Writing in the Classroom: What do We Eat That With?

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Resumen: La escritura es una habilida importante que ha sido desatendida de alguna forma en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en la educación secundaria. Consecuentemente, el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en los estudiantes ha sido obstaculizado a través de los años. Por lo tanto, como respuesta a esta situación particular, esta ponencia presenta los resultados de un estudio llevado a cabo con cuatro grupos de décimo nivel en cuatro diferentes colegios públicos en Pérez Zeledón. El propósito de este estudio es descubrir los posibles efectos que la actual enseñanza y evaluación de la escritura tiene en el desempeño comunicativo de estos estudiantes. Un tipo híbrido de investigación va a ser utilizado para recolectar la información para responder a la interrogante de si la escritura se está enseñando como un proceso conducente al desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en esta habilidad específica. Luego, el análisis de la información recopilada va a ser la base para dar sugerencias y recomendaciones para el mejoramiento de la enseñanza y la evaluación de la escritura tales como: la implementación de evaluación continua para orientar la escritura a su proceso y no su producto y la incorporación de actividades y estrategias más contextualizadas para enseñar la escritura con propósitos comunicativos y facilitar la expresión de ideas. La información será recolectada por medio del uso de instrumentos tales como cuestionarios para los estudiantes y los profesores, observación no-participativa basada en una lista de cotejo, y la recolección de muestras de escritos de los estudiantes in colegios académicos públicos. Una vez llevado a cabo el análisis de los instrumentos, la información obtenida permitirá la revisión meticulosa de cada uno de los instrumentos para establecer conclusiones y recomendaciones.

Palabras clave: Proceso de escritura, escritura, evaluación continua, habilidad comunicativa, retroalimentación correctiva

Abstract: Writing is an important skill that has been somehow neglected in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in secondary education. As a result, students' development of communicative competence has been hampered over the year. Therefore, as a response to this specific issue, this lecture 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 is to discover the possible effects that current teaching of writing and its evaluation have on the

communicative performance of those students. A hybrid type of research is going to be used to collect the data to answer the question of whether or not writing is being taught as a process leading to the development of communicative ability in this specific skill. After that, the analysis of the data gathered is going to be the basis for providing suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of the teaching and evaluation of 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 writing for communicative purposes and to ease the expression of meaning. The data will be collected under the use of data collection instruments such as questionnaires for students and in-service teachers, nonparticipant observation based on a tally-sheet, and collection of writing samples from the students in public high schools. Once the analysis of instruments is conducted, the data gathered will allow the researcher to check each piece of information in depth to come up with a set of conclusions and recommendations.

Key words: Writing process, writing, writing assessment, evaluation, communicative ability, corrective feedback

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 Public 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 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 vocabulary. 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, such as writing, are left aside.

The problem approached in this study is important because it will allow the researchers to discern important aspects of tenth graders' ability to write, in connection to the model of process writing 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.

II Literature Review

Writing is not an easy task, even for native speakers of a language. Nunan (1999) affirmed that:

> In terms of skills, producing a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing is probably the most difficult thing there is to do in language. It is something most native speakers never master. For second language learners the challenges are enormous, particularly for those who go on to a university and study in a language that is not their own. (p. 271)

Thus, it is important to set the foundations that are going to guide a writing methodology that is focused on the process as well as the product.

2.1 Methods for Teaching Writing

Writing focus has moved from the "exclusive emphasis on the products of writing to emphasis on the process of writing and interactive learning between teachers and students with a focus on meaning" (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996, pp. 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 (1996) proposed. 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. (p. 139)

This theory is expanded by Raimes (as cited in Omaggio, 2001) who summarized six approaches to writing, including *The Process Approach* that "emphasizes the writing process over product, with adequate time provided to develop a piece of writing, a recognition of the recursiveness of the process, and the encouragement of exploration of topics through writing" (p. 324). Therefore, instructors should approach writing as a process which students may implement combining work in and outside the classroom.

Additionally, Jan Frodesen (2001) suggested 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" (p. 237). However, Frodesen cautioned 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 (pp. 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 techniquesin this way, 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. However, teaching grammar should not follow the traditional role but help the learner express his/her ideas in writing. As Jan Frodesen (2001) put 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" (p. 233). 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 explained 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" (p. 246). 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. 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.

2.2 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, 2007, p. 270). 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 learners 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 (2008) showed this in a study this scholar developed in relation to this issue. This researcher affirmed:

> 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. (p. 364)

This evidences that learners need to receive feedback on their use of the language so that they can continue to advance in their interlanguage development. 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, Shin (2008) stated 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" (p. 364). He also established 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 (2007) recommended that teachers keep a balance between the type 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 (274). 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.

