individually and ask questions about the processes they use in writing" (139). This questioning is associated with all the stages of Process Writing and can provide varied opportunities for assessment (139). This type of feedback is beneficial for students to develop their written communicative performance since it forces them to reflect on the process of writing.

Another example that demonstrates the benefits of providing grammar instruction and feedback on linguistic performance is that of Annabelle Hernández Herrero. She claims that, "there are many ways in which teachers can provide feedback to the students. However, in order for feedback to be effective, it should be done judiciously, using appropriate techniques, appropriately focused, in an effective supportive, nonjudgmental manner" (7).

2.6 Evaluation and Assessment Methods in Grammar and Writing

The evaluation and assessment of grammar and writing have also evolved under the influence of the communicative approach to teaching English. For example, if a grammar exercise is largely mechanical and can therefore be done without necessarily understanding the context, it will not serve to test the learner's grammatical knowledge. Therefore, exercises must provide the learner with an understanding of the context and the meaning that is being conveyed. Discrete-point exercises must change to a more communicative and integrated context-dependent practice where students have to make sense of what they are writing in order to be able to use the grammatical structures for expressing ideas clearly and meaningfully.

One way to do this is by constructing tests that really evaluate the learner's communicative ability. In order to assess communicative language ability, some criteria must be followed. A communicative test "has to test for grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and illocutionary competence as well as strategic competence. It has to be pragmatic in that it requires the learner to use language naturally for genuine communication and to relate to thoughts and feelings, in short, to put authentic language to use within a context. It should be direct... And it should test the learner in a variety of language functions" (Brown 265). It is evident, thus, that tests must include many areas of language and must have a more integrative nature. Teachers have to leave behind the discrete point type of test that measure only isolated knowledge placed in no context and, in many cases based exclusively on multiple-choice questions.

On the other hand, to promote authentic writing-assessment requires following some guidelines for constructing writing tasks and prompts, and examples of different kinds of scoring criteria. "The prompt consists of the question or statement students will address in their writing and the conditions under which they will write" (O'Malley and Valdez 139). The scoring criteria refer to the types of scoring used to assign a grade to the writing. They should "always be defined before the exercises and assessment procedures are developed" (142).

In the classroom, teachers can implement both formal and informal assessment to help learners become responsible for their own growth. With this idea in mind, they can implement writing logs, self assessment and peer assessment sheets according to the specific task, conferencing, peer and self editing exercises and more.

Scoring can be holistic, in which a variety of criteria are used to produce a single score, or it can be analytic, in which components are scored separately. If the teaching of grammar and writing has changed to a more communicative perspective, the evaluation and assessment must change accordingly.

To sum up, it has become evident from the discussion above, that the role of grammar in CLT is more integrative in nature because this approach seeks an integration of skills that can lead to the goal of achieving communicative ability. For that to happen, grammar is seen as a vehicle to express meaning accurately and meaningfully with the incorporation of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience where students use grammar to satisfy their communicative

needs. Therefore, grammar may not be the main focus but an aid to communication through an approach which brings linguistic abilities and communicative skills together in an integrative manner.

To put it into practice, grammar can be taught deductively or inductively or as context-based where language is presented as a set of choices that make form/function relationships transparent. In the same way, writing has to move from an emphasis on the product to an emphasis on the process of writing following the prewriting, while-writing, and postwriting phases. At the same time, activities for incorporating grammar into writing help learners communicate their ideas, making grammatical accuracy an essential component of written communication.

Another important point to remember is corrective feedback. CF should be done carefully in order to prevent fossilization or students' demotivation. CF is used for learners to learn the language accurately and advance in their interlanguage development. It can range from form-focused CF to conferencing in the writing class. Finally, the evaluation of grammar and writing should be done based on the steps students follow, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading and by means of assessment instruments with formal and informal foci.

III. Methodology

3.1 Type of Investigation

This study follows a hybrid comparative model for discerning the relationship that may exist between grammar and writing, in an attempt to make sense of the data obtained in the target high schools in Perez Zeledón where the study was conducted. This hybrid comparative model involves four different types of data collection instruments; namely, unstructured observations, structured interviews, opinionnaires and the application of a writing test.

The observation of the state of affairs in the development of the English program, together with the application of structured interviews, allows to identify plausible relationships between grammar teaching, evaluation methods, and the level of proficiency achieved by the target tenth graders for communicating their ideas in writing. Concomitantly, observation and structured interviews along with the opinionnaires will also serve to inquire about the attitude assumed by both the students and the teachers in regards to learning grammar and composition, and the corresponding evaluation of these two aspects of the language. Finally, the proficiency level of the participant tenth graders is corroborated by means of a writing test.

3.2 The Standpoint of the researcher

Depending on the type of research, the investigator must be as objective as he can be in order to present the phenomenon in the clearest and most truthful way possible. With that objective in mind, the researcher set out to follow a stand

that could be as unobtrusive as he could so that the data could be gathered in a valid and reliable fashion. In the particular case of this study, the researcher is an active believer in the empowering nature of grammar in the expression of meaning in writing.

The investigator observed the methodology employed by four teachers at four different public high schools in Pérez Zeledón. When observing, the researcher was the one who collected, analyzed and interpreted data. Thus, the researcher was responsible for maintaining an objective position since the events observed constitute objective data and their interpretation was based on theory, not on the researcher's subjectivity.

When carrying out observation, the researcher had a non-participant role as an observer. This let the researcher better understand the problem of study because the investigator was able to take a more objective stand in collecting details associated with the methodology used by teachers to teach and evaluate both grammar and writing. This observation period extended over a month.

While the observation process was being conducted, the researcher applied other instruments to further explore other areas related to the teaching and learning or grammar and writing. These data collection instruments included an opinionnaire applied to both teachers (others than the ones being observed) and students. Sometime later during the process, a structured interview was applied to the teachers who were being observed and to the English advisor of the region.

Also along the process, artifacts of the materials students were given were collected as a way to aid the process of interpretation of the data collected by means of the unstructured observation. Finally, a writing test was applied to the students to have an approximation of the learners' communicative writing ability. All of these instruments allowed for a better understanding of the phenomenon and for a greater objectivity because they informed the researcher and permitted him to come to objective conclusions.

3.2 Research Focus/Paradigm

The research is a hybrid type because it includes both quantitative and qualitative techniques and analysis procedures. In the first place, observations were carried out to identify the role of grammar in the teaching and evaluation of writing in order to draw conclusions in the analysis. Then, teachers were requested to record their attitudes toward grammar and writing through various instruments, such as interviews and opinionnaires. Finally, information about the students' writing skills and their attitudes toward writing and grammar instruction was also collected by applying a writing test. The results of such test were later used to determine the proficiency level of the students based on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. Precisely for this reason, the research project was a hybrid type of research since it relied on techniques from both quantitative and qualitative paradigms.

3.3 Research Design

The research design followed was a non-experimental model. This study was mainly descriptive because it collected information to depict the relationship between grammar instruction and evaluation and writing, and the effect that one possibly had on the other. The study was based on a representative sample of the many high schools in Pérez Zeledón. The selection of non-participant observation aimed at not interrupting the normal pace and teaching methodology and practice as participant observation would.

The investigation, in some way, followed a Causal-Comparative model, which is one of the divisions of ex post facto research. In their book *Research Methods in Education*, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison define it as follows:

> When translated literally, *ex post facto* means 'from what is done afterwards'. In the context of social and educational research the phrase means 'after the fact' or 'retrospectively' and refers to those studies which investigate possible cause-and-effect relationships by observing an existing condition or state of affairs and searching back in time for plausible causal factors. In effect, researchers ask themselves what factors seem to be associated with certain occurrences, or conditions, or aspects of behaviour. *Ex post facto* research, then, is a method of teasing out possible antecedents of events that have happened and cannot, therefore, be engineered or manipulated by the investigator (205).

The study is Causal-Comparative because it investigated a possible cause-and-effect relationship of grammar teaching and evaluation on the communicative written performance of tenth graders in high school.

3.4 The Subjects and Setting

3.4.1 The Subjects

In order to select the subjects for this research project and because of the research design, the subjects were chosen at the convenience of the researcher. This was done this way since in this research design the investigator cannot manipulate the variables. Instead, he has to tease out possible antecedents of events that have happened. Therefore, the high schools and subjects were chosen at the researcher's convenience, making sure to include both rural and urban high schools in the area of Pérez Zeledón.

The subjects of this study are students in tenth grade and their English teachers. The sample consisted of four groups of students in equal number of public high schools in Pérez Zeledón. Two of the groups belong to rural public high schools and the other two belong to urban public high schools in the San Isidro downtown area and surroundings of the Region Brunca of Pérez Zeledón. The high schools selected were: the Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias and Colegio Técnico Profesional de General Viejo, Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón, and Colegio Técnico Profesional de San Isidro.

Even though the sample was chosen at the convenience of the researcher, students that were native speakers or had taken extracurricular English courses were excluded because they could affect the validity and reliability of the results. Consequently, the sample was made up of students who were currently in tenth grade and who had not taken any additional English courses besides the ones they had taken in public high school. These students constituted the subjects of interest due to the fact that they were the ones who could contribute to showing the effect that instruction and evaluation had had on the development of their writing skills.

The instructors that teach tenth graders were also informants for the investigation. They provided important information on the methods and activities they used to teach grammar and the ones they used to develop students' proficiency in writing. However, not only the teachers in charge of the groups observed provided information, teachers from other high schools were also inquired for the purpose of gathering information about the attitudes that teachers have in regards to grammar and writing and the way these subjects are taught and evaluated.

Furthermore, the instructors were requested to refer to their educational background, as well as where, for how long and why they had studied English. Some other sources of information included artifacts such as exams these teachers had applied to measure students' ability and students' records.

3.4.2 The Setting

The Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias is an academic high school with an environmental-oriented curriculum, located in the community of Pedregoso, three kilometers away from San Isidro de El General. This school was founded in 2000 and has a population of 537 students. The students come from different communities near Pedregoso, including Villa Nueva, Santa Rosa, Calle Moras, San Cayetano, Pedregosito, San Ramon Sur, San Ramon Norte, and Barrio Valverde. This school has three groups of tenth graders with ages ranging from 16 to 19 years old.

In the third cycle, the students receive three lessons of academic English and six lessons of conversational English, totaling nine English lessons per week. In the fourth cycle, however, they take five forty-minute academic English lessons plus three lessons of conversational English a week, eight in total.

The main problem in this high school is the low promotion students obtain on the National examination, which is worrisome in face of the many hours per week students are in contact with the language. Other problems that affect the students are binge drinking and the low economic status of some of them.

The Colegio Técnico Profesional de San isidro de El General was another high school selected to gather information for the research. This high school has a population of 1570 students from surrounding neighborhoods such as Los Angeles, Villa Ligia, INVU Las Rosas, Rosa Iris, and Palmares. This school has eight English teachers, six female and two males, and there are six groups of tenth graders. In the third cycle, they received only five English classes per week.

Nevertheless, the learners receive four English lessons of forty minutes per week and three to six lessons of technical English, depending on the specialty students chose to have for the last three years of the fourth cycle.

The main problems affecting this high school are economic and a high rate of dropouts in the fourth cycle because many realize that the specialty they chose was not the best option for them and decide to leave the high school.

The Liceo Nocturno is an evening high school in the downtown area of San Isidro de El General. it was established in 1962, so it has a long history. This high school was created to allow interested adults to obtain a high school diploma. Most of the students work during the day to make a living and attend classes at night Nevertheless; the population has changed a lot over the years. Now, many young people choose it because the curriculum includes fewer subject matters in comparison to day high schools.

This high school has a population of 1210 learners. There are nine groups of tenth graders. Some of the problems the high school faces are drug addiction, absenteeism, low academic success and teenage pregnancy. The learners come from the downtown area and surrounding communities. In regards to the English teachers, there are six teachers teaching the different levels; two are males and the other four are female. The students in tenth grade in the Nocturno High school receive five lessons of English per week. However, they lesson are only thirty-five minute long.

The Colegio Técnico Profesional de General Viejo is another rural high school in Pérez Zeledón. Its population is of 599 students. The students come from different communities, including General Viejo, La Hermosa, Quizarrá, Cajón and even Rivas. This school has three groups of tenth graders with ages ranging from 16 to 19 years old. There are six English teachers, five females and one male.

In the third cycle, learners receive three lessons of academic English and six lessons (4 hours) of conversational English per week. However, the learners take four English lessons of forty minutes per week in the fourth cycle plus three lessons of technical English (2 hours).

The main problems that affect the students are binge drinking and low economic status of some students. Besides, some students live far away from the place and spend a lot of time commuting to school.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Various instruments were used to obtain information from the subjects. Some of them were administered to the teachers and some others were applied to the tenth graders. For the purposes of this research, both those teachers from the target high schools and those that worked in other schools were asked to fill out different instruments. In the first place, there was a structured interview applied to the teachers observed which asked about the methodology and techniques used to teach both grammar and writing, and their background and teaching beliefs. In addition, a similar interview was conducted with the English advisor of the area of

Pérez Zeledón. Secondly, teachers answered an opinionnaire: This instrument helped to learn about the instructors' attitudes toward teaching grammar and writing. However, this instrument was applied to teachers other than the ones being observed. An opinionnaire is "an information form that attempts to measure the attitude or belief of an individual" (Best and James Kahn 179).

Nonparticipant observation was also used. "Nonparticipant observation is used when the researchers require comprehensive, detailed, and representative accounts of individual behaviors" (Lecompte and Preissley 206).

Likewise, different instruments, such as tests and classroom practice material, were collected and analyzed to discover the type of tasks used in tests as well as the scores students had gotten. In this way, the number of items dedicated to the teaching and evaluation of grammar could be identified and analyzed. Besides, the tasks that students were asked to do for writing were as well identified and analyzed.

On the other hand, the instruments administered to the students included: an opinionnaire, which helped the researcher discover students' attitudes toward studying grammar and writing; and a writing test, which assessed students' proficiency level in writing to discover if it was in accordance with the profile the MEP intends students to have, and to provide a description of their level based on the ACTFL guidelines.

3.6 Definition of terms and Instrumentation

Teachers' methodology refers to the way instructors teach students to use the language forms to accomplish communication tasks in writing. In order to study this variable, observations of English classes were carried out. An interview was also conducted with teachers for them to describe the methods and activities they employ to teach grammar and writing. Moreover, some teachers filled out an opinionnaire that showed their attitudes toward the teaching and evaluation of grammar and writing.

Grammar evaluation refers to the procedures teachers use to evaluate the grammar forms their students have learned through instruction. This variable was studied by observing classes and by analyzing artifacts such as achievement tests students had taken during the course. The instrument designed to record this type of information was ruled out in face of the fact that grammar was not taught in most classes.

Writing communicative performance refers to the ability to use organized knowledge about language structure, content, and discourse in order to communicate effectively in writing in the target language. This variable was assessed by having students take a test based on a communicative situation where they had to use their knowledge to compose a short piece of writing effectively. The task was related to the topics they were studying in accordance with the national syllabus.

Teachers' and students' attitudes toward grammar refers to the way they feel about grammar and the teaching and evaluation of grammar. This variable was researched by means of an opinionnaire. One was designed for instructors and the other for the learners.

Materials alludes to books, handouts, photocopies or power point presentations teachers use to develop their classes. In order to study this variable, observations of English classes were carried out and some samples of the materials were collected.

3.7 Limitations of the study

Because the writing tests applied consisted of a single writing task, the true proficiency level of tenth graders is difficult to determine for sure. A wider range of tasks would be required to have a better notion of the true ability these learners possess. Another limiting reality faced in this study is the short period during which observations took place. In this regard, more time is necessary in addition to the involvement of a greater number of teachers, for the purpose of making generalizations about the teachers in the area of Pérez Zeledón.

3.8 Validity and reliability of the study

The validity of this study is established by means of the multiple instruments employed to collect the data. The results were gathered after all of the information was analyzed and interpreted to come to the conclusions. Each one of these instruments provided interesting findings that were also corroborated when they were contrasted with the ones obtained from a different instrument; this

is to say, there was triangulation of the data because all of the instruments allowed the researcher to measure and cross-examine what was intended to be inquired about in the research.

IV. Data Analysis

This chapter is intended to analyze whether there is a relationship between grammar teaching and evaluation and communicative written performance of students in tenth grade. There is a discussion that presents a step by step analysis of the research problem, which is the effects that the teaching and evaluation of grammar have on the development of the writing skill among tenth grade students.

This section will revolve around the discrepancies among what is established in the national syllabus for tenth grade and what is done in the classroom, the approaches to teaching grammar and writing in the target classrooms, the agents' beliefs and attitudes towards grammar and writing, the assessment and evaluation of these two skills, evaluation methods and instruments, the level of achievement in writing in the target population, and the effect of error correction and evaluation on the learners' writing, based on the information gathered through the various instruments mentioned above.

4.1 Discrepancies between what is said and what is done

First of all, the national syllabus for tenth graders establishes that the teacher should facilitate the writing process by providing the necessary guidance for the learner to be able to express her/his knowledge of the topic. It is also necessary to define the type of writing tasks the students will perform. Any written practice should:

be related to the topic being studied, follow the objectives, be creative, take account of the students' cognitive knowledge and skills, be graded from simple sentence descriptions to more complex products, include the use of appropriate language, style, punctuation and other characteristics, involve the teacher and students in the development and production of writing, use a collaborative approach in which teachers create together and give each other feedback through the process, use real-life tasks for students, write authentic texts, notes and letters, integrate the other skills before, while or after the writing task is performed, and motivate the students to express their feelings, emotions and points of view in a written form. (Programa de estudio 2005 21)

The syllabus also states that to promote the development of writing skills, teachers can design a series of activities enabling students: to write notes and shopping lists, keep records, send messages, write letters to friends, keep diaries, complete reports and write poetry or fiction. All of these authentic tasks should be performed in class, following principles in which the writer attempts to communicate something, has a goal or purpose in mind, has to establish and maintain contact with the reader, and has to organize the material by using certain logical and grammatical devices. Besides these general principles, teachers should pay attention to the rhetorical, logical, grammatical and lexical devices: appropriate to different types of texts, spelling, punctuation and other organizational features.

Writing has to be taught by practicing different techniques and types of writing. It should be preceded by exposure to a wide range of models of written language. It is also important to show the students how the written language functions as a system of communication. The learner also needs to know how to organize sentences into a coherent text; write different kinds of texts; or select the appropriate style, formal or informal, according to the task, subject matter and target audience. However, most of all, tasks must be as realistic as possible.

Whenever a teacher is ready to introduce an activity focusing on one of the four basic skills described above, he/she should take into account five steps:

a. Preparation b. Demonstration c. Time to introduce the skill

d. Correction   e. Follow-up

In order to follow these steps, the teacher should provide: "Pre-activities" to help the students think about what they already know and find a reason for listening, speaking, reading or writing; "While-activities" to exploit oral or written speech. These exercise different skills to carry out the task assigned and "Post-activities" to link the new information and skills with the students own experience and other skills.

All of the above should be done under the principles of the Communicative Approach (Methodology endorsed by the MEP), whose main characteristics emphasize the creation of a stress-free environment with a great number of opportunities to communicate, where interaction is a key element and positive feedback is favored through the taking into consideration of the learners' needs and interests. The methodology is participative, and dynamic, where problem-solving

activities are used as situations that may take place in real life. This makes the learner responsible for his/her own learning because he/she is completely involved in the language-learning process while the objectives of the syllabus are met (Programa de Estudio 2005 21-22).

However, during the observation of the classes carried out in the four public high schools in Pérez Zeledón, it became evident that writing instruction does not follow a structured set of procedures that guides the learner in the expression of ideas through writing. Only two teachers out of the four observed implemented writing activities during the observation period, but even in those two cases the writing process was not facilitated by exposure to a wide range of models of written language, nor did it involve pre, while, and post-activities. The procedure followed by these two was to give students general instructions on the writing task and ask the learners to perform it without any prior preparation. One of the teachers who had students do some writing in the classroom did it once in the course of eight observations conducted in his high school while the other teacher followed the same pattern by applying, during in a two-lesson period, a writing class in the course of seven observations. The other two teachers did not teach writing to students in any of the classes observed. This information is illustrated in the exhibit below.

Exhibit No.1

Number of writing lessons observed
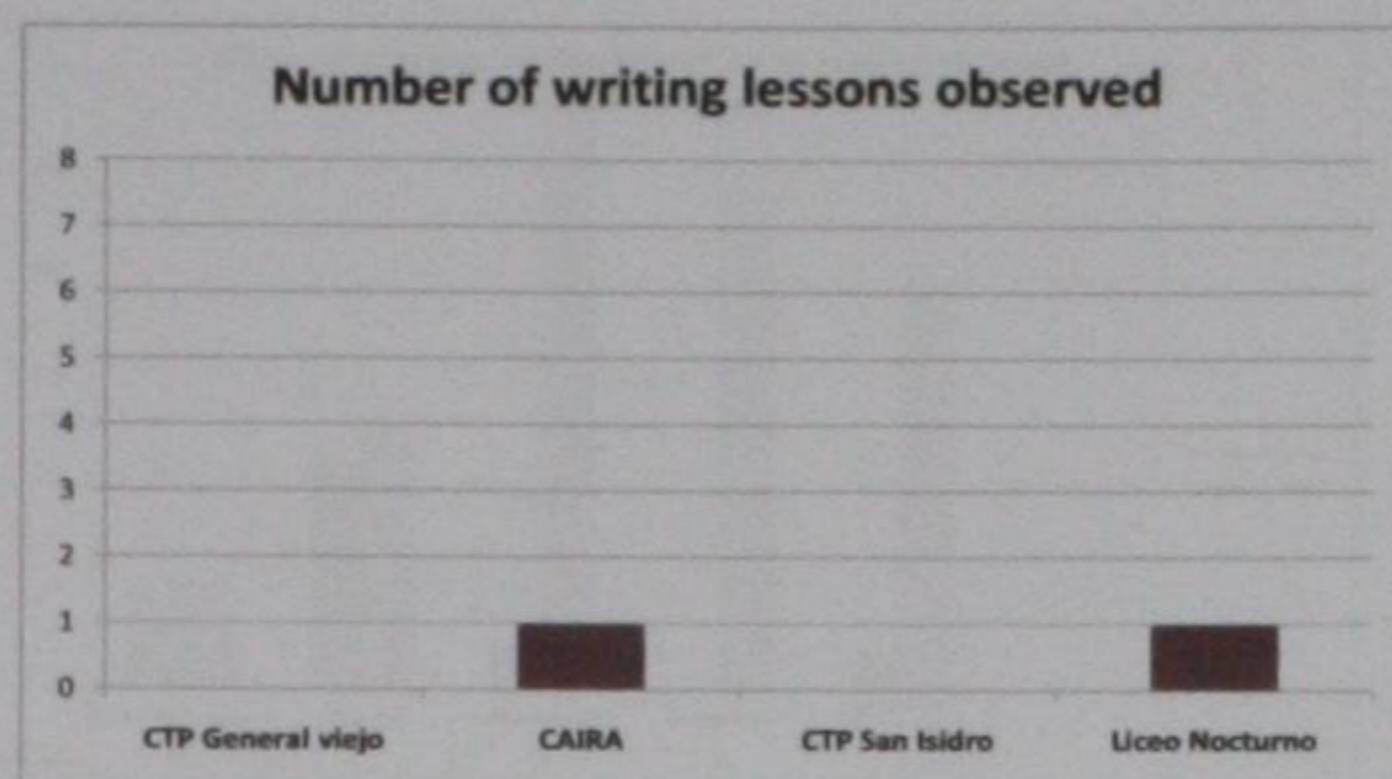
Source: unstructured observations

This exhibit shows a discrepancy between what teachers are instructed to do in order to implement the syllabus in the English class and what they really do in the classroom, where writing is not dedicated sufficient time for its proper step by step instruction, practice and assessment.

Another point that is contradictory is the fact that 60% of all the teachers that answered the opinionnaire stated that they provide pupils with interesting and varied writing activities, while 22% of the students strongly disagreed with such statement in addition to another 27% that disagreed as well. This means that 49% of the students perceive that the activities teachers have them develop in class are not very interesting.

Exhibit No. 2

The writing activities are varied and interesting

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Teachers	3	11	2	0	2	
Students	5	13	28	24	20	
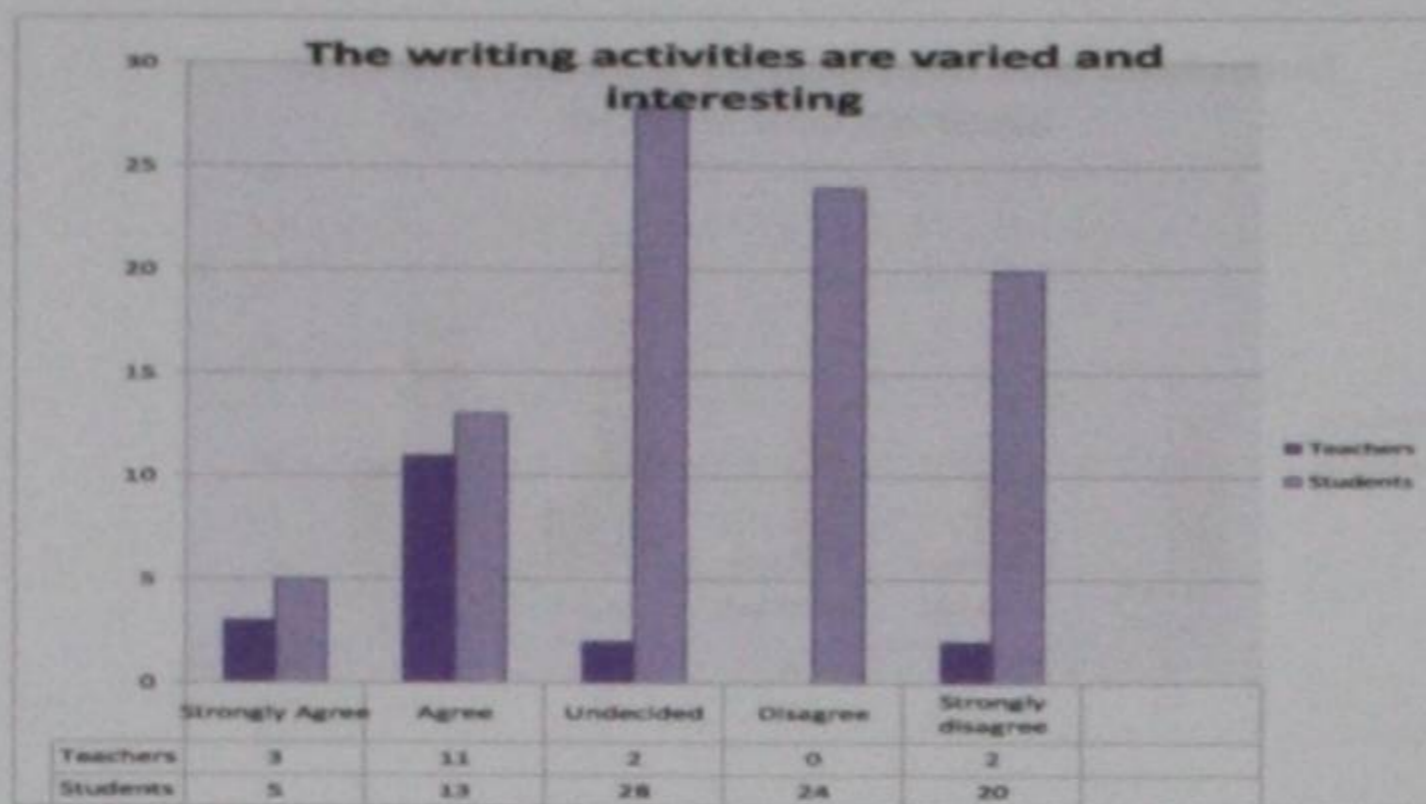
Source: Opinionnaire for students and teachers

One more point that is contradictory is that even though the syllabus tells teachers that grammar is an important component in the development of the students' communicative competence, grammar is not evaluated in class and on tests. However, when asked if grammar should be assessed and evaluated in the classroom, 26% of the students strongly agreed and another 32% of them agreed while 16% were undecided, another 10% was in disagreement and the remaining 16% was in strong disagreement. In addition, 55% of the teachers strongly agreed and another 33% agreed with the idea. Only 6% was in disagreement, while the remaining 6% was undecided, as seen in exhibit No. 3. This evidences that reality is against teachers' and students' perceptions of the role of grammar in the curriculum.

Exhibit No.3

Grammar should be assessed and evaluated in class and on tests

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Teachers	10	6	1	1	0
Students	23	30	14	9	14
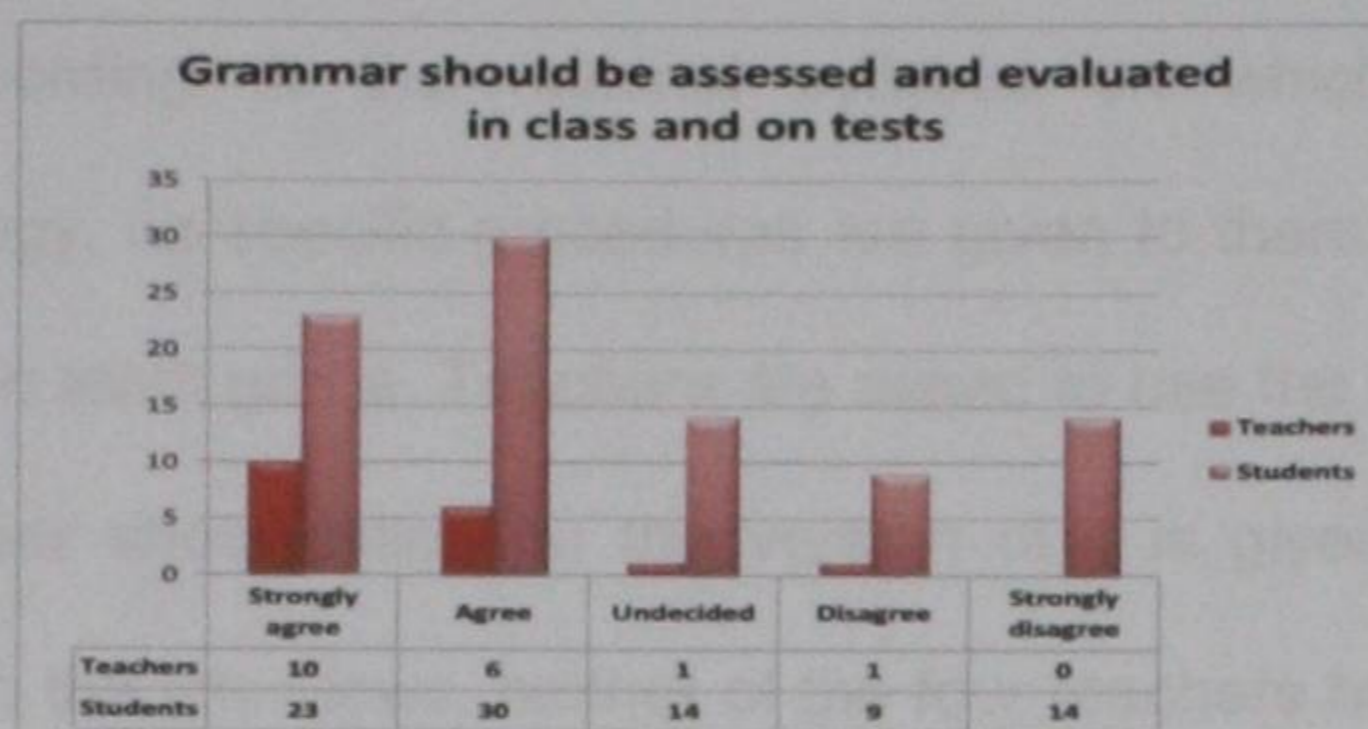
Source: Opinionnaire for students and teachers

Nevertheless, contrarily to the overwhelming affirmative positive opinions of both students and teachers, grammar is not included in tests. The reality established is that 80% of every test is dedicated to reading comprehension and the other twenty 20% is dedicated to evaluating writing.

Another discrepancy was evidenced when the interviews were contrasted with the observations. The instructors who were observed expressed that they incorporated grammar when they started a new target content, whenever they had the chance to do it, or when they needed to teach it for the production part of the tests. Nonetheless, the observations revealed that grammar was only taught when the target content had a grammatical focus as was the case of the topic "Linking Words in Context." And as it was mentioned above, only two teachers taught a writing class, but no grammar was emphasized in connection to writing.

4.2 Approaches to teaching grammar in the target classrooms

According to the national syllabus on which instructors base their methodology, no specific procedures are given to them as a guide to include the grammar in tenth grade. Teachers are asked to use the communicative approach, but no clear specification on the version of it is given to them. Based on the answers to the interviews, neither of the four teachers have a clear notion of what each one of the divisons of the communicative approach implies. Basically, these teachers resorted to deductive methodologies and to traslation as a way to present the grammar points to their pupils, not taking into consideration the principles of the approach endorsed by the MEP. The only indication of grammar or language they must teach is given in the units of the syllabus as language examples as is shown in the exhibit 4 included next.

Target Content	Reading objectives	Writing objectives	Language examples
1. Achievements of our national athletes	**READING** • Understanding short and factual texts. • Understanding ideas and information in the text through making inferences. • Understanding conceptual meaning.	**WRITING** • Making use of new vocabulary and structures encountered in their reading to respond orally and in writing. • Writing coherently and accurately on a range of factual and imaginative topics.	**National athletes: lives and achievements.** • Information questions: who, when, where, how fast/long, which, etc. • What sports does _____ play? Are you good at _____? • What's his/her best _____? • Sports: swimming, diving, archery, canoeing, etc. • National athletes: achievements, biography, etc.
2. Costa Rican Art, music and crafts	**READING** • Selecting written material that is appropriate to their competence to read independently. • Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances.	**WRITING** • Linking sentences and paragraphs, structuring ideas. • Expressing a range of responses and attitudes to events, issues or opinions, giving reasons	**Art crafts and music in Costa Rica:** • Wh_ questions: which, when, what, how many, how, why, etc. • Who is a famous painter/writer? • Where does the _____ play? • Do you like/prefer _____ Yes/no questions Is he/she a _____? Types of music: classical, popular. Places: Gallery, theater, etc.
3. Words with same/different meaning	**Listening/ reading** • Understanding conceptual meaning. • Understanding relations between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices. • Understanding relations within the sentence. • Understanding texts through the use of synonyms/antonyms.	**Writing** • Making use of new vocabulary and structures encountered in their reading to respond orally or in writing. • Expressing opinions by using synonyms and antonyms.	**Synonyms and antonyms:** • list = roll • well = bad • fight = battle • excellent = poor / inadequate • sad = unhappy • hot = cold
4. Costa Rican typical food	**READING.** • Identifying details in familiar material. • Understanding relations between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.	**WRITING** • Producing pieces of writing of various lengths on real and imaginary subjects. • Expressing a range of responses and attitudes to	**Typical food:** • What are the most popular dishes in your community? • What do you eat for breakfast, lunch, etc. _____? • Which, when, how, what kind of _____? • Do/does _____ like _____? What's typical from _____? etc.

		events, issues or opinions, giving reasons.
5. Holidays and celebrations in Costa Rica with some celebrations in English Speaking countries	**READING** • Identifying details in familiar material. • Understanding relations between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices	**WRITING** • Adapting clearly, formal and informal writing styles at a simple level. • Expressing a range of responses and attitudes to events, issues or opinions, giving reasons	**Current events and holiday celebrations:** What's your favorite celebration? When is it celebrated? How is it celebrated? My family is used to going /eating, celebrating, etc. on ____? I prefer ____. etc.
6. Causes and effects of natural resources misuse	**READING** • Understanding a range of imaginative and factual material that includes some complex sentences and unfamiliar language. • Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances.	**WRITING** • Redrafting writing tasks already given, with support guidance. • Expressing and justifying ideas, opinions or personal points of view and seeking the views of others.	**Natural resources:** We should ____. A solution could be ____. I think/believe that ____. I agree/don't agree ____. It's better to ____. What about ____. etc. I would ____. etc. ____ may be correct ____.
7. Linking words in context	Listening/ reading • Understanding conceptual meaning. • Understanding relations between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices. • Understanding relations within sentences.	Writing • Making use of new vocabulary and structures encountered in their reading to respond orally or in writing	Linking words: Conjunctions: and, but, or, nor, yet, unless, both, whether, as so, while, either...or, neither...nor, etc. When do we use ____? Is it better to say/use ____ than ____? What did ____ mean?
8. Tourist attractions offered by Costa Rican Communities	**READING** • Understanding conceptual meaning. • Selecting written material that is appropriate to their competence to read independently.	**WRITING** Writing coherently and accurately on a range of factual and imaginative topics.	**Tourist attractions:** • Do you like ____? • Have you ever ____? • Have you gone/liked/enjoyed ____? • Why don't you ____? • Would you ____? • You should ____; • There is/are ____.