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 (2009), results pointed 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 Valdez (1996) described 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.

2.3 Evaluation and Assessment Methods in Writing

The evaluation and assessment of writing have also evolved under the influence of the communicative approach to teaching English. For example, if a writing 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. In this regard, Brown (1994) stated:

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. (p. 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 measures 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 & Valdez, 1996, p. 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" (p. 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 writing has changed to a more communicative perspective, the evaluation and assessment must change accordingly.

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 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 Findings

3.1 Questionnaire for teachers[16]

One of the most significant findings from this instrument is that, even though teachers provided learners with some time for planning before writing, this time was not sufficient for adequate preparation. They implemented a little planning, drafting or writing, but they skipped revising, editing and proofreading, and feedback was provided in a general fashion, not providing individual feedback. Through this, it became evident that writing instruction did not follow a structured set of procedures to guide the learner in the expression of ideas through writing as the writing process demands.

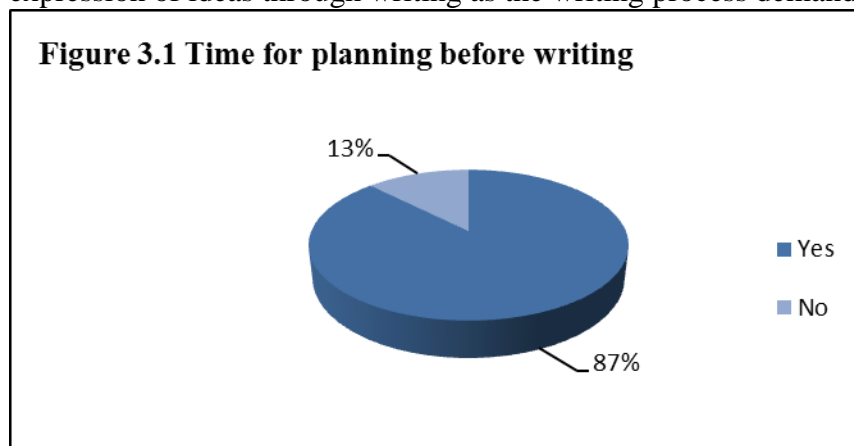**Figure 3.1 Time for planning before writing**

13%

87%

■ Yes

■ No

Figure 3.1. This information was gathered from the questionnaire
for teachers.

Another significant finding was that more than half of the teachers responded that they do not ask their students to rewrite their paragraphs after they receive feedback. This is shown in the figure 3.2 below.
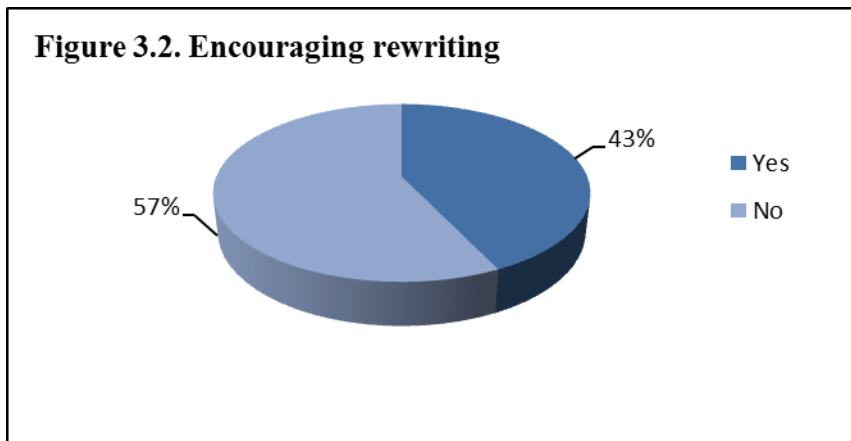
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[16] See appendix 2