	READING	• Let me show you ____.
	• Selecting written material that is appropriate to their competence to read independently.	• The place offers you ____. etc.
9. Common illnesses and new diseases and epidemics	• Understanding a range of imaginative and factual material that includes some complex sentences and unfamiliar language.	**Common illnesses, diseases, epidemics and prevention:** What's the matter? How do you feel? Have you seen a doctor? Do you know about ____? You need to take/drink/stay in bed etc. What are the symptoms of ____? What are some sexual diseases? Etc.
	WRITING • Structuring ideas. • Linking sentences and paragraphs. • Adapting clearly, formal and informal writing styles at a simple level.	
	READING	
	• Identifying details in familiar material.	**Costa Rican Democracy :** What do you understand by ____ (democracy, freedom, sovereignty, etc.)?
10. Our Democratic Tradition	• Understanding relations between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.	What do you think about ____ (democracy, politics, the right to vote/ speak, etc.? It's the government for the people, by the people and of the people.
	WRITING • Using reference sources to achieve greater accuracy precision and variety of expressions (the meaning is clear and there may be some mistakes). • Redrafting writing tasks already given, with support guidance.	Parties, voters, ballot, ballot process, citizenship, ruler, laws, etc. Qualities of democracy/equality.
	READING	**Careers, jobs, lifestyles:** Which professions are ____?
11. Careers, jobs and lifestyles	• Understanding a range of imaginative and factual material that includes some complex sentences and unfamiliar language.	What professions do you ____? What do you know/think of ____? Are there as many ____ as ____? Which are the benefits of ____? I'd like (to) ____ because ____.
	• Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances.	How much does a ____ earn/cost at ____? What does he/she do? Where can you major in ____?
	WRITING • Understanding a range of imaginative and factual material, opinions or personal points of view and seeking the views of others. • Expressing a range of responses and attitudes to events, issues or opinions, giving reasons.	____ is better than ____. ____ is longer. It takes ____ to graduate, etc.

Source: Programa de estudios 2005 (38-58)

10th The students can ...

- produce written descriptive texts.
- narrate about different topics.
- produce pieces of writing such as: brochures, flyers with information, posters and texts.
- identify synonyms and antonyms.
- use synonyms and antonyms in appropriate contexts.
- produce written information promoting our typical food.
- write procedures.
- write comparative texts about holidays, celebrations and culture.
- write texts using cause and effect.
- identify and use linking words in context.
- use linking words correctly.
- write promotional material.
- produce pieces of writing to alert and prevent people from getting contaminated.
- write flyers and promotional material about the topic.
- write a resume, a letter inquiring information about a job, letters of complaint, presentation, etc.
- use complex language for different communication purposes

Furthermore, even though teachers declared in the opinionnaires and in the interviews that presenting grammar rules is better for the learners' understanding and that grammar instruction allows students to write better in English, the observations evidenced that the way in which grammar was taught, the few times it was taught in the classes, did not help learners to put their thoughts in writing and communicate them clearly.

Exhibit No. 5

Ways in which grammar was taught in classes

- Grammar Identification exercise
- Deductive presentation of grammar rules with fill-in-the-blank practice
- Translation
- Grammar presented through examples

8%   8%   38%   46%
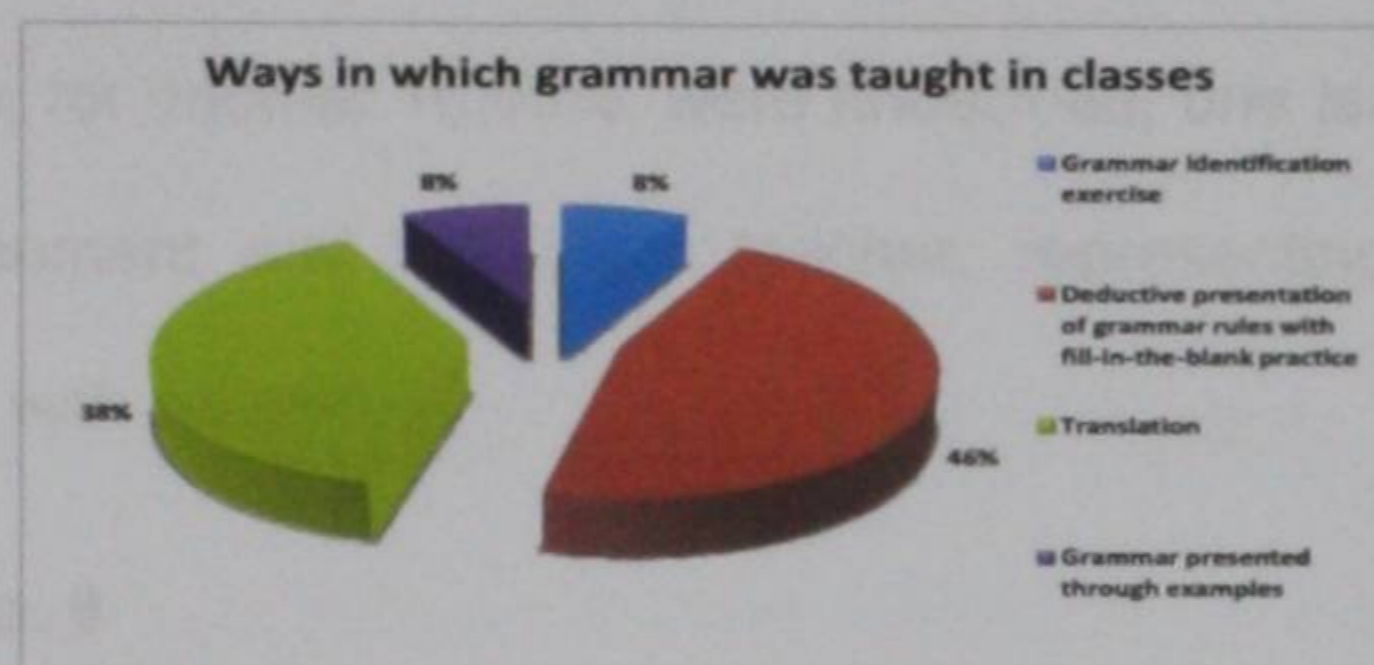
Source: Unstructured observations

In exhibit No. 5, it becomes evident that teachers resorted to deductive presentation of grammar rules along with fill-in-the-blank exercises in addition to traslation to explain the grammar points to their students to a greater extent than to any other type of grammar instruction available to them. The former accounted for a 46% and the latter for a 38%, whereas grammar identification exercises accounted for an 8% and grammar presented through examples for the remaining 8%.

This finding is also proved by some of the beliefs and attitudes of the teachers who filled out the opinionnaire, where a significant percentage of the instructors see

grammar practice as a mechanical endeavor and consider fill-in-the-blank practice useful for learners to master specific grammar points. In the former, two teachers for an 11.11% strongly agreed that grammar practice is very mechanical, ten teachers for another 61.11% agreed with the statement, whereas three teachers representing 16.66% were undecided and the other two teachers strongly disagreed with it. Regarding the use of fill-in-the-blank exercises for students to master specific grammar points, ten teachers for a 55.55% strongly agreed with the statement, three more teachers representing another 16.66% agreed with it while three more instructors, for another 16.66%, were undecided, one teacher for another 5.55% was in disagreement and the other teacher, representing the other 5.55% strongly disagreed with as well.

Exhibit No. 6
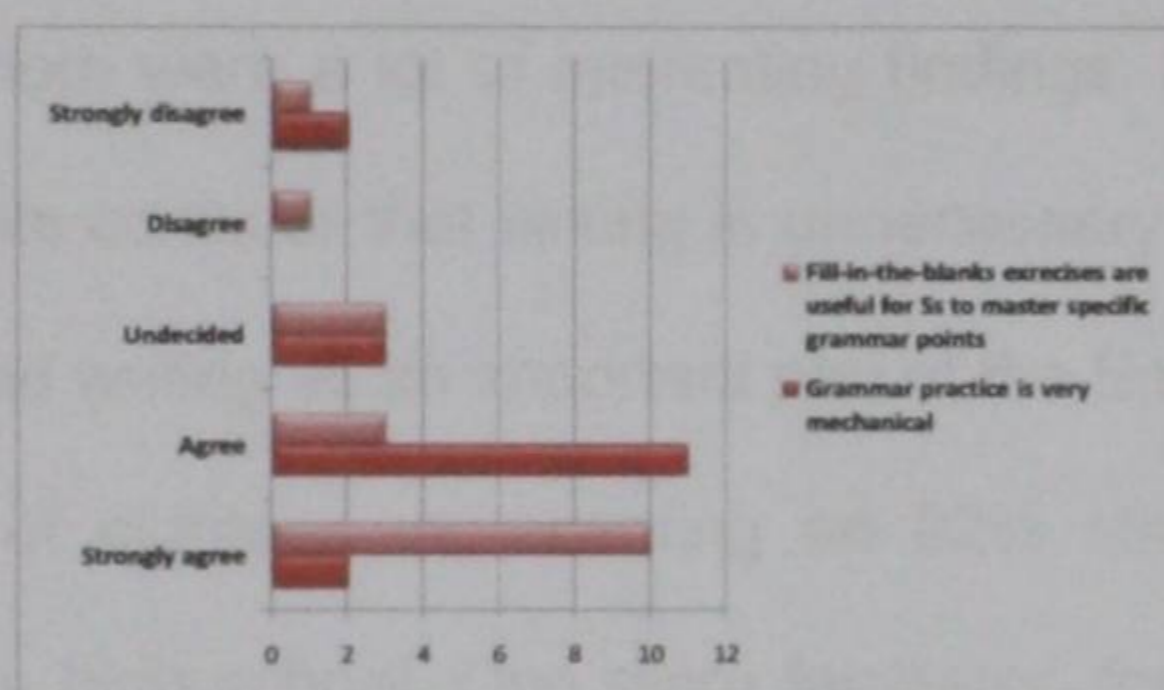
Source: Opinionnaire for teachers

The information above shows that because teachers favor the use of deductive methodologies to teach grammar and fill-in-the-blank exercises to a

greater extent, learners are not able to use the grammar to express their ideas clearly in writing.

4.3 Approaches to teaching writing in the target classrooms

Although the syllabus endorses writing teaching as a procedure based on pre, while, and post writing stages that is integrated with the other skills that are proposed to be developed, writing was taught very few times in the classrooms that were observed. What was observed was a very limited writing development with no pre or post writing activities that can favor the development of communicative competence in learners.

4.4 The agents' beliefs and attitudes towards grammar and writing

In regards to the teaching and evaluation of grammar and writing in the target classrooms, there were a lot of interesting findings. First of all, neither the teachers nor the students consider that writing is unnecessary in high school. Instead, a great majority favored writing as an important part of the English class. For example, fifteen teachers out of eighteen representing an 82% strongly disagreed that writing is unnecessary in high school. One more facilitator, for another 6%, disagreed with it, another teacher for another 6% was undecided, and the other teacher, for the remaining 6%, agreed with the statement. The students, furthermore, presented similar results with the same statement. Forty-six learners out of ninety representing a 50% strongly disagreed that writing is unnecesary in high school, twelve more students representing a 13% disagreed with it, and eleven more pupils for another 12% were undecided. Meanwhile, six students for another 6% disagreed with the

statement and the other eighteen learners representing the remaining 19% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Exhibit No. 7

Writing in English is unnecessary in high school

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Learners	18	6	11	12	46
Instructors	0	1	1	1	15
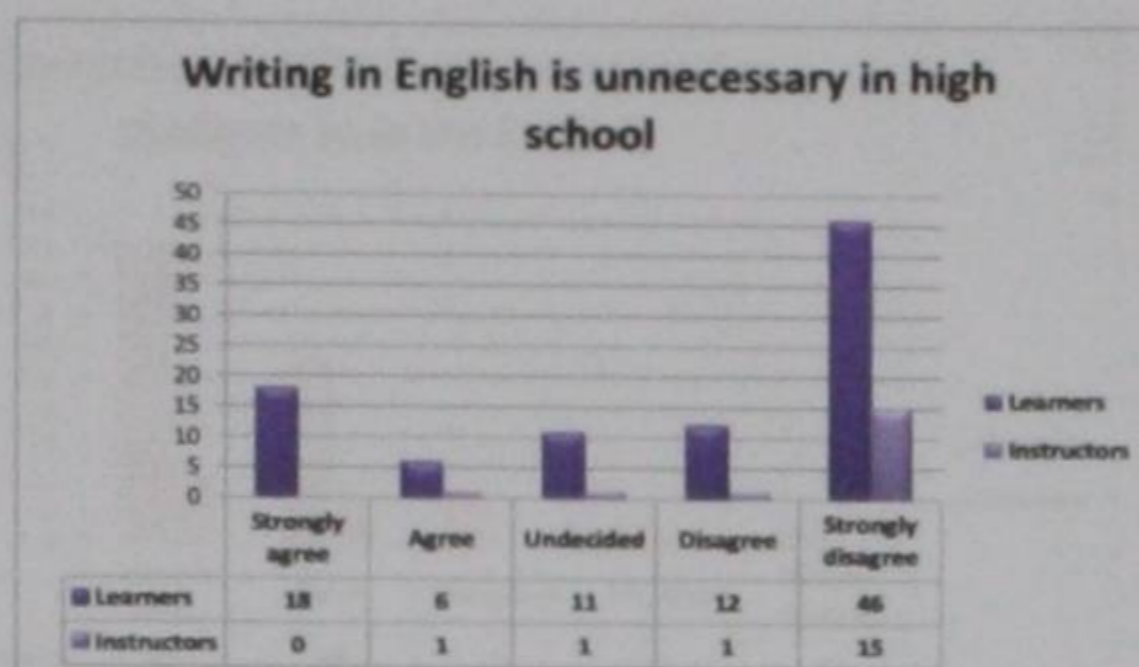
Source: Opinionnaire for students and teachers

This exhibit demonstrates that most teachers and students find writing to be an important part of the English curriculum since most of them do not think that writing is unnecessary in high school.

In the same way, most facilitators and apprentices are in favor of corrective feedback when they expressed that it is necessary for pupils to learn English. All teachers agreed with the statement that corrective feedback is necessary for students to learn English. Twelve teachers out of the eighteen representing a 67% strongly agreed with the statement and the other six instructors representing a 33% agreed with it as well. On the other hand, forty-six learners out of ninety representing a 52% strongly agreed with the statement, twenty-nine more representing another 32% agreed with it as well while seven students for an 8% were undecided, four more pupils for another 4% disagreed with the statement and the remaining four

learners representing the remaining 4% strongly disagreed with the statement that corrective feedback is necessary for students to learn English as it is shown below.

Exhibit No. 8

Corrective feedback is necessary for students to learn English

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Students	46	29	7	4	4
Teachers	12	6	0	0	0
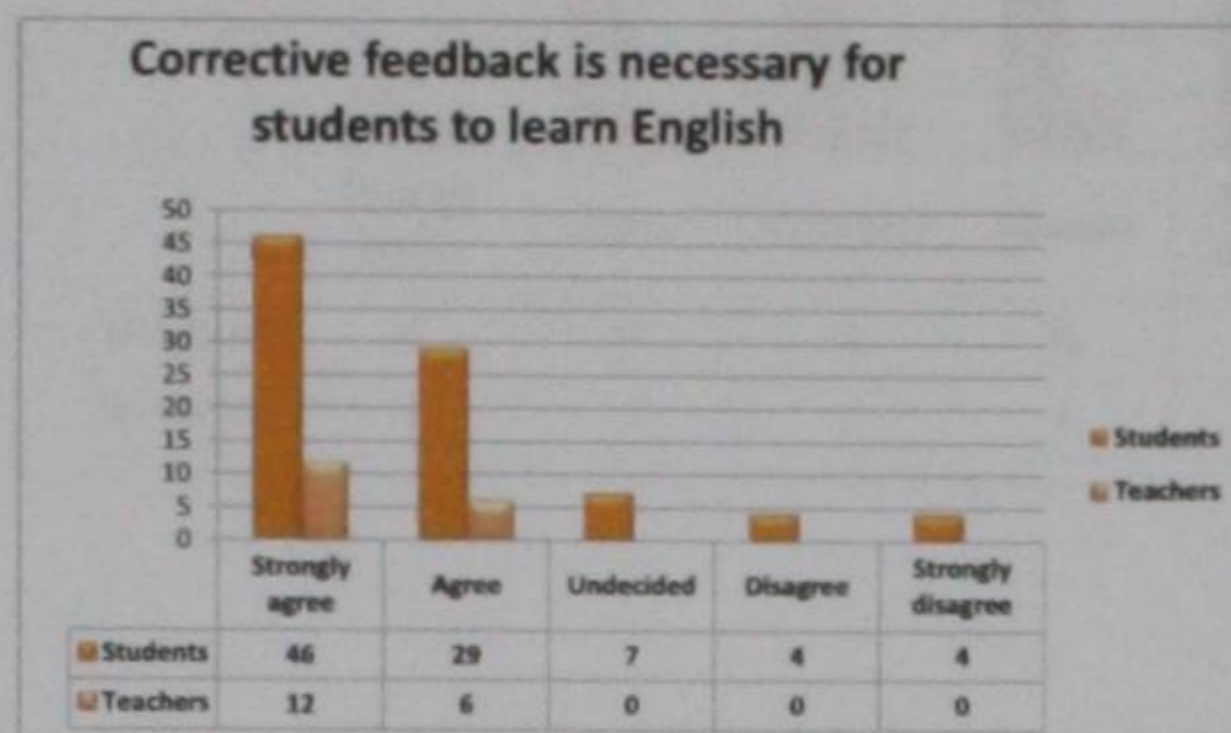
Source: Opinionnaires for students and teachers

The problem is that students receive very little writing instruction in the classroom; that is, during the seven observations carried out with each instructor, only two of the teachers were observed to dedicate lesson time to teaching writing, which occurred only on one ocassion. From the total, 100%, of observations, only a 12,5% of the teaching time was devoted to writing instruction, which is not enough for learners to develop communicative ability in writing because the corrective feedback was minimal and explicitly given for students to make the corrections. The assertion made above is evidenced when the majority of teachers and learners believe they (students) cannot express their ideas easily in writing as it is shown in the following exhibit.