Figure 3.2. This information was gathered from the
questionnaire for teachers

3.2 Questionnaire for students

Proofreading is very useful when writing because it helps the writer find mistakes and improve his/her writing. According to this graph, only 13% of the learners do not check their paragraphs after writing them while 87% of them implement proofreading.
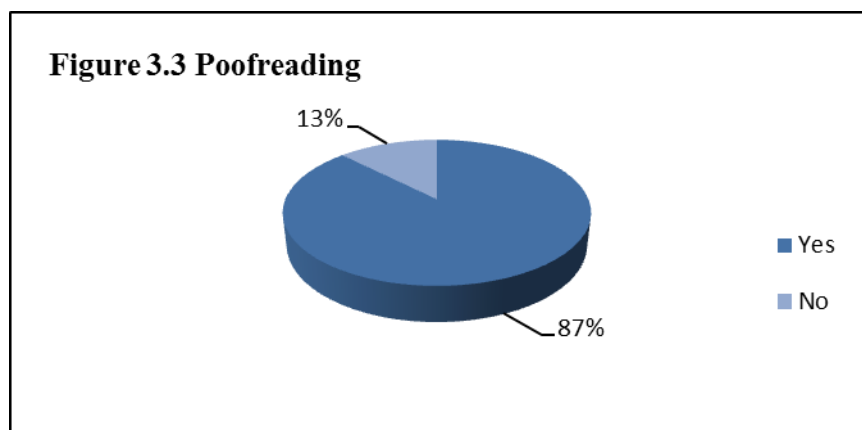
Figure 3.3 This information was gathered from the questionnaire for students.

Even though students expressed in the questionnaire that they use proofreading, as is shown in the figure above, proofreading was not performed when the writing test was applied because they committed many spelling mistakes that could have been corrected if proofreading had been applied.

3.4 Observations

3.4.1 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 an oral presentation about what they wrote, their mistakes were given to them on the board as a general error analysis. The feedback given to the learners was also explicit.

Figure 3.4. Assessment and evaluation
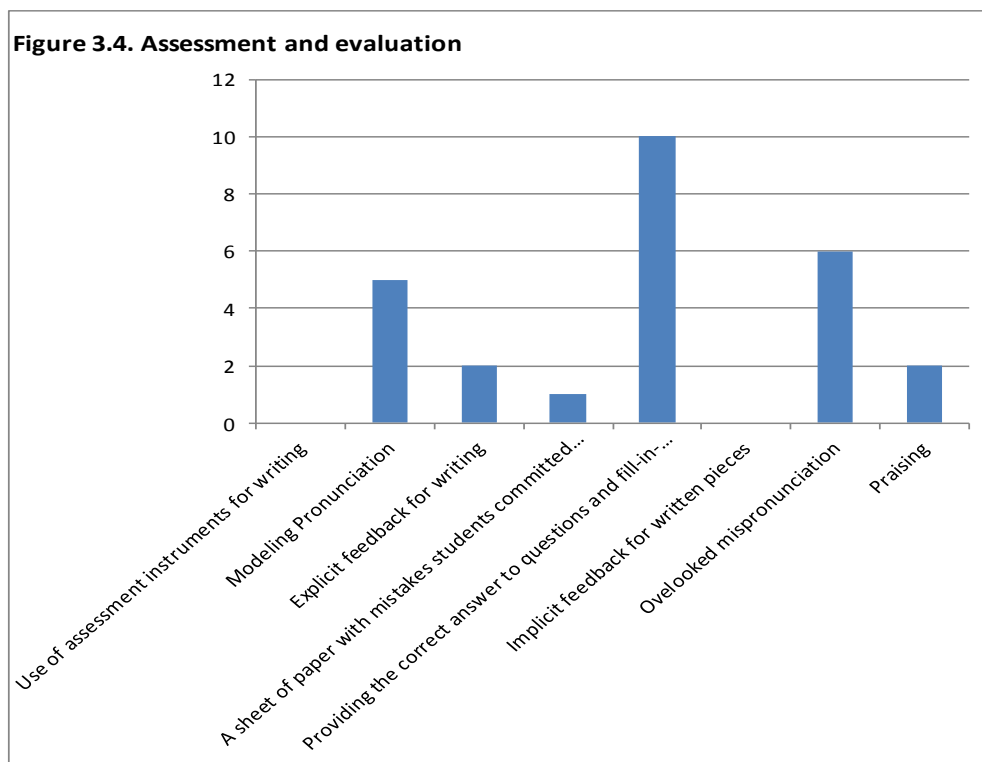
Figure 3.4 This information was collected from the observations.

As can be noted in the figure 3.2 above, the type of feedback teachers used evidenced the use of just explicit feedback for the writing part as well as for the grammatical part of the instruction taking place in the classroom. Students were always given the corrrections and could not develop true communicative ability since their critical thinking was not reinforced. Some students corrected their writing pieces, but this is not proof that they understood the mistkes they committed.