Exhibit No. 9

Students can express their ideas easily in writing

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Students	7	18	29	15	21
Teachers	3	3	3	4	5
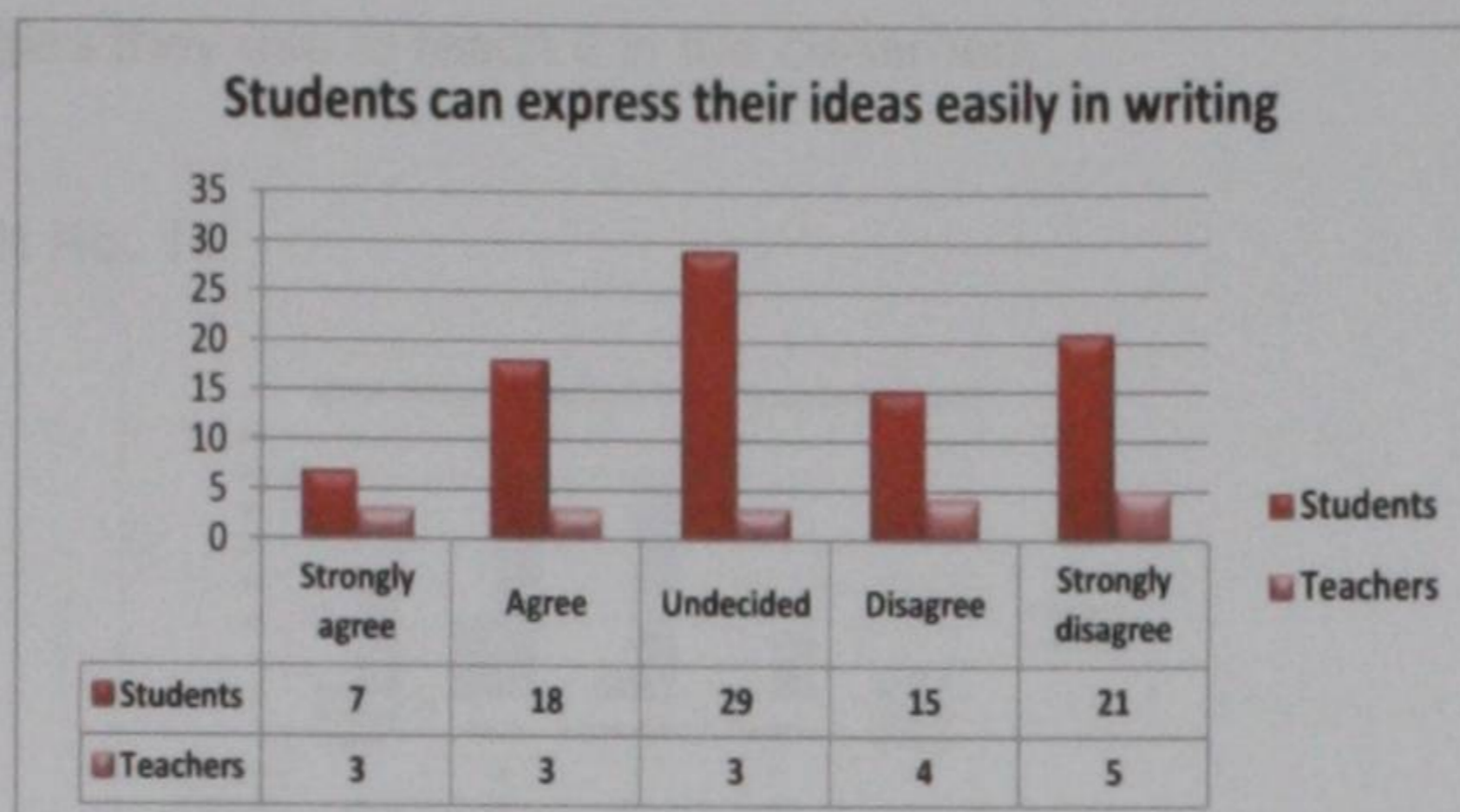
Source: Opinionnaires for students and teachers

Both teachers and learners agree that the latter are not capable of expressing their ideas easily in writing. Five teachers out of eighteen, representing 27%, strongly disagreed with the statement and four instructors more, representing 22% disagreed with the statement as well. On the other hand, three teachers representing 17% were undecided, other three teachers for another 17% agreed with the statement and the other three instructors representing the remaining 17% strongly agreed with it. Students, similarly, expressed like answers. Twenty-one learners out of ninety representing 23% strongly disagreed with the idea, fifteen more pupils for another 17% disagreed while twenty-nine students representing 32% were undecided, eighteen more pupils for another 20% agreed with the statement, and the other seven learners representing the other 8% strongly agreed with the statement.

The same happens when grammar instruction and evaluation in the classroom are examined. Learners receive very little grammar instruction, that is limited to the grammatical topics teachers are told to develop in the syllabus. The problem is that

most teachers believe that grammar practice is very mechanical, which is reflected on the strategies they use to teach it in the classroom.

Exhibit No. 10

Grammar practice is very mechanical

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Teachers	2	11	3	0	2
Students	15	30	31	9	5
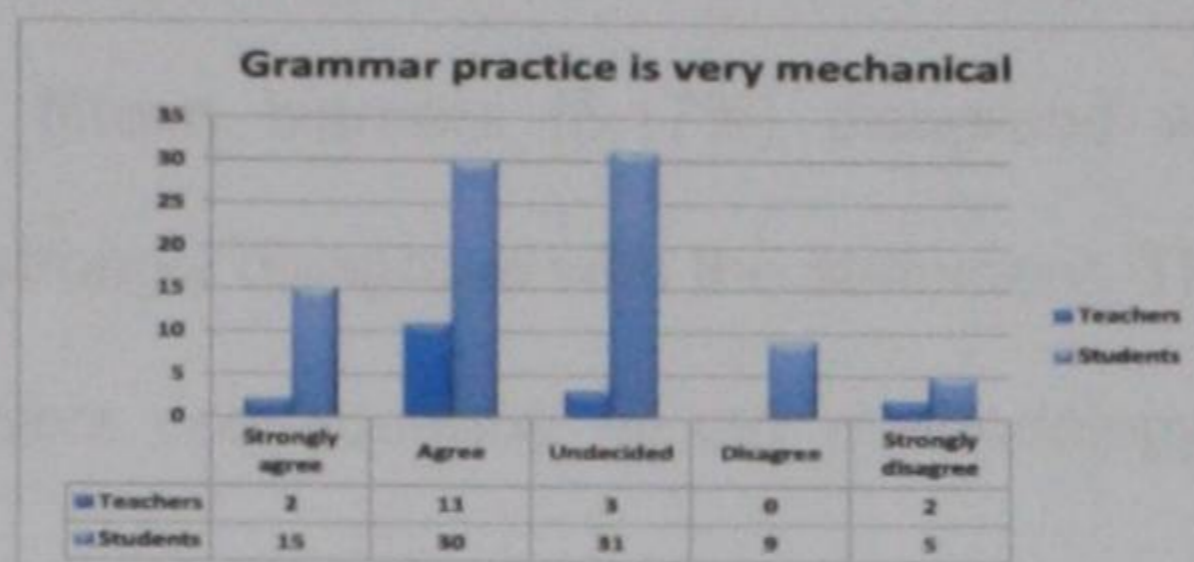
Source: Opinionnaire for students and teachers

As observed in the classroom, grammar was presented using deductive methodologies, fill-in-the-blank exercises and traslation for the most part, leaving aside a form-focused approach that can lead to a development of communicative ability in writing. This also manifests in the atitudes of the learners who consider grammar rules and its practice exercises to be boring. This is perhaps the result of the methodology implemented by the teachers in the English classrooms.

Exhibit No. 11

Grammar rules and exercises are boring

- 22, 24% Strongly aree
- 16, 18% Agree
- 29, 32% Undecided
- 15, 17% Disagree
- 8, 9% Strongly disagree
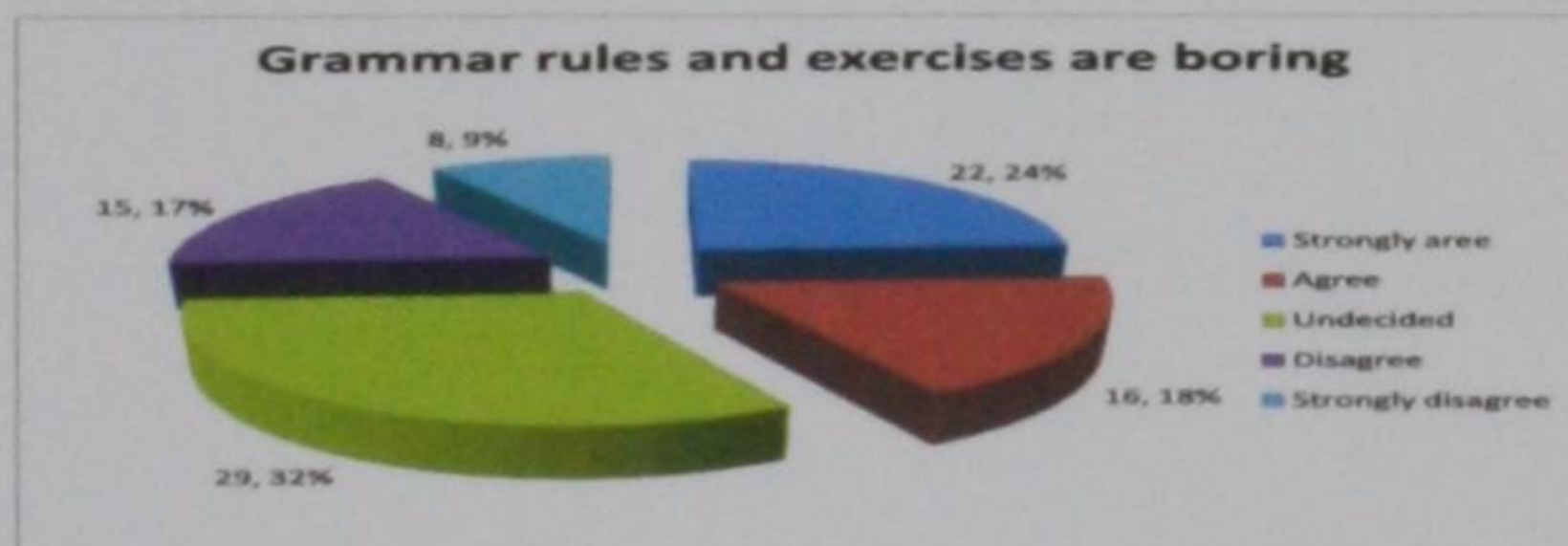
Source: Opinionnaire for students

This exhibit presents students' opinions regarding their negative feelings about grammar rules and exercises studied in class. Twenty-two students representing 22,24% strongly agreed that this aspect of the language is boring and sixteen students (16,18%) agreed with it as well. Twenty-nine learners (29,32%) were undecided while fifteen learners (5,17%) disagreed with it and the other eight students (8,9%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The negative response by the students is a direct consequence of the methodology employed in the English classroom.

4.5 Assessment and evaluation of grammar and writing

4.5.1 Type and quality of feedback (error correction)

Concerning error correction, the only type of feedback provided was explicit feedback. In the observations, the teachers only corrected mispronounced words by modeling the right pronunciation of the word for students to repeat. When students gave a speech or made an oral presentation, a piece of paper with their mistakes was given to them. Concerning writing, the feedback given to the learners was also explicit. The two teachers that taught writing (once over the observation period) wrote the corrections and instructed them to rewrite the ideas.

Exhibit No. 12

Assessment and evaluation
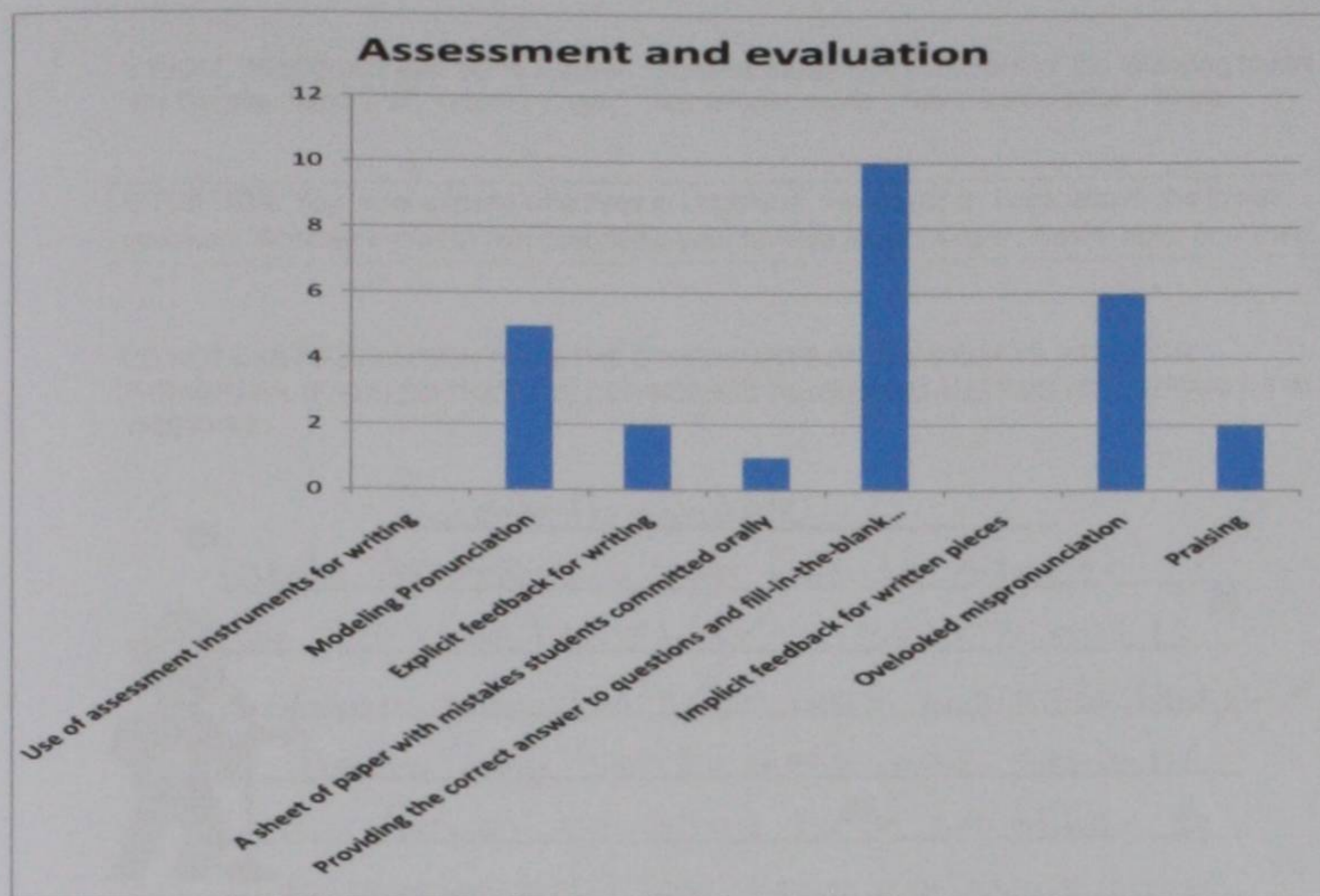
Source: unstructured observations

As can be noted in the exhibit above, the type of feedback teachers used evidenced the use of solely explicit feedback for the writing part as well as for the grammatical part of the instruction taking place in the classroom. Students are always given the corrrections and cannot develop true communicative ability since their critical thinking is not reinforced. For example, the feedback that appears on tests collected during fieldwork consisted of markings with red ink where words are crossed out, circled or signaled with arrows. Misspelled words are corrected by adding the letters that were missing. Also, words are crossed out and the correction or more appropriate word is written above, as illustrated in the figures below taken from exams applied by the teachers.

Exhibit No. 13

V PART. PRODUCTION. Write a seven sentence paragraph about one of the following topics. "My favorite music", "My favorite singer", "My favorite movie", "My favorite actor". 10 pts.

SITUATION: You have a friend who lives in Louisiana. He wants to know about the things you like. Write an e-mail to him describing your favorite music, singer, movie, actor or other.

DO NOT USE INFORMATION FROM THE OTHER PARTS OF THE EXAM TO WRITE THE PARAGRAPH. IF YOU DO THAT IT IS CONSIDERED PLAGIARISM AND YOU WILL OBTAIN A 0 IN THIS PART.

Vicente Fernandez

Vicente Fernandez is my favorite singer. He sings rancheras. He is Mexican and is famous woldwide. He also has made songs. He is my favorite singer, and some of my favorite song are un millon de primaveras, los casaguates, no me se rajar, de un rancho a otro and el ultimo beso I consider that he is a great singer event for wold.

8

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Topic's management					
Content					
Length					
Vocabulary					
Coherence					20

5. Excellent
4. Very good.
3. Good.
2. Fairly Poor
1. Poor

Exhibit No. 14

To write down your paragraph you need to include: the name of the sport, implements, where it is practiced, kind of sport ((water, team, indoor, etc), and other information you consider important.

SITUATION: Diego's friend lives in Louisiana. He wants to know about the sports that people practice in Costa Rica. Diego is writing an e-mail describing the sports.

soccer

the best sport in the world is soccer. I is praticed in a soccer field and it is a team sport. to practice soccer you need a uniform, soccer shoes shinguards an ability.
I like this sport because ???
I play it with my firends and engoy in my free time.
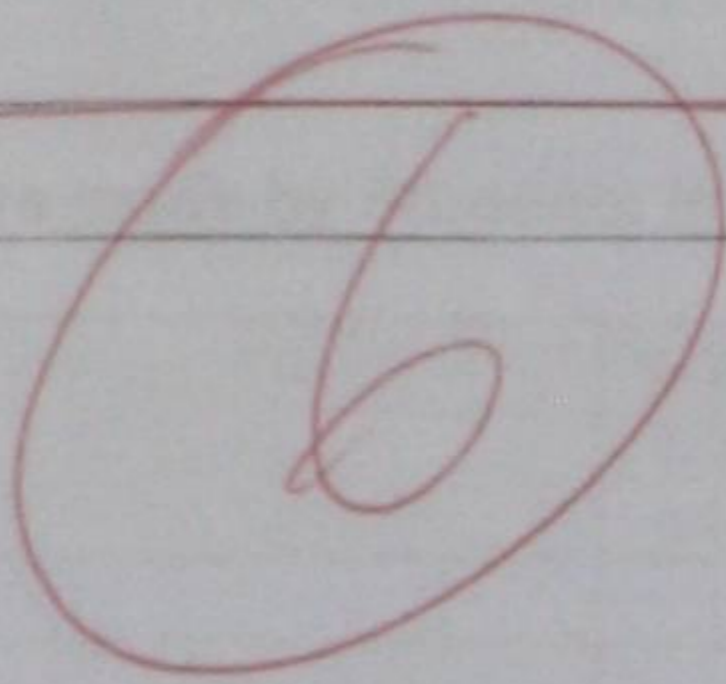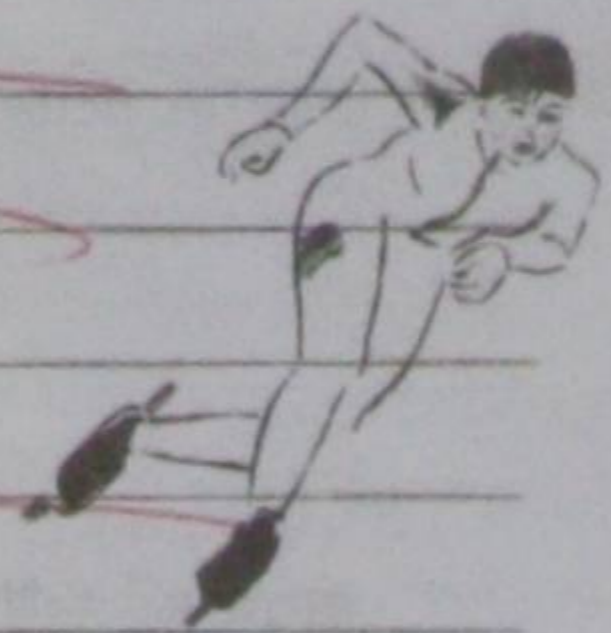
Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Topic's management					
Content					
Length					
Vocabulary					
Coherence					15

5. Excellent
4. Very good.
3. Good.
2. Poor
1. Fairly Poor

4.6 Level of achievement in writing in the target population

4.6.1 Most Common Types of Grammatical errors

On the writing tests applied by the researcher, there are several types of errors that students commonly made. The most common included lack of coherence and unity, use of L1 or creative constructions, incorrect spelling, wrong use of quantifiers, wrong use of articles and awkward constructions. But also, there were cases in which students were either totally unable to express ideas or expressed them by means of disconnected sentences.