3.5 Level of achievement in writing in the target population
3.5.1 Most Common Types of Grammatical errors
On the writing tests applied by the researchers, there were 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. However, there were also 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.

Table. 1. 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	20	46,5%
Wrong use of articles	3	7%
Wrong use of quantifiers	8	19%
Incorrect spelling	29	67%
Use of L1 or creative constructions	35	81%
Lack of coherence and unity	34	79%
Total inability to express ideas or ideas expressed in isolated sentences	9	21%

Table 1. This resulted from the writing test.

The information above made evident that the learners have a lot of difficulties expressing their ideas in writing. Thirty-five out of the total sample of 43 (81%) lacked 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.

3.6 Level of achievement according to ACTFL writing guidelines
This writing test was applied to 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 fifty-one 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, forty-three 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, 2005, p. 58). These competencies were assessed based on the ACTFL guidelines (Breiner-Sanders, K. E., Swender, E., & Terry, R. M., 2001, p. 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 was subdivided into high, mid, and low levels of proficiency.

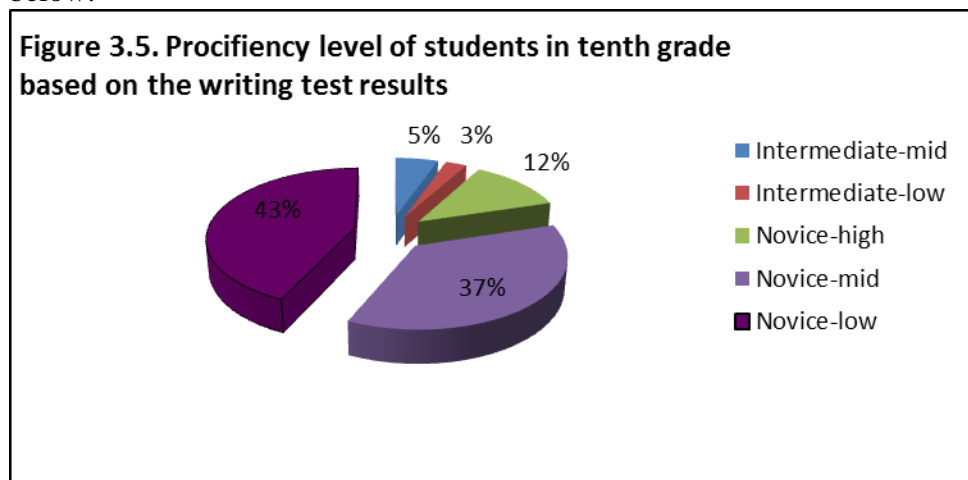The tests were scored based on the scale[17], and the results are shown in the exhibit below:

Figue 3.5. This information was the analysis of the results of the writing test.

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[17] See appendix 5

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 novece-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 table number one like awkward constructions, use of L1 or creative constructions, etcetera.

IV Conclusions

After carrying out a thorough analysis of the data collected, the researchers arrived at the following conclusions:

Even though the syllabus designed for students in the fourth cycle sets the parameters for teachers to implement the CLT[18] in the classroom, this approach is not fully implemented by the teachers observed. The steps to teach writing in a communicative way are not thoroughly developed the way they have to in order to promote the development of communicative writing ability on learners.

Despite the fact that the syllabus provided by the Ministry of Public Education establishes that the teacher has to guide the writing process to aid the students 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, writing, and post writing activities that permit pupils to use prior knowledge and relate it to the writing task, writing instruction is given a superficial emphasis because it has very little space in the English curriculum in the PES. Some of the basic steps in the writing process were skipped or not given enough emphasis to develop the writing ability in students. It is evident that the writing process is not developed the way it is proposed in the syllabus.

Moreover, the syllabus provided by the MEP does include a clear proficiency level as a reference for both teachers and students to know the desired outcome of instruction at the end of the school year.

Another conclusion is that both teacher and students 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 amendments. This evidences that the main focus of writing is still the product when CLT promotes a focus on the process.

The only type of corrective feedback provided by teachers was explicit feedback either by corrections on the students' paragraphs or by general error corrections on the

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board. Nonetheless, this type of feedback was not significant because it did not help learners to do well on other types of writing inasmuch as they were still not able to put their thought in writing, revise them, and edit them as a result of a process.

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

Based on the result of the writing test, it is evident that the majority of the mistakes committed by the learners had to do with grammar, such as lack of coherence and unity, use of the L1 or creative constructions, incorrect spelling, wrong use of quantifiers, wrong use of articles, and awkward constructions. However, there were also cases in which students were either totally unable to express ideas, or they 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 putting 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 by developing supporting details coherently put together to develop 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 apprentices used are a reflection of the type of writing they do in the classroom where the first draft is completed and presented as the final product, without carrying out any careful prewriting activity, drafting or revision of the task. They did so regardless of the specific instructions given to them on the test. Thus, most learners 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 unclearly suggests they must have. 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 needs to express themselves in writing in the task that was set out on 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.

4.1 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 for communicative purposes. In this way teachers will be able to design activities that are more appealing so that learners' motivation can increase, favoring language learning.

Equally important is the fact that teachers should also receive some training on the assessment of the different skills that are taught in PES. It is quite important for

teacher to understand that they must be able to introduce more integrated methodologies into their teaching to help learners reach high proficiency levels in all language skills.

It is also imperative to help students become aware of their own learning process through self and peer assessment in the classroom. In this way instructors and learners can monitor the progress they make in regard to the attainment of the goals set in the national syllabus.

Another recommendation for MEP's authorities is to set clear and attainable proficiency levels to be reached at the end of every school year. This will ease the roles of both teachers and learners since they will clearly know what is expected of them.

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Appendix 1
Universidad Nacional Sede Regional Brunca
Cuestionario para Estudiantes
Diseñado por Diego Garro y Juan Manuel Méndez.

Institución: _____ Sexo: _____

      Las siguientes preguntas pretenden recolectar información sobre el proceso de escritura en inglés en el aula. Muy amablemente, encierre **Si** o **No** de acuerdo con lo que normalmente ocurre en el aula. La información que usted nos brinde será usada confidencialmente y solo para los propósitos de la investigación.

1. ¿Sabe usted cuáles son las partes del párrafo?   Si/No

2. ¿Le da el profesor tiempo para prepararse antes de escribir algo en inglés?   Si/No

3. ¿Se le solicita que organice las ideas de alguna forma específica antes de escribir?   Si/No

4. ¿Se le pide que trabaje individualmente para generar ideas?   Si/No

5. ¿Se le pide que trabaje en grupos para generar ideas?   Si/No

6. ¿Se le da suficiente tiempo para escribir?   Si/No

7. ¿Escribe usted solo en la clase?   Si/No

8. ¿Escribe usted con frecuencia en la clase de inglés?   Si/No

9. ¿Le revisa el profesor todo lo que usted escribe en clase?   Si/No

10. ¿Le revisa algún compañero(a) lo que usted escribe?   Si/No

11. ¿Auto-revisa usted lo que ha escrito cuando termina de escribir?   Si/No

12. ¿Recibe usted ideas para mejorar lo que escribe?   Si/No

13. ¿Le dan sus compañeros ideas para mejorar lo que usted escribe?   Si/No

14. ¿Son las correcciones solo dadas con marcas o tachones sobre lo que usted escribe? Si/No

15. ¿Usa el profesor escalas o listas de control para corregir lo que usted escribe?   Si/No

16. ¿Toma el profesor tiempo para explicarle las correcciones que le hace a lo que usted escribe?

     Si/No

17. ¿Rescribe usted lo que había escrito después de haber entendido las correcciones del profesor?

     Si/No

Appendix 2

Closed Questionnaire for teachers

Universidad Nacional

Sede Regional Brunca

Designed by Diego Garro Bustamante and Juan Manuel Méndez.

Institution: _____ Sex: _____

Years of experience: _____

The following questions are intended to gather information on the writing process in the classroom. Kindly, answer the questions according to your experience and to the methodology that you implement in your context. The information you provide will be confidentially handled and used only for research purposes.

1. Do you teach the parts of a paragraph before you ask students to write?   Yes/No
2. Do you give your students time to prepare before they write something in English?
        Yes/No
3. Do you encourage learners to organize ideas in a specific way before writing?
        Yes/No
4. Do you ask students to gather ideas before they write by (Check all that you use):

Discussion _____ Individual work _____ Outlining _____ Peer work _____

Clustering (Diagrams/ word maps/ idea maps)_____ Previous research_____

5. How much time do you give learners to write?   _____
6. Do you ask students to write in_____ (Check all that you use)?

   Class _____   At home _____

7. How often do you ask your students to write in the English class? Explain if necessary.

_____
_____
_____.

8. What strategies do you implement to provide feedback to your students once they have finished writing?

_____
_____
_____.

9. Do you talk with your students about the errors they commit in their writing?

> Yes/No

10. Do you have your learners