A summary of the most common types of errors is shown in the table below, which is divided into three columns. The first identifies the most outstanding type of errors made by the learners in the writing test. The second column presents the number of students that made that particular kind of error, and the third column shows the percentage that represents the presence of each error among the total number of students that comprised the sample.

Exhibit No. 15

Summary of Types of Errors made by Students in the Sample

Type of error	No. of students per error	Average in total sample
Awkward constructions	41	46%
Wrong use of articles	7	8%
Wrong use of quantifiers	17	19%
Incorrect spelling	60	67%
Use of L1 or creative constructions	73	82%
Lack of coherence and unity	70	79%
Total inability to express ideas or ideas expressed in isolated sentences	19	21%

Source: Writing test

The information above makes evident that the learners have a lot of difficulties expressing their ideas in writing. Seventy-three out of the total sample of 89 (82%) lack the vocabulary that would allow them to describe their likes and dislikes about Costa Rican and American food. For this reason, they resorted to using words in Spanish or even to making up words and expressions to compensate for their lack of vocabulary. The examples that follow illustrate this prominent tendency among the students.

Exhibit No. 16

Use of L1 or creative constructions
-The food of America is garbage because nos hace overweights.
-I generaly breakfast "Gallo Pinto."
-The Costa Rican food is rich.
-I dislikes the egg duro.
-But in Status Union have a delicious food how: Hamburger, hot dogs and others.

Source: Writing test

In the first example, one can note that the student used the Spanish verb "hace" instead of the corresponding English verb "make" or "cause.," meanwhile the adjective "overweight" is pluralized following the pattern of the student's L1 language. Either of these contents should be well known by a tenth grader; however, they are not. In the second example, the learner used the noun "breakfast" as a verb instead of "eat" or "have," again following the pattern used in Spanish where the L1 speaker would use the verb "desayunar." The third and fourth examples illustrate how the student tranfered from the L1 the adjective "rico" and "duro", which would correspond to "delicious" or "tasty" in the first case, and to "boiled" in the second in the L2. The last example included in the table above represents an extreme case of the tendency

identified among the students for coming up with creative constructions for expressing their ideas. Here one can note how the writer makes up the word "Status Union" for naming the United States of America. In this case, what the student did was to invent a term that in some remote way resembled what the English word would be like.

One of the skills that students need to develop in order to produce good writing is to focus on the topic sentence or controlling idea of the piece of writing and to develop supporting details coherently put together to explain the topic sentence. This is what coherence and unity is all about. In the case of the eighty-nine learners that comprised the sample, none of them was able to develop a coherent and unified piece of writing expressing their likes and dislikes about Costa Rican and American food. In fact, the revision of the task evidences that not a single student followed the writing process.

Outstandingly, 79% of all students that completed the writing task presented it as a final product, without carrying out any prewriting activity, drafting or revision of the task regardless of the specific instructions given to them on the test. In fact, the students were specifically instructed to plan and edit their work, but the instruction was totally ignored. Why did this happen? Evidence gathered from observations points to one major reason: learners are not taught how to write, so they ignore how to follow the writing process and thus they are incapable of producing a coherent and unified piece of writing. Students cannot do what they are not taught to do. In all cases, the students jumped from one topic to another, not sticking to a single central idea. Likewise, the ideas they were able to express were not logically linked together by means of appropriate transitional words.

Other relevant results obtained from the application of a writing test have important implications for understanding the discrepancy between what is stated in the syllabus and what takes place in the tenth grade classroom in public high schools. One aspect is that an important percentage of them, 21%, was totally unable to express their ideas or expressed ideas in disconnected sentences as illustrated in the following exhibit.

Exhibit No. 17

Example transcriptions of what some students could write
Example 1   *Andthe comias tipic*   *Beans and rice shicken and amburger, potatos, coca cola, vegetals, carrot, tomato.*
Example 2   *I dont now nating*
Example 3   *My types the food favority rice and beans chicken and potatos and meat the salad vegetables. I like mucho the fruts.*
Example 4   *I like to food and amburguer, pizza, chiken, rice chiken mmm delicious salad.*   *I like the refrest, bread.*   *I like apple, milk, orange, banana*   *I like colors red, green, violet, yellow.*   *I like computer,*   *I like the french the very good etertaining*   *I don't pescado wakala*

Source: Writing test

Another significant finding with implications for understanding the discrepancy between what is stated in the syllabus and what takes place in the classroom in

public high schools is the use of awkward constructions. A total of forty-one students (46%) used awkward constructions because they were unable to use specific structures to put their ideas in writing. Some examples are provided in the exhibit that follows:

Exhibit No. 18

Examples of awkward constructions

Awkward constructions
-What like food most? -I like the hamburger but more like me the gallo pinto. -The food in Costa Rica is more good and best.

Source: Writing test

Another skill that students need to develop in order to produce good writing is editing practices that can significantly improve the first draft. Spelling is one of the aspects that can be revised and corrected if the steps of process writing are followed. However, for this specific type of error, sixty learners (67%) did not correct spelling errors before handing the test back. In fact, the revision of the task evidences that most of the errors comprehended omission or addition of letters that could be easily corrected if learners were used to editting what they write. Examples of this error are given in the exhibit below.

Exhibit No. 19

Examples of incorrect spelling

Incorrect spelling	
-Raice	-Vaitamins
-Necesary	-Countrys
-Fray chiquen	-Tipical
-Diferents	-Favoryte
-Pepers	-importan

Source: Writing test

Two minor errors also found in the writing test included the wrong use of quantifiers, which accounted for 17 learners and which represented 19% , and the wrong use of articles with 7 students representing 8% of the total population. Another relevant result derived from the evaluation of the writing test is that the students in the tenth grade were only able to use the present tense to develop the writing task when the syllabus mentions that tenth graders can use complex language for different communication purposes as is the case of the present perfect tense, which is suggested in the language examples students are supposed to master in this grade.

4.7 Level of achievement according to ACTFL writing guidelines

This writing test was applied to each one of the four groups of tenth graders the researcher observed in the four public high schools in Pérez Zeledón. This exam consisted of writing a short descriptive paragraph related to the learners' likes and dislikes about Costa Rican and American food. The participants were given sixty minutes to complete the examination. From the sixty minutes, students were given ten minutes to plan their writing, forty minutes to write the text, and ten more minutes

to edit what they had written. A total of ninety-seven learners took the test. From them, eight compositions were ruled out since the learners wrote a note telling they had taken extracurricular courses or had lived and studied in U.S.A or Canada. At the end, eighty-nine compositions were read and assigned to a level based on an instrument that was developed using the ACTFL proficiency guidelines for writing.

Some tests were ruled out because the researcher made sure to ask the participants to write down a note on top of the test if they had had any extracurricular English courses or if they had lived in any English Speaking country. This was done to avoid the misinterpretation of results due to the fact that the test was intended to determine the writing proficiency level of students after four years of English instruction in high school alone.

According to the National Syllabus for English teaching in Public high schools, learners in tenth grade should master a wide range of competencies, which are portrayed in the syllabus in a can-do chart (Programa de Estudio 58). These competencies are assessed based on the ACTFL guidelines (Breiner-Sanders, Elvira Swender, and Robert M. Terry 4). The writing test applied to establish the level of proficiency of tenth graders was precisely evaluated with a more specific scoring guide constructed based on those guidelines. The instrument includes three broad categories: Advanced, intermediate, and novice, each one of which is subdivided into high, mid, and low levels of proficiency. The scale is included in the next exhibit.
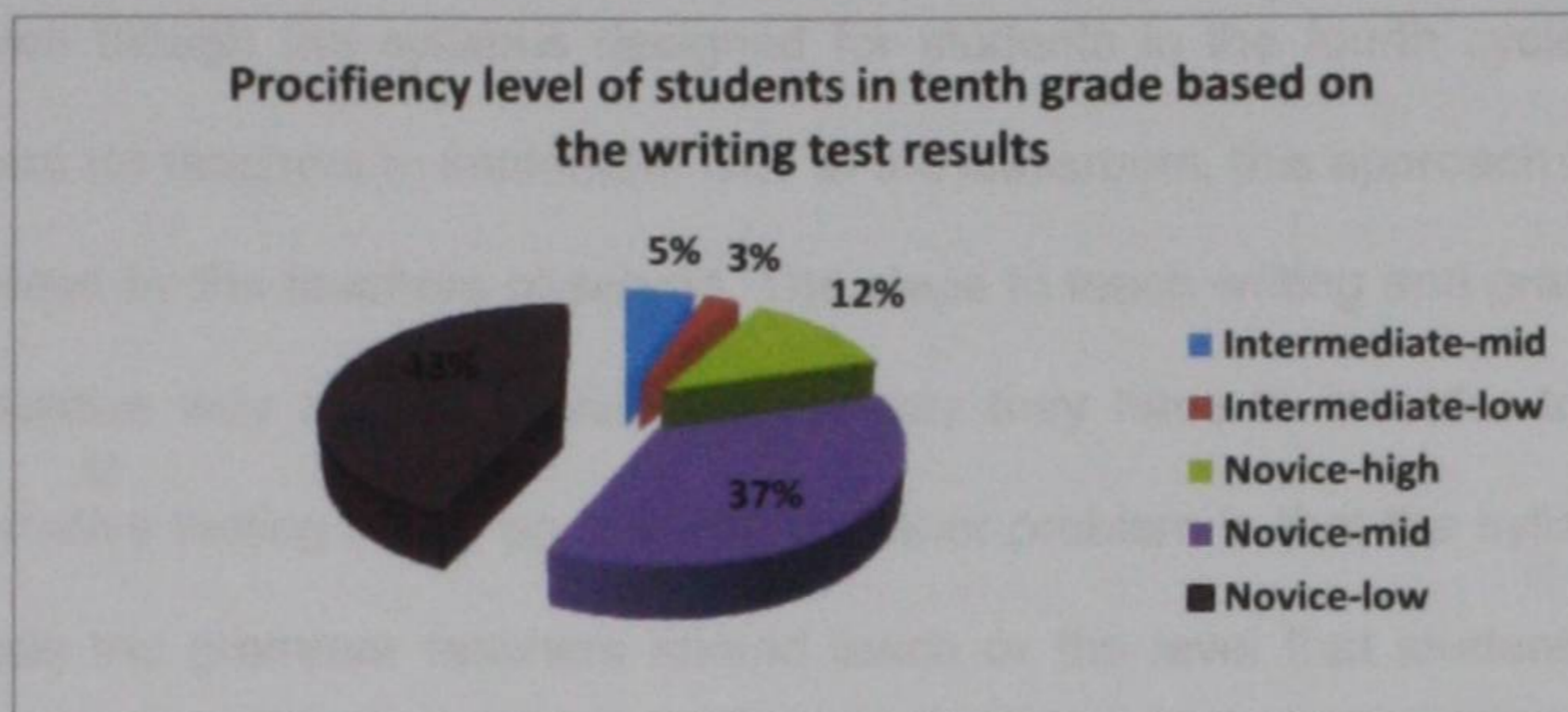
Exhibit No. 20

Assessment Scale for Writing Tasks at the 10th Grade Level CTP San Isidro, Liceo Nocturno, CTP General Viejo and CAIRA Based on the "ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Writing: Revised 2001 and Designed by Diego Garro Bustamante

Grade	ADVANCED
	HIGH
100%-90%	Writer can write extensively about the topic with significant precision and detail, tending to emphasize the concrete aspects of the topic. Can describe an narrate in all main time fames with good control of aspect. In addition, the student can demonstrates some ability to incorporate the functi9ons and other criteria of the Superior level, showing some ability to develop arguments and construct global, and/or impersonal terms. Often shows remarkable ease of expression when writing. Good control of a full range of grammatical structures and fairly wide general vocabulary, though may not use these comfortable and accurately in all cases. Weaknesses in grammar, syntax, vocabulary, cohesive devices, or punctuation may occasionally distract the native reader from the message. Production often reads successfully but may fail to convey the subtlety and nuance of the Superior level.
	MID
89%-79%	Writer is able to meet academic writing needs with good organization and cohesiveness that may reflect the principles of his/her first language. She/He is able to write straightforwardly by means of narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. Demonstrates the ability to narrate and describe with detail in all major time frames. His/Her writing is characterized by a range of general vocabulary that expresses thoughts clearly and exhibits some variety of cohesive devices in a text of several paragraphs in length. Good control of the most frequently used target language syntactic structures, e.g., common word order patterns, coordination, subordination. There may be errors in complex sentences, as well as in punctuation, or spelling. Writing may at times resemble oral discourse or the writing style of the first language. Incorporates organizational features both of the target language or the writer's first l language. Writing is understood readily by natives not used to the writing of non-natives
	LOW
78% - 68%	Writer is able to meet basic academic writing needs, by means of narratives and descriptions of a factual nature, and demonstrates the ability to narrate and describe in major time frames with some control of aspect. Also, he/she is able to combine and link sentences into texts of paragraph length and structure. Writing may not be substantive, incorporating a limited number of cohesive devices, but resorting to much redundancy and awkward repetition. Subordination in the expression of ideas is present and structurally coherent, but generally relies on narrative patterns of oral discourse or the writing style of the writer's first language. Writer demonstrates sustained control of simple target-language sentence structures and partial control of more complex structures. Writing can be understood by natives not used to the writing of non-natives, although some effort may be required in reading the text..
Grade	INTERMEDIATE
	HIGH
100%-90%	Writer is able to compose connecting sentences into paragraphs using a limited number or cohesive devices that tend to be repeated and with some breakdown in one or more features of the Advanced level. Writer can write simple descriptions and narrations of paragraph length in different time frames, although with some inaccuracies and inconsistencies, resulting in a loss in clarity. The vocabulary, grammar, and style of the writer essentially correspond to those of the spoken language. The writing is generally comprehensible to natives not used to the writing of non-natives, even though it contains numerous and perhaps significant errors; however, gaps in comprehension may occur.
	MID
89%-79%	Writer can write short, simple texts, loosely connected based on personal preferences, daily routines, common events, and topics related to personal experiences and immediate surroundings. Most writing is framed in present time, with inconsistent references to other time frames. The writing style closely resembles the grammar and lexicon of oral discourse. Writer shows evidence of control of syntax in non-complex sentences and in basic verb forms, and may demonstrate some ability to use grammatical and stylistic cohesive elements. Writing is best defined as a collection of discrete sentences and/or questions loosely strung together. There is little evidence of deliberate organization. Natives used to the writing of non-natives can understand the text.
	LOW
78%-68%	Writer meets some limited practical writing needs based on statements and questions related to familiar material. Most sentences are recombination of learned vocabulary and structures. There are short and simple conversational-style sentences with subject-verb object word order, written mostly in the present time with occasional and often incorrect use of past or future time. Writing tends to be a few simple sentences, often with repetitive structure. Vocabulary is limited to common objects and routine activities, adequate to express elementary needs. There may be basic errors in grammar, word choice, punctuation and spelling. Natives used to the writing of non-natives can understand the text, although additional effort may be required.
Grade	NOVICE
	HIGH
100%-90%	Writer meets limited basic practical writing needs by means of simple notes to express himself or herself within the context in which the language was learned, relying mainly on practiced material. Writer is able to recombine learned vocabulary and structures to create simple sentences on very familiar topics, but the language produced may only partially communicate what is intended. There is inadequate vocabulary and/or grammar. Writing is often comprehensible to natives used to the writing of non-natives, but gaps in comprehension may occur.
	MID
89%-79%	Writer is able to reproduce from memory a modest number of isolated words and phrases in context, and can supply limited information on simple forms and documents and other biographical information. Writer exhibits a high degree of accuracy when writing on well-practiced, familiar topics using limited formulaic language. With less familiar topics, there is marked decrease in accuracy. Errors in spelling or in the representation of symbols may be frequent. There is little evidence of functional writing skills. Writing is difficult to understand even by those accustomed to reading the texts of non-natives.
20%	**LOW**
78%-68%	Given adequate time and familiar cues, the writer can reproduce from memory a very limited number of isolated words or familiar phrases, but errors are expected.

The tests were scored based on the scale above, and the results are shown in the exhibit below:

Exhibit No. 21

Procifiency level of students in tenth grade based on the writing test results

- Intermediate-mid
- Intermediate-low
- Novice-high
- Novice-mid
- Novice-low

5% 3% 12% 37% 43%

Source: Writing test

The most evident result is that the writing proficiency level of 92% of the students is at the novice level. Among those, the highest percentage, 44%, qualify as novice-low; 36% as novice-mid, and 12% as novice-high. This means that those that show the best performance among this 92% of the students are only able to meet limited basic practical writing needs to express themselves in writing about their likes and dislikes of Costa Rican and North American food. Also outstanding from the information, is the fact that only 8% of the students achieved an intermediate level. This basically means that they are capable of writing short simple texts loosely connected based on personal preferences; however, even though they can, they do so making numerous errors of the types pointed out in exhibit number fifteen like awkward constructions, use of L1 or creative constructions, etcetera.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

After carrying out a thorough analysis of the data collected, the researcher has been able to arrive at the following conclusions:

Even though the syllabus designed for students in the fourth cycle sets the parameters for teachers to implement CLT in the classroom, this approach is not fully implemented by the teachers observed. The steps to teach writing and grammar in a communicative way are not developed the way they have to in order to promote communicative writing ability on learners. Another problem is that the syllabus does not include the grammar teachers should teach or the level that students have to master to be ready to pass the year and level up. This is a problem for beginning teachers who do not know what grammar needs students have and a problem that can be solved by the MEP by incorporating specific guidelines in the syllabus to ease the teachers' work.

Despite the fact that the syllabus provided by the Ministry of Public Education establishes that teacher has to guide the writing process to aid the learners to express their ideas about the topic and give practice into the different mechanisms that allow learners to produce coherent paragraphs or short compositions; and that these processes must be guided in three sequential types of activities; namely, pre-writing, while writing, and post writing activities that permit learners to use their prior knowledge and relate it to their writing task, writing instruction is given a superficial emphasis because it has very little space in the English curriculum in the PES. Most of the teachers observed took no more than two lessons per unit to develop the skill, and most of the basic steps (planning, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading) to

develop it were overlooked. It is evident, therefore, that the writing process is not developed the way it is proposed in the syllabus, and writing is neglected in the English class.

In addition, the teachers do not implement interesting and varied writing activities in the classroom as could be seen in the opinion of the students, who said that the activities were unattractive, and the observations that were carried out in the four public high schools.

Furthermore, even when a big number of in-service teachers and students stated that grammar is an important component in helping learners in their development of communicative competence, grammar was not evaluated formally either in class or on tests contrary to the perceptions of the main participants in the development of the curriculum. What is more, grammar was not incorporated in the development of any of the cognitive targets of the syllabus unless the topic had a grammatical emphasis. Even so, there was not any connection between grammar and writing whatsoever.

Moreover, the syllabus provided by the MEP does not include a clear guidance as to what grammatical topics the instructors have to incorporate in their classes; it only includes language examples. Consequently, the in-service teachers observed only resorted to deductive presentation of grammar and translation as the only methodology, leaving aside a form-focused approach that can lead to a development of communicative ability in writing, and students were not able to use the grammar in writing as a result of the mechanical exercises pupils were asked to complete. Students had a very basic command of grammar, and this also affected them to express their ideas since they did not know how to apply grammar rules in context.

They were unable to make a connection between the structures they had studied and their application in writing purposes to communicate meaning.

Another conclusion is that both the teachers and the students consider that writing is necessary in high school and that is an important part of the English class. In the same way, both consider corrective feedback as a key element in the learning process, but the time devoted to writing instruction and the focus of the writing class are not enough for learners to develop communicative ability in writing because the corrective feedback was minimal and explicitly given for students to make the amendments. This evidences that the main focus of writing is still the product when the CLT promotes a focus on the process. When the teachers observed taught writing, they were mostly interested in the final product and did not provide corrective feedback throughout the development of the pieces of writing. The only type of feedback provided by them was explicit feedback given as written corrections in the pupils' paragraphs whether learners understood them or not. Thus, this type of feedback was not significant because it did not help learners to do well on other types of writing due to the fact that they were still not able to put their thoughts in writing, revise them, and edit them as a result of a process.

The same happens when grammar instruction and evaluation in the classroom are examined. Learners receive very little grammar instruction that is limited to the grammatical topics teachers are told to develop in the syllabus. The problem is that most teachers believe that grammar practice is very mechanical, which is reflected on the strategies they use to teach it in the classroom, and learners tend to believe the same since they are not helped to find the connections between grammar and communication. Therefore, they manifest their atitudes when they express that

grammar rules and practice exercises are boring. Consequently, the methodology used to teach and assess both writing and grammar does not allow learners to develop communicative ability in the target language.

As to the development of critical thinking, it is clear that the explicit corrections do not let pupils learn how to monitor their language in either writing or speaking since they are not given a chance to do so. Hence, the use of explicit feedback in writing does not build students' communicative ability.

Based on the results of the writing test, it is evident that the majority of the mistakes comitted by the learners had to do with grammar, such as lack of coherence and unity, use of L1 or creative constructions, incorrect spelling, wrong use of quantifiers, wrong use of articles and awkward constructions. But also, there were cases in which students were either totally unable to express ideas or expressed them by means of disconnected sentences. This shows that grammar is not given the necessary place in instruction because students cannot express their ideas even at the most basic level; that is, sentence construction where a complete thought is expressed. These students have a lot of difficulties expressing their ideas in writing.

Also, of more concern is the fact that none of the students who took the writing test was able to develop a coherent and unified piece of writing by focusing on the topic sentence or controlling idea of the piece of writing and developing supporting details coherently put together to explain the topic sentence. This shows that writing instruction in the high schools observed does not follow the basic steps that are required for process writing to take place. The procedures that the apprentices used are a reflection of the type of writing they do in the classroom where the first draft is

completed and presented as a final product, without carrying out any prewriting activity, drafting or revision of the task. They did so regardless of the specific instructions given to them on the test. Consequently, learners are not taught how to write, so they ignore how to follow the writing process and thus they are incapable of producing a coherent and unified piece of writing.

It is also clear that the tenth graders have not achieved the proficiency level that the syllabus states they must. Students' level is far below the expected one. In fact, most of the learners who took the writing tests achieved a novice-low proficiency level and none of them was able to write a coherent piece of writing. What is more, the ones who did better on the test were only able to meet limited basic practical writing needs to express themselves in writing in the task that was set out in the test. This shows that the means to reach the goal of communicative ability in writing do not lead to the results expected of the teaching of English in tenth grade.

It was also evident on tests because 80% was dedicated to reading comprehension and the remaining 20% was dedicated to evaluating writing; grammar was not evaluated on tests, which shows that it is taught in isolation as if writing and grammar were not related and complementary. As a result, students are somewhat demotivated because the activities are not very appealing to them even when teachers believe the activities they implement are interesting and varied. Plus, they lack motivation since they know they cannot express what they want to say in writing.

5.1 Recommendations

It is essential that the MEP's authorities give some training to teachers on the application of the Communicative Approach and on the teaching of grammar and for writing communicative purposes. In this way, teachers will design activities that are more appealing and learners' motivation will increase, favoring language learning. Equally important is the fact that teachers should also receive some training on the assessment of the different skills that must be taught in the PES. It is quite important for teachers to understand that they must be able to introduce more integrated methodologies into their teaching to help learners reach high proficiency levels in all the language skills. It is also imperative to help students to become aware of their own learning process through self and peer assessment in the classroom. In this way, teachers and students can monitor the progress they make in regards to the attainment of the goals set in the national syllabus.

The MEP authorities should also take into account the incorporation of grammar in achievement tests. Of course, the items that will measure students' knowledge on grammar should be communicative in nature and avoid discrete-point tests where grammar is used mechanically. This does not mean that deductive methodologies and fill-in-the-blank exercises cannot be used, but the practice should progress from these methodologies to more analytical ones so that the learning does not become stuck at the "know" level.

Another recommendation is to ask MEP to provide teachers with training on classroom research and reflective teaching so as to maximize the use of existing

resources and provide learners with activities that can increase their motivation and therefore their communicative ability.

It is also advisable to carry out an experiment to determine if there is a direct relationship between grammar instruction and gains in writing communicative performance. This way, there can be control on the variables that intervene in the process.

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VI Appendices
Appendix A: Opinionnaire for high school teachers

Universidad Nacional Sede Central
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Escuela de literatura y Ciencias del lenguaje
Research in Second languages and Cultures LPE709
Designed by Diego Garro Bustamante.

Institution: _____ Name: _____
Years of Experience: _____ Highest Degree in English Teaching: _____

The following statements represent opinions, and your agreement or disagreement will be determined on the basis of your particular beliefs. Kindly, check your positions on the scale as the statement first impresses you. Indicate what you believe, rather than what you think you should believe.

a. I strongly agree   b. I agree   c. I am undecided   d. I disagree   e. I strongly disagree

	a	b	c	d	e
Grammar teaching is very difficult.					
Grammar rules and exercises are boring.					
Grammar practice is very mechanical.					
Presenting grammar rules is better for students' understanding.					
Examples of grammar rules in use increase students' autonomous learning.					
I have difficulty presenting grammar rules to students.					
Fill-in-the blank exercises are useful for students to master specific grammar points.					
Grammar mastery allows learners to express their ideas in writing.					
Grammar should be assessed and evaluated in class and on tests.					
I have difficulty explaining grammar rules to learners.					
Corrective feedback is necessary for students to learn English.					
The materials I give students are very interesting.					
Grammar instruction allows students to write better in English.					
Students can express their ideas easily in writing.					
I always provide an example for learners to follow when writing in L2.					
I give learners time to organize their ideas before writing in English.					
I give learners interesting and varied writing activities.					
The activities I have students do resemble real-life writing tasks.					
The instructions I give learners for writing are very clear.					
Writing in English is unnecessary in high school					

Appendix B: Opinionnaire for students

Universidad Nacional Sede Central
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Escuela de literatura y Ciencias del lenguaje
Research in Second languages and Cultures LPE709
Designed by Diego Garro Bustamante.

Opinionnaire for Students

Institution: _____ Sex: _____

The following statements represent opinions, and your agreement or disagreement will be determined on the basis of your particular beliefs. Kindly, check your positions on the scale as the statement first impresses you. Indicate what you believe, rather than what you think you should believe.

a. I strongly agree   b. I agree   c. I am undecided   d. I disagree   e. I strongly disagree

	a	b	c	d	e
Grammar is very difficult.					
Grammar rules and exercises are boring.					
Grammar practice is very mechanical.					
The teacher always presents and explains grammar rules clearly.					
I understand grammar structures better with examples.					
I understand grammar better when I am given the rules explicitly.					
Fill-in-the blank exercises help me know how to use grammar rules.					
Grammar should be evaluated in class and in tests.					
The teacher doesn't know how to explain rules.					
The teacher corrects me very often when I write in English.					
I feel frustrated when the teacher corrects what I write in English.					
I learn better if the teacher corrects my mistakes.					
The materials we use are very interesting.					
I can express my ideas easily in written English.					
I am always given an example to follow when writing in English.					
We have time to organize our ideas before writing in English.					
We have interesting English writing activities.					
The activities we do resemble real-life writing tasks.					
The instructions the teacher gives us for writing in English are very clear.					
Writing in English is unnecessary in high school					

Universidad Nacional Sede Central
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Escuela de literatura y Ciencias del lenguaje
Research in Second languages and Cultures LPE709
Designed by Diego Garro Bustamante.

Opinionario para estudiantes

Institución: _____ Sexo: _____

Las siguientes afirmaciones representan opiniones, y su reacción en acuerdo o en desacuerdo serán determinadas basados en sus creencias particulares. Amablemente, marque su posición en la escala de acuerdo a su primera impresión hacia la afirmación. Indique lo que usted crea en lugar de lo que usted piense que usted deba creer.

a. Completamente de acuerdo   b. En acuerdo   c. Indeciso   d. En desacuerdo
e. Completamente en desacuerdo.

	a	b	c	d	e
La gramática inglesa es muy difícil.					
Las reglas de la gramática inglesa y ejercicios son muy aburridas.					
La práctica de la gramática es muy mecánica.					
El/la profesor (a) siempre presenta y explica las reglas gramaticales muy claramente.					
Entiendo las estructuras gramaticales mejor con ejemplos.					
Entiendo mejor las reglas gramaticales cuando me dan las reglas gramaticales explícitamente.					
Ejercicios de completar me ayudan a saber usar las reglas gramaticales.					
La gramática debe ser evaluada en el aula y en los exámenes.					
El/la profesor (a) no sabe cómo explicar reglas gramaticales.					
El/la profesor (a) me corrige frecuentemente cuando escribo en inglés.					
Me siento frustrado cuando el profesor corrige lo que escribo en inglés.					
Aprendo mejor cuando el/la profesor (a) corrige mis errores.					
Los materiales que usamos son muy interesantes.					
Puedo expresar mis ideas muy fácilmente en inglés escrito.					
Siempre se me da un ejemplo a seguir cuando escribo en inglés.					
Tenemos mucho tiempo para organizar nuestras ideas antes de escribir.					
Tenemos actividades de escritura muy interesantes.					
Las actividades que hacemos son similares a tareas de escritura en la vida real.					
Las instrucciones que el/la profesor (a) nos da para escribir en inglés son muy claras.					
Escribir en ingles es innecesario en el colegio.					

Appendix C: Writing test

Universidad Nacional Sede Central
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Escuela de literatura y Ciencias del lenguaje
Research in Second languages and Cultures LPE709
Designed by Diego Garro Bustamante.

Writing test for tenth graders

This test is part of the research graduation project. What it wants to find out is the writing proficiency level tenth grade students have. Kindly, write what is required of you in the task as your level allows you to do it. The information gathered will be used with total discretion and confidentiality.

Purpose: The purpose of this test is to assess students' writing abilities based on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Writing to establish a contrast between MEP's tenth graders' writing profile and students' real level.

Task: In an hour (60 minutes), you will write a short descriptive text about your likes and dislikes about Costa Rican and American food. You can use some of the time to plan your writing (10 mins) and some other time (10 mins) after you finish writing to edit what you had written. Please use a pen to write the paragraph. It must be 12 lines long and written on every other line. Write a title for it as well.

Name: _____ High school: _____

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Appendix D: Structured Interview for teachers

Interview

1. What's your full name?

2. How long have you been teaching?

3. What's your degree? Where did you graduate from?

4. What type of curriculum did you go through when you were studying?

5. What teaching philosophy did the curriculum promote?

6. What's your teaching philosophy? What type of methodology do you base your teaching on?

7. Which trend of the communicative approach do you use for teaching your classes?

8. What role does grammar have in your classes?

9. Do you think that grammar teaching is necessary in high school? How do you do it? How often do you teach grammar in high school?

10. How do you evaluate grammar?

11. How do you assess grammar competence and performance?

12. How much time do you dedicate to grammar in your classes?

13. How do you teach writing?

14. What steps do you follow to teach writing?

15. What difficulties have you noticed students have when writing?

16. How much time do you dedicate to writing?

17. What do you evaluate in your tests?

18. Can your students communicate their ideas clearly in writing? What do they lack?

Appendix E: Structured Interview for the advisor of the area of Pérez Zeledón

Interview for the English advisor

1. What's your full name?

2. What type of curriculum does the MEP implement in high schools?

3. What type of methodology should teachers in MEP base their teaching on?

4. Which trend of the communicative approach is promoted by the English curriculum the MEP implements?

5. What role does grammar have in this curriculum?

6. Do you think that grammar teaching is necessary in high school? How should teachers do it? How often should teachers teach grammar in high school?

7. How can teachers evaluate grammar in high schools?

8. How can teachers assess grammar competence and performance?

9. How should teachers teach writing?

10. What steps do teachers have to follow to teach writing?

11. How should teachers deal with difficulties students have when writing?

12. How much time should teachers dedicate to writing?

13. Can high school students communicate their ideas clearly in writing?

14. What should teachers evaluate on tests?

Appendix F: Nonparticipant observations

Observation Log

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez

Date: August 26th, 2009.   Class start: 2:05p.m Class end: 3:25p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 10, 4 Males and 6 females

Topic: Linking Words

To start the class, students (Ss) were given a word search in a handout to look for some linking words. After that, some of the linking words were written on the board, and Ss were asked to tell if they knew what these words were used for. Ss expressed their ideas in Spanish until they said linking words were used to connect sentences.

Working on the same handout, Ss had a list of words, which they had to look up in the dictionary. The words were some linking words with different uses such as *However, therefore, even so*, and some others. However, just 2 Ss had dictionaries. For this reason, the teacher sent a pupil to take out some dictionaries from the library for them to start working. After some minutes, the teacher started checking the meaning of the words by translating them. Some learners read the meanings they found. The teacher started explaining, in Spanish, the use of *therefore* with the example "Mañana tengo examen de inglés. Por lo tanto, tengo que estudiar." He then said that they were classified according to their uses: effect: *Therefore*; contrast: *in contrast, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, and even so*; addition of information: *also, furthermore, in addition, and too*; illustrations: *as an illustration, for example, and for instance*.

When they finished with this, the teacher asked Ss to complete some sentences with the correct connector. This exercise was also in the handout. To check it, the sentences were read out loud, and the pupils provided the right connector. While checking, the teacher said they could use any connector of contrast almost interchangeably. As soon as they finished, learners had to complete a paragraph by choosing the right transition. While Ss were doing this practice, the teacher wrote two words on the board along with their definition in English. They took more than 20 minutes and they had not finished at 3:18. At 3:21, the instructor started reading the paragraphs, and the learners had to mention the linking word they used. If they did not give the right answer, he provided them with it orally. He ended the class by saying that the connector they had to use depended on the context and the ideas expressed.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional   Teacher: Falina Díaz.

Date: August 27th, 2009.   Class start: 2:10p.m Class end: 3:30p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 30, 10 Males and 20 females

Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

After the daily routines, the instructor gave Ss their homework back. She then told them they were going to start a new topic and asked them to brainstorm ideas related to natural resources. They expressed words, which were written on the board. The teacher asked them why those resources were important, and a female student gave some ideas. She spoke in English. After this, students were asked to work on exercises A and B in their handout. Some students read the words they associated with nature and nature's misuse. Then, the facilitator chose a learner to write a text on the board while the teacher was checking if the rest of the students had brought their materials. After she finished checking, she decided to continue writing the text herself because the student she chose was writing very slowly. Meanwhile, SS were copying the text. This text was for learners to study at home. They were asked to work on some other exercises as homework. They had to do some reading comprehension exercises, and this was the end of the class.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís

Date: August 28th, 2009.   Class start: 8:55 p.m Class end: 10:05 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: ------------------------------

Topic: --------------------------

On this day the class could not be observed because the teacher, Yolanda Ureña S., did not come to the institution. She had permission since she is taking the training the Ministry of Public Education is giving to some teachers, and she was given the day off. Consequently, the researcher could not be in the class.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional de General Viejo Teacher: Jéssica Barquero M.

Date: September 2nd, 2009.   Class start: 10:00 a.m. Class end: 11:20 Lessons: 2

Number of students: 19,   15 Males and 4 females

Topic: Causes and Effects of natural Resources Misuse.

The teacher started by doing the daily routines (attendance, date, announcements). After this, she gave the tests back to students, and she began calling each student to the desk to give them their final grade for the second trimester. This took 15 minutes. A soon as she was finished, she set the computer and projector with the help of a pupil. She had some trouble because there were no extension cords available in the classroom, so a learner went out to look for one. This was the first day the topic was introduced to Ss. She prepared a presentation with several slides. One of them had a leopard and the question "What's biodiversity?" and students told their ideas. In the second slide there was a question, "What's the difference between development and conservation?" SS were prompted to answer it and later the definitions were given in the slides, which were also read aloud by the students. The learners gave their ideas in English when they knew how. Some said they did not even know what a rain forest was in Spanish. "What can we do to save our planet?" was the last question, and the pupils gave their recommendations. Then she started presenting the vocabulary, by writing the words on the board along with synonyms or related words in English to make the meaning s clear. After this, a text was displayed on the board and the teacher had Ss read parts of it, one learner at a time. Some mispronunciation was corrected by modeling the right pronunciation for the mispronounced word e.g. climate /klaɪmɪt/. Ss were given a reading comprehension practice to do, based on the text. They were given 10 minutes to complete it. While working, some learners asked for the meaning of some words; some used English while others asked in Spanish. The teacher always used English to explain the vocabulary. SS took more time than the teacher expected. Afterwards, the answers to the questions were checked orally. A student was chosen by the teacher to answer a question, and the answer was also displayed on the board through the projector for the other students to check. After checking, she asked them to make groups for an extra class assignment. Finally, the instructor asked pupils to arrange the classroom and the class ended.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional   Teacher: Falina Díaz.

Date: September 3rd, 2009.   Class start: 2:10p.m Class end: 3:30p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: ------------------------

Topic: -----------------------------

The teacher, Falina Diaz, called the researcher and informed him that she had a sick-leave for the whole week. For this reason, the observation could not be carried out until the following week.

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez

Date: September 4th, 2009.   Class start: 11:50 a.m Class end: 1:50 p.m. Lessons: 3

Number of students: --------------------

Topic: ---------------------

On this date, the teacher was not in the high school. No reason was given to the investigator by anybody. Besides, the two previous classes, on August the 27th and September 2rd, weren't observed because the teacher was giving the tests back to students along with the final grades of the second trimester.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís

Date: September 4th, 2009.   Class start: 8:55 p.m Class end: 10:05 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: ---------------------------------

Topic: ---------------------------

On this day the class could not be observed because there was a situation students began by throwing balloons filled with water. The classes were suspended and students sent home. Neither the teacher, Yolanda Ureña, nor the researcher could do anything about this.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional de general Viejo Teacher: Jéssica Barquero M.

Date: September 9th, 2009.   Class start: 10:00 a.m. Class end: 11:20 Lessons: 2

Number of students: 17,   13 Males and 4 females

Topic: Causes and Effects of natural Resources Misuse.

To begin the lesson, a song was passed out for students to complete with the missing verbs. The song was played once and the learners were asked to tell her the words they could write in. The song was played a second time after this. The words that were missing were checked again orally, just as in the first time. The song was played a third time for Ss to check pronunciation. This task took 20 minutes. In this lesson, the teacher gave students the instructions for the extra class assignment. Each group had a different activity to do (separate sheet of paper handed to the researcher). Afterwards, the teacher asked pupils to take out their handout and told them to work in pairs. This activity started at 10:45 a.m. Each pair was given a dictionary, and they had to do some reading comprehension practice (activities B, C, D, and E). At 11:15, Ss were still working on this task. The teacher started checking and asked some learners to read different texts aloud. Some words were mispronounced and the teacher modeled the right pronunciation right on the spot for students to repeat. Only exercise B was checked and the class was dismissed.

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez

Date: September 9th, 2009.   Class start: 2:05p.m Class end: 3:25p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 7, 1 Males and 6 females

Topic: Cause and effects of natural Resources Misuse.

To start the class, the teacher wrote the phrase Natural Resources on the board and asked students to give examples of natural resources in Costa Rica. Then, he wrote 3 examples of forests (cloud, rain, and dry). He continued asking oral questions related to natural resources, such as "What would you do to protect natural resources?"

After this, the teacher began writing some lexical items on the board. The teacher went out and brought some dictionaries for students to look up the words. At 2:30, he asked Ss they

had 10 minutes to do that. 12 minutes later, the teacher asked for the meanings of the words. The checking process took 10 minutes. As soon as they finished checking, the teacher gave them a new handout. He read some statements and Ss had to tell if they agreed or not. Some learners asked for the meanings of some words in Spanish. This took 7 minutes. Later, pupils had to complete a conceptual map in the handout. To do this, they were required to read a text and it was related to the hawksbill turtles. The activity was checked at 3:15 p.m. Ss read the answers out loud. Following this, the teacher asked learners to read another text and complete it with some words that were in a chart just above the short paragraph. 10 minutes later, the instructor had a girl read the text with the right answers, but she had done just one. Consequently, another S read the second part. The teacher read the rest to finish. Some questions were read by the teacher for apprentices to answer. The teacher also added some questions he had prepared; they were not in the handout. Finally the class ended at 3:30 p.m.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional   Teacher: Falina Díaz.
Date: September 10th, 2009. Class start: 2:10p.m Class end: 3:30p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: ---------------------------------------
Topic: ---

When the researcher arrived at the institution, he was informed by the teacher that the class was not going to be taught because teachers had a meeting that was scheduled at the time of the lesson. However, the teacher gave the investigator a bunch of handouts she has used this year.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís
Date: September 11th, 2009. Class start: 8:55 p.m Class end: 10:05 p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: ---------------------------------
Topic: ---------------------------

On this day the class could not be observed because there was an official ceremony as this was the civic week nationwide. All of the teacher's students were in the aforementioned activity and as a result, the class could not be taught again. Nevertheless, the researcher could talk to a student who provided him with some of the materials and tests they have used and taken.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional de general Viejo Teacher: Jéssica Barquero M.
Date: September 15th and September 16th, 2009.   Class start: ------
Number of students: ---------------------
Topic: ---------------------------------------

On this week, no observation could be carried out at this high school since September the 15th was a holiday, and consequently, a day off, and on September 16th, the teacher was asked to attend to a 3-day training at a different location. Therefore, the researcher could not observe the development of the English classes on these two dates.

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez
Date: September 16th, 2009. Class start: 2:05p.m Class end: 3:25p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: 7 Males and 13 females
Topic: Cause and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

On this class, the teacher got into the classroom and told Ss he had a meeting. However, he instructed the 20 learners to finish the exercises in the handout and to make a list of unknown vocabulary they found while reading. Before the teacher left, the researcher asked for his permission to apply an opinionnaire for Ss to fill out. The researcher administered the instrument and explained the affirmations whenever they had a doubt. After this, he left the pupils working and went away at 2:40 p.m.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional   Teacher: Falina Díaz.

Date: September 17th, 2009. Class start: 2:10p.m Class end: 3:30p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 31, 9 Males and 22 females

Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

The teacher called the roll and arranged the classroom. She started by checking an assignment she had assigned the previous class. It was checked orally. The teacher read the statements and Ss told if they were true or false. The second part of the homework was a completion exercise based on a reading. This time, the teacher called for specific Ss to answer and they did so in English. This took around 20 minutes. The third part of the homework was a reading comprehension practice related to the hawksbill turtle and the teacher asked learners to tell what some specific words meant. For example, she asked them to tell what "shell" meant. Some words were explained in English, and some others were just translated by either the teacher or the students. Following the same comprehension exercise, the teacher required learners to mention three reasons leading to the problem of the turtles. She did all of this from her desk. Meanwhile, some students that were far from her were doing other activities while the teacher was checking because they did not have the handout. After the homework was checked, the instructor told pupils to take out the new handout. The first exercise was related to the classification of some resources into renewable and non-renewable. Once they were working, the facilitator began verifying that all students had their materials and dictionaries. After this, the investigator asked the teacher for permission for him to apply the opinionnaire to students. This was 10 minutes before the class ended. Once Ss finished completing it, the class was over.

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez

Date: September 18th, 2009. Class start: 11:50p.m Class end: 1:50p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: ----------------------------

Topic: ---

No observation was carried out on this date because the COLYPRO (Colegio de Licenciados y Profesores) hold a meeting for its members to attend. Consequently, classes were suspended at 11 a.m.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís
Date: September 18th, 2009. Class start: 8:55 p.m Class end: 10:05 p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: --------------------------------
Topic: ----------------------------

No observation was carried out on this date because the COLYPRO (Colegio de Licenciados y Profesores) hold a meeting for its members to attend. Even though the meeting was held at daytime, the professors who are members and who attended the event did not have to go to the high school at night. Again, the class could not be observed.

High school: Colegio Técnico profesional General Viejo   Teacher: Jéssica Barquero
Date: September 22nd, 2009. Class start: 3: 00 p.m Class end: 4:20 p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: 16, 13 males and 3 females.
Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse

The teacher informed the researcher that on Wednesday 23rd, some groups, including hers, would not have to come some days because twelfth graders would begin their Bachillerato tests, and classrooms are not available for all the groups to be in the high school at the same time.

The teacher called the roll and started the class by projecting a reading by means of a projector. She had individual students read short paragraphs of a reading about an old man. She corrected some pronunciation mistakes by modeling the right pronunciation of the word as soon as it was mispronounced by any of the learners reading out loud. Some mispronounced words were not corrected by the teacher, though. The text was presented in paragraphs in Spanish and English; students read it in English. After finishing reading the

text, the instructor asked pupils why the reading was easy. Once they answered some oral questions, a slide related to items that have to do with natural resources was presented. Ss chose aspects associated with them, and later they also selected aspects that damage the environment. The learners did not know the meaning of the word "can," so they asked for its meaning. The teacher just translated the word for them. Another slide had the question "what can reflect and affect the conservation of natural resources?" and following it, more words appeared on the slide and the pupils, again, mentioned the ones that were good or bad for the environment.

Another question was displayed: "what can we do to save natural resources?" Students gave some ideas orally about it. Some used words while others used complete sentences with some problems with the inflections of present verbs. Some other questions were asked orally for learners to answer. All of this took approximately 20 minutes. Later on, the facilitator instructed pupils to work on their handouts at 3:30 pm. She asked students to read a text and answer some questions in 15 minutes. While they were working, the teacher was walking around, clarifying doubts and checking their work. At 4:05 Ss were still working. The researcher asked the teacher to give him 10 minutes for him to apply an opinionnaire to students. She kindly granted him the time. She agreed to give him the last 10 minutes of the class for it, and as soon as they finished the class was over.

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez
Date: September 23rd, 2009. Class start: 2: 10 p.m Class end: 3:25 p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: 17, 8 males and 9 females.
Topic: Tourist Places Offered by Costa Rican Communities.

The teacher started the class with 9 students. He started showing them some pictures of animals and asked to tell him what the possible topic of the class would be. Some of them said "national Parks." They continued guessing until they mentioned tourist places. Then, the teacher asked learners to brainstorm places that people can visit in Cost Rica. They mentioned beaches, volcanoes, mountains, rivers oceans, waterfalls, islands, and lakes. The teacher then required pupils to enumerate places they had visited. They cited Dominical and some rivers

nearby. Soon after this, the teacher wrote a question on the board "Which _____ would you like to visit?" he asked them if they knew what "would" mean. Ss didn't answer, though. Afterwards, another question was made: "what activities can you do there?" Again, learners listed to some activities like canopy, horseback riding, walking, hiking and snorkeling. The teacher asked if they knew the difference between hiking and climbing. Ss told their meanings, but they were confused. The meaning of "climbing," according to students, was to walk while "hiking" implied the use of ropes, so the teacher corrected them. Next, the facilitator made them say what the first thing to stay in a hotel was. The teacher used some circumlocutions until students said "do a reservation." The teacher said that it is to book and explained the terms "check in/out." Nevertheless, the phrase "Do a reservation" was not corrected. After this, the teacher encouraged students to mention different places in a hotel. He wrote them on the board as learners mentioned them: restaurant, bar, pool area, spa, and casino.

The instructor continued by asking another question: "what places have you been to?" In Spanish, the teacher said that to talk about places they have visited they needed a specific tense. He mentioned the present and past perfect and explained it was formed by the auxiliary have/had plus a past participle of a verb. All of this explanation was given in the students' native language. Afterwards, he wrote the answer to the question he'd written on the board before, "I've been to _____." He also explained that in speaking auxiliaries are contracted, and he presented "would" as well. "I'd like to visit _____." Following that, the teacher instructed learners to prepare a conversation with the three questions they had already studied in this lesson:

-What places have you been to?

-Which _____ would like to visit?

-What activities would you like to do?

And he gave them 10 minutes to make the conversation at 2:38 pm. While students were working, the teacher was sitting at his desk, reading and writing something. Some pairs went to his desk to ask him questions related to their task. 10 minutes after students first began working, they were not finished. Only women got close to the facilitator for feedback on their work. Most of the boys were talking a lot on nothing related to their task. At 2:58 pm, the teacher went out the classroom. While he was out, several students began walking around the

classroom. The teacher came back at 3:05. He entered, picked up a binder, and went out again. At 3:08 pm, he came back and said it was time to check. The first pair of boys went to the front and read their dialogue. The teacher praised them by saying "Very good!" Another pair of boys went to do their presentation. They did it, and when they were finished, the teacher corrected the question "you can help me?" by providing the right word order "Can you help me?" Following them, two more boys presented. This time some grammar mistakes (use of parallel structure e.g. I'd like to surf and swimming) were not corrected. Following these boys, a pair of a girl and a boy continued. They finished, and another pair went on to present their dialogue. No corrections of any kind were given to them. Two more girls went to present. While students were presenting, the instructor was writing on a notebook. The researcher could not see if what he was writing was mistakes for him to give feedback to pupils in another class, to finish, a final pair of girls read the dialogue. The final pair pronounced most words with a lot of precision. The teacher thanked them and afterwards, he called a boy to give him a written communication to his parents. It seemed that was what he was writing during the presentations. This was the end of the lesson.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional de San Isidro   Teacher: Falina Díaz Date: September 24th, 2009   Class start: 2:10 p.m. Class end: 3:30 p.m.   Lessons: 2

Number of students: 31, 10 boys and 21 girls.

Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

The instructor greeted the learners and checked attendance. After this, she told students to get in groups of four people. She told them they were going to make a collage, and she provided them with the necessary materials for this. She gave them a lesson to prepare it. Students began working at 2:15. 40 minutes later, the students were not ready. They finished them at 3:05 p.m. the groups went to the front to present their work. There were eight groups and they read the things that they had written in their collages. One by one, each group presented their work. This went on the same way until the time of the class was over. At 3:30, the class was dismissed.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís

Date: September 24th, 2009. Class start: 7:35 p.m Class end: 8:45 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 24, 10 boys, 14 girls.

Topic: Linking Words in Context

The teacher began the class by calling the role. Then she told the class that the new handout was already at the photocopy place, and that it was very important for all of them to finish the handout quickly. She, then, asked them to open their handout and started reading an explanation on the use of conjunctions. She continued by checking a practice by reading some statements out loud while learners provided the answer. After this, the teacher said they were going to continue with paired conjunctions. She read (not only…but also, neither…nor, either…or, and both…and…) and read some examples along with the proximity principle. Later, she had students complete some statements with the verb be, either in singular or plural based on the proximity principle. The learners did not understand because they called the instructor to explain the rule to them again. The teacher just told them to continue with the following exercise, and it would be clearer for them after it. In the second exercise, pupils had to combine some sentences using the paired conjunctions. Again, only two pairs of learners could do it. They seemed to have more command of English than the rest of the students in the classroom. At the end, the teacher read the answers and the learners wrote them down. This was the end of the class.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís

Date: September 25th, 2009. Class start: 8:55 p.m Class end: 10:05 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 16, 6 boys, 10 girls.

Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

The teacher began calling the roll. At the beginning of the class, there were 14 students in the classroom. She started the class by asking learners if they remembered what natural resources were. Ss gave examples, but the instructor wanted a definition. She wrote examples they told her on the board such as trees, water, sun, air and animals. She wrote a

definition next to them, and it read "all the things that nature gives us." Then, pupils were questioned on the types of natural resources. The facilitator wrote renewable, non-renewable and flow. They had to give examples of the 3 kinds. After this, the teacher asked learners to mention causes of the destruction of natural resources. Many brainstormed their ideas. Later, the apprentices were asked to tell what global warming was, and they mentioned some of its causes.

Once the questions were answered, learners were asked to work on the new handout. In this exercise, they had to match each natural resource to a type of destruction that affected them as well as to a preventive measure against the destruction. The teacher read the propositions, and students matched the items in each column. Once they were finished, they had to read a text about natural resources. The teacher had a student read, but she did not correct pronunciation mistakes. Two students got into the classroom after the first lesson. Some others in the class did not have the handout.

While reading, the teacher directed learners' attention to "sustainable development," and she wrote a simple definition about it, saying "To replace what we get." Pupils continued reading and the teacher wrote some other terms on the board, along with simple explanations. For example, biotic (life, plants and animals). After reading the text, learners had to use a long list of vocabulary to complete a crossword puzzle. They were given 10 minutes to solve it. They took almost all of the rest of the lesson to finish, but still they couldn't. The teacher told them they would finish the following lesson and the class was dismissed.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional General Viejo   Teacher: Jéssica Barquero
Date: September 29th, 2009. Class start: 3: 00 p.m Class end: 4:20 p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: 17, 14 males and 3 females.
Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse

The teacher called the role and told students they were in charge of celebrating Culture's Day (October 12th). They were responsible for presenting the culture of Jamaica, and the teacher explained some of the ideas and events for that day. This was done in Spanish and took about 15 minutes. Afterwards, learners had to present the extra class assignments. The first group had to present a brochure they made up. They read what was written on it. The

teacher marked the words students mispronounced in a copy of the brochure she was given. The second group went to the front and they talked about flora and fauna of Costa Rica. They read the information they had in a poster. While presenting, pupils were not corrected if they mispronounce words. As soon as they finished, the third group continued. They stuck a paper on the board with six solutions to natural resources misuse. They read verbatim from it. They read about the three "R's" (reduce, use less, reuse and recycle). They mentioned ideas related to each "R." After them, another group went to present. They talked about the Chirripo National Park. At last, a male student read some information about causes and consequences of natural Resources. This was the end of the presentations. All of them took 25 minutes. Students were seated in three round tables and were given a piece of scrap paper per group. They were also given markers, glue and a pair of scissors as well as some old newspapers and some old magazines. They were asked to make a collage related to natural resources, either positive or negative, and were given 20 minutes to make it. Students talked in Spanish during the activity. At 4:05, pupils were still working on the collage. While working, the teacher told them to pick up the next handout for next classes. Ss wrote different phrases in the collages. They did not do anything else with their collages. At 4:15, learners started arranging the classroom and picking up the garbage. This was the end of the class.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional General Viejo   Teacher: Jéssica Barquero

Date: September 30th, 2009. Class start: 10: 00 a.m. Class end: 11:20 a.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 18, 15 males and 3 females.

Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse

The teacher started the class by calling the role. Then she asked students if they had gotten the national symbols of Jamaica along with information about them. They showed her some of the things they had collected, including a towel with the picture of Bob Marley. This took 10 minutes.

After this, the instructor asked learners some oral questions related to different examples of natural resources that are being destroyed. They mentioned the ozone layer, rain forests, flora, and fauna, biodiversity and some others. Some students told the examples in

English while others did it in Spanish. The teacher corrected some words students mispronounced. Then, she wrote some words that were part of a reading, along with a simple definition or related synonyms for students to understand their meaning. She said the reading was in the handout and asked pupils to read it; each student read a sentence or two. All of this took around 25 minutes. Once they were finished reading, they were directed to read a letter and take out the problem, its causes and some facts related to it. Pupils began at 3:35 p.m. While they were working, the teacher was walking around them to check they were doing the reading and the practice. They asked the instructor for the meaning of some words. She answered in English, but if apprentices did not understand, she provided the answer in Spanish. At 4:07, they started reading the answers; meanwhile, the teacher was writing them on the board for every student to check the answers. At 4:17, they finished checking, and the teacher told them to straighten out the classroom. She also told student to make copies of the last handout of the year for the following lesson. This was the end of the class.

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez

Date: September 30th, 2009. Class start: 2:05p.m Class end: 3:25p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 22, 9 Males and 13 females

Topic: Tourist Places Offered by Costa Rican Communities.

The teacher entered the classroom and told students to work on their handout. He said that from this date on, he was going to work on a technical project on Wednesdays, so they will have to work alone. He went out and left them working. Several students kept walking around the classroom, while others were working. Students had to complete several reading practices. Some learners asked the researcher for the meaning of some words. The class went on the same way for the two lessons. The teacher never showed up. The class was over at 3:30 pm.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional de San Isidro   Teacher: Falina Díaz

Date: October 1st, 2009   Class start: 2:10 p.m. Class end: 3:30 p.m.   Lessons: 2

Number of students: 26, 8 boys and 18 girls.

Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

The teacher began the class by greeting pupils and calling the roll. After the routines, she told students they would have to copy the topics for the test that she started to write on the board.

The learners began copying them and finished writing ten minutes afterwards. Then, the teacher wrote a list of words students were going to encounter in a reading about deforestation. She gave pupils time to jot them down and when they were ready, she explained each one of the words. She used English, but if learners did not get the meaning, she translated the words to Spanish. The instructor told learners to read the text and do a multiple choice practice with seven different questions. 20 minutes later, students were finished with this practice, so the teacher read the propositions and they told the answers out loud. The following activity was a puzzle students had to complete with information from the text. They took 15 minutes doing this exercise. The words needed to complete the puzzle based on the across and down clues were written on the board by the instructor.

Later on, the students had to read a shorter text to take out some pieces of information. This other text was related to protected areas in Costa Rica. This was a short answer exercise that took the remaining time of the class to be completed by apprentices. The answers were read out loud again by the teacher to check them. This was how the class ended this day.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís

Date: October 1st, 2009.   Class start: 7:35 p.m Class end: 8:45 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 24, 11 boys, 14 girls.

Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

This night, the teacher was asked by students to start the class earlier since they had had some classes off. She began with the routines. The teacher asked them if they had

finished the crossword puzzle and started giving the answers. She decided to write them on the board because students were asking for them. This took 20 minutes. After this, the teacher made some oral questions for apprentices to answer, and she wrote them on the board, along with the answers students provided. For example, "What's pollution? Air, water, land, and noise pollution." Then, students were asked to mention examples of the causes of each type of pollution. Following this, some effects were also written o the board.

Later on, students had to do a reading about air pollution that was in their handout. The instructor had them read the text out loud. She asked for volunteers and some students read a specific part of it. When they read it, they had to answer a set of questions, and they also had to complete a chart with information from the reading. They kept working until 9:25. At this time, the class was dismissed.

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez
Date: October 2nd, 2009.   Class start: 11:50 am. Class end: 1:50 p.m. Lessons: 3
Number of students: 25, 9 Males and 13 females
Topic: Tourist Places Offered by Costa Rican Communities.

When the researcher got into the classroom, he teacher greeted learners and told them to copy some questions that he had written on the board. He went out and took two boys with him. Meanwhile, students were copying the questions that included:

1. Why do birds migrate?

2. When do they start flying to the Arctic?

3. Which natural beacons (guidance) do birds use as references?

4. Write three types of birds.

5. What's the name of a Central American bird?

6. Where do birds converge (meet at one point)?

7. What do birds use boats for?

8. Where do birds fly to in fall migration?

9. How many times a year do birds fly?

10. Which are the causes of death when migrating?

11. What happened to their resting places?

12. Where do the Albatross fly to?

13. Where do penguins travel from?

Later, the teacher and the two students came back, carrying a TV set and a DVD on some type of furniture. However, it was too big for it to go through the door. For this reason, students were told to go to a different classroom with more space to bring the equipment in. Some minutes later, the students and teacher brought the TV set and the DVD to the new classroom. All of this setup took around 30 minutes. Pupils had to watch a documentary to answer the questions that were written on the board of the first classroom. The documentary began to play at 12:30 pm. While the learners were watching, the teacher was checking visually for the attendance. While watching, some students were taking notes. At 1:30 pm, the documentary was still playing. The rest of the class followed the same pattern. 5 minutes before the class ended, the teacher asked students to hand in the answers to the questions, either on their notebooks or on a separate sheet of paper. Many students did not answer them, but the teacher picked some of them. This was the end of the class.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís

Date: October 2nd, 2009.   Class start: 8:55 p.m Class end: 10:05 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 27, 11 boys, 16 girls.

Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

The teacher began calling the roll. She told learners they were going to use the 2 lessons to write a paragraph about the topic. She wrote the following instruction on the board: Write a ten-sentence paragraph. You have a pen pal from the U.S. He wants to know about the problem of pollution in our country. Write a brief paragraph, explaining to him about one kind of pollution. Mention causes, effects, and preventive measures.

She read this to students and let them know they could write about any of the four types of pollution and other information they wanted to add. She said she would check the first person to finish. They were given the remaining time to write the paragraph. She also mentioned that they would have to write a similar paragraph in the test. The teacher walked around the classroom to make sure they were working. When students finished writing, they

took them to the teacher for her to correct their mistakes. This was how the lesson was developed. The class ended at 8:45 pm.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional de San Isidro   Teacher: Falina Díaz

Date: October 6th, 2009   Class start: 12: 35 p.m. Class end: 1:15 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 30, 10 boys and 20 girls.

Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

This day the teacher completed the daily routines and told students that she would assign the homework. She told them to do the last two reading s of the handout as homework, and that she would check it in class. Students agreed because the instructor said that the readings were very similar to the ones they had done so far. This class, the teacher told learners they would have just one lesson because the English department had a meeting. For this reason, they were instructed to do two readings and do the exercises that were a multiple choice practice and a short answer exercise. They began working on this and were ready 5 minutes before the class ended, so the answers were checked before they left. The teacher finally told them to pick up the new handout at the photocopy place for the following class. After this, the class was dismissed.

High school: Colegio Técnico profesional General Viejo   Teacher: Jéssica Barquero

Date: October 6th, 2009.   Class start: 3: 00 p.m. Class end: 4:20 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 18, 14 males and 4 females.

Topic: Linking Words in Context.

The teacher greeted students and asked them to take out their new handout. Some of them said they had forgotten to buy it and asked her for permission to go and get it. The teacher allowed the 5 boys to go. Then, she asked pupils to mention the function of linking words. Some students said they were used to order sentences. The instructor told them it was

related to that. She told them linking words were used to connect ideas. This took around 10 minutes.

Afterwards, the teacher read some information related to linking words and the definition of "conjunction." She called on individual students to read a conjunction, its use, and an example. On the second page of the handout, learners had to use their dictionary. They looked some conjunctions up in the dictionary, and when they had them, 15 minutes later, they went to the board to write them, both conjunction and its translation in Spanish. As soon as this was finished, the instructor instructed learners to read a short text and take out the conjunctions they could find in it. 5 minutes afterwards, the teacher read the text and students mentioned the linking words they had found.

Later, they had to look up a list of 18 connectors and write down their meaning. The teacher also told them to complete some sentences that gave the functions of the connectors. This took 25 minutes. Again, the facilitator checked the meanings and gave some others in Spanish. She said that the last activity had to do with choosing the right connector to link 2 sentences. Ss began doing it, but there was not enough time for them to finish it and check. At 4:20, the class ended, so the teacher told pupils they would finish the following lesson.

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez
Date: October 7th, 2009.   Class start: 2:10 pm. Class end: 3:30 p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: 15, 6 Males and 9 females
Topic: Tourist Places Offered by Costa Rican Communities.

The teacher entered the classroom and told students to work on their handout. He said he would continue with the project, so they would have to work alone again. He told them to work in their handout. He said he wanted them to do two readings and the exercises that accompanied them. Their names were "Jump into Tico Adventure" and "The Call of the Canopy in Jacó." He went out and left them working. Several students kept walking around the classroom, while others were working. A group of students sat together in group and started working. Other students used their dictionaries to look up unfamiliar vocabulary while some learners asked the researcher for the meaning of some words. The class went on the same way for the two lessons. The teacher never showed up. The class was over at 3:30 pm.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional General Viejo   Teacher: Jéssica Barquero

Date: October 7ᵗʰ, 2009.   Class start: 10: 00 a.m. Class end: 10:40 a.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 20, 16 males and 4 females.

Topic: Linking Words in Context.

The teacher got into the classroom, greeted students, and called the roll. She told them they would have just 1 lesson because she had to meet with the other English teachers for the preparation of the Language week. After this, she checked the practice that was pending from the previous class. Then, the teacher told students to look for as many connectors as they could in a word search in 5 minutes. As soon as they finished, pupils mentioned the ones they found, and the teacher gave a chocolate to a girl who found the biggest number of connectors. Afterwards, learners were instructed to continue working on the handout. This time, they had to find more connectors in some sentences and look them up in the dictionary once they had identified them. They started looking them up, but time wasn't enough. The teacher told them they would finish the coming week and allowed them to pack and leave for them to have lunch. This was the end of the class.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional de San Isidro   Teacher: Falina Díaz

Date: October 8th, 2009   Class start: 2:10 p.m. Class end: 3:30 p.m.   Lessons: 2

Number of students: 26, 8 boys and 18 girls.

Topic: Linking Words in Context.

The teacher began the class by greeting the students and calling the roll. Then she said she was going to give them their tests back and began calling on each student and jotted down the grades on her record. This took about 25 minutes. While she was doing this, she asked students to continue working on their handout. When she was finished, she stood up from her desk and started checking the test for students to make sure that the points had been counted correctly. Some students had doubts about their results, so they went to check to her desk. When the doubts were clarified, the teacher directed students' attention to their handout. There was a summary chart of transitional words and connectors. She went on each one of the

categories and explained the use of the connectors orally to pupils. She also read a list of 21 sentences in which connectors were highlighted. Students were told to study the example sentences. After they were finished, the teacher instructed learners to complete 8 statements with the connectors given. They were *although, consequently (therefore), because* and *otherwise*. They took 6 minutes to complete this practice. When they were done with it, the teacher called on some specific students to go to the board and write one of the sentences. They wrote them on the board, and some mistakes were corrected by the teacher who read the statements and prompted pupils to correct the ones that were mistaken.

Once the practice was checked, the instructor asked them to do a multiple choice exercise in which they had to choose the write linking word from the alternatives. This was done in 10 minutes. And the teacher just read the answers this time. The last activity of the class was a dictionary use activity. Students were told to look up 13 connectors in the dictionary and write down their meaning. This was the end of the class.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís
Date: October 8th, 2009.   Class start: 7:35 p.m Class end: 8:45 p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: 27, 11 boys, 16 girls
Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

The teacher greeted students and called the roll. She asked students to open up their handout because they would do a reading about the ozone layer. The reading was very long, so the teacher asked for volunteers to read out loud for the whole class. A male volunteered and read the first 3 paragraphs. He mispronounced several words, but the teacher only corrected some of them. Students asked her for the meaning of some words, which she translated to Spanish. After this boy's participation, a girl continued reading. Again she was corrected very few times by the teacher even though many words were mispronounced. The lesson continued like this for almost the first lesson. When they finished reading the text and clarifying the vocabulary, the instructor told learners to do the exercises that followed. These included a multiple choice practice that pupils completed in 5 minutes, a true/false exercise, and a short answer part. They took another five minutes to do the true/false exercise, but they

could not finish the short answer practice. The teacher told them they were going to check the first two exercises, and she instructed them to complete the short answer part at home. They checked the exercises by reading the questions or propositions and providing the answers. This was the last activity of the class, and it was dismissed at 8:45 pm.

High school: Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias   Teacher: Rafael Chávez

Date: October 9th, 2009.   Class start: 11:50 am. Class end: 1:50 p.m. Lessons: 3

Number of students: 25, 9 Males and 13 females

Topic: Tourist Places Offered by Costa Rican Communities.

The teacher greeted students, called the roll, and told them they would check the answers to the exercises they worked on the previous class. First, he wrote some sports students had to identify and explained a little about each one of them. Then, he called on some specific learners to write the answers of the completion exercise they had to answer based on the text "Jump into Tico Adventure." As soon as they finished writing, he read the text "The Call of the Canopy in Jacó" and the propositions of the multiple choice exercise for students to provide the letter of the right answer. This took 20 minutes.

Later on, the teacher told students to write a pair of sentences related to Costa Rican biodiversity. He said that the sentences could talk about positive and negative aspects and gave them 10 minutes to do it. After the 10 minutes, the students were still not done with their sentences, so the teacher gave them a little more time. 5 minutes later, the teacher divided the board in two parts by drawing a line in the middle of it with a marker. The teacher wrote a title on the left half of the board: "Costa Rica: A paradise in Destruction?" He also wrote the first idea, the topic sentence: "Cost Rica is a country full of fauna and flora, but lately it has been affected by many factors." He left it like this, and called on 4 students to write their sentences on the right part of the board. They wrote them and the teacher used them to develop the paragraph. He asked students to tell him linking words they could use to unite or connect the ideas. However, the sentences that the students wrote only mentioned positive aspects, so the teacher wrote three sentences, mentioning some examples of how Costa Ricans are destroying the natural resources. All of this took almost a lesson.

He then used all of the sentences on the right part of the board, including the ones he also wrote, to complete the paragraph on the left part of the board. This took ten more minutes. Once it was finished, it looked like this:

Costa Rica: A paradise in Destruction?

Cost Rica is a country full of fauna and flora, but lately it has been affected by many factors. Costa Rica has a lot of beaches, volcanoes, and tourist attractions that people can enjoy. At these places, people can go swimming, bird watching, hiking, and camping. Many animals and plants are part of its biodiversity. We have turtles, humming birds, toucans, orchids and many other examples. However, we have cut down many trees, and we are polluting the air, water, and land. The construction of tourist resorts is also damaging the environment and the flora and fauna. Therefore, we have to protect our natural resources for Costa Rica to continue being a paradise.

Once the paragraph was ready, the teacher asked students to copy it and he went out. This was at 12:25 p.m. Students began copying the paragraph. The teacher came back at 12:30 p.m. Students were still copying. The teacher erased the right part of the board and wrote down the topics for the test. In writing the paragraph and the topics for the test, students took almost the remaining time of the class. The teacher explained the topics for the exam and told them students to pack their belongings. The class was dismissed at 1:50 pm.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís
Date: October 9th, 2009.   Class start: 8:55 p.m Class end: 10:05 p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: 7, 4 boys, 3 girls.
Topic: Causes and Effects of Natural Resources Misuse.

Very few students came to class this night. The teacher told students they could already buy the new handout that she had already left at the photocopy place. Then, the professor continued checking the answers to a reading practice that students were working on the previous class. As the students had not finished it the lesson before, she gave them time to look for the answers. They sought the answers and they were read for the teacher to write them on the board. Students mispronounced many words, but the teacher did not correct them

in any way. This went on for 20 minutes. While they were answering, they commented, in Spanish, the information with the teacher. The teacher spoke in Spanish and English interchangeably. When they came to an end, the teacher told them she was going to read a text about natural disasters. She began reading the text out loud while pupils were listening and following the reading. The teacher asked them if they understood the vocabulary and translated some words for them. She read in English and made a summary of it in Spanish after each paragraph. When the instructor finished doing the reading, she told learners an anecdote she lived when she was 16 years old. The anecdote was told in Spanish, though. Some students told other anecdotes. They were also in Spanish. Afterwards, she began reading another part of the reading. Meanwhile, some of the students were talking. She finished reading and told them to start solving the exercises that followed. However, it was too late to start and thus, the class was dismissed.

High school: Colegio Técnico profesional General Viejo   Teacher: Jéssica Barquero
Date: October 13th, 2009.   Class start: 3: 00 p.m. Class end: 4:20 p.m. Lessons: 2
Number of students: 19, 15 males and 4 females.
Topic: Linking Words in Context.

The class began with the daily routines. The teacher asked students to take out their handout. She wrote the connectors from the practice that was pending on the board, along with their meanings in Spanish. Then, she explained the use of paired conjunctions to learners by writing some examples on the board and directing students' attention to the words these connectors linked and at their position. Then, she told learners to complete a text with some of the conjunctions they had previously studied and these paired conjunctions she explained this day. This took 25 minutes. Pupils began working and took another 10 minutes. After this, the practice was checked. The text was read by the teacher and students provided the answers. As soon as this was done, they had to complete some statements with the words the paired conjunctions linked as in "Either...or... joins _____(two nouns)." This took 5 minutes. The next activity was very similar to the first: They had to complete a text with a list of connectors given. However, the text was longer this time. This

took almost the rest of the lesson because 10 minutes before the class was over, the teacher asked students to stop to talk about their responsibilities for the culture's week. This was how the class ended.

High school: Colegio Técnico Profesional de San Isidro   Teacher: Falina Díaz

Date: October 15th, 2009   Class start: 2:10 p.m. Class end: 3:30 p.m.   Lessons: 2

Number of students: 30, 10 boys and 20 girls.

Topic: Linking Words in Context.

The teacher got into the classroom and greeted students. After this, she sat at her desk and checked attendance. Once she completed the daily routines, she checked the meaning of the linking words students had to look up the previous lesson. Students read the meanings they found and the teacher gave them other meanings in addition to the ones they had, this was done with some of them, like since, therefore, and for instance.

Once the instructor made sure that all the students had the meanings of these connectors, she told them to read two different paragraphs and to underline coordinate conjunctions in the first and correlative conjunctions in the second.

After this exercise was completed and checked, pupils were asked to complete first some sentences and then a paragraph with appropriate conjunctions. When students began working, the teacher stood up and told them to take out their materials because she was going to check that all of them had them.

While working, some students complained that the paragraph was very complicated. The teacher told them to read it carefully and understand it. This took a lot of time, however. To check this exercise, the facilitator read the statements and allowed the learners to give the answers. For the text, she did the same, but this time students told some wrong answers, so she provided them with the right one.

Again in their handouts, students had to complete three more exercises. Some of them complained they were tired of doing the same type of exercise, but the teacher ignored them. Students took the rest of the lesson to finish this. The teacher told them they were going to

check them 5 minutes before the class was over. Nevertheless, she could not finish checking on time and had to let pupils leave at 3:30 p.m.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís

Date: October 15th, 2009.   Class start: 7:35 p.m Class end: 8:45 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 24, 9 boys, 15 girls

Topic: Common Illnesses, New Diseases, and Epidemics.

The class began with the daily routines. After them, the teacher asked learners if they had brought the new handout. Many students did not bring it because they were absent the previous class and did not know they were supposed to buy the new handout. For this reason, the teacher told them to choose a person to go and make the copies. A student volunteered to go and picked up the money to make them. The teacher told students they were going to check the last reading practice from the previous class and that was related to causes and effects of natural resources misuse. She started checking it by asking learners to give her the answers. She wrote these on the board. This took a lot of time, more than a lesson, because it included a matching exercise, and three charts that learners had to complete with information from the text. Half an hour after the student who went to make the copies left, she came back with the handouts. She passed them out, and the instructor told them to start working on the warm-up. It was a type of multiple choice in which learners had to read a description of a disease and mark the option that gave its name. This was not easy for students because there were a lot of new words for them, so the pupils who had dictionaries had to look them up to be able find the answer. This took the rest of the class. Two minutes before the end of the class, this practice was checked. The teacher read the propositions and learners provided the answer. This was the end of the class.

High school: Liceo Nocturno de Pérez Zeledón   Teacher: Yolanda Ureña Solís

Date: October 16th, 2009.   Class start: 8:55 p.m Class end: 10:05 p.m. Lessons: 2

Number of students: 26, 11 boys, 15 girls

Topic: Common Illnesses, New Diseases, and Epidemics.

The teacher called the role and told learners to open their handout. She began presenting a set of pictures she had taken from a picture dictionary. These pictures included parts of the body and aliments, symptoms and injuries. The pictures were numbered so pupils could relate the picture with the word in English. Nevertheless, students translated the words as they were read, especially when they knew them. This took 30 minutes. After this, learners were asked to complete some definitions with the names of many common illnesses and new diseases. Just as in the previous lesson, there was a lot of complex vocabulary students had to look up for them to understand the definitions. They had three pages with this exercise. They took the rest of the class to finish it. Almost at the end of the class, they were still not finished, so the teacher told students they would continue working on this the following class. The class ended at 10:05 p.m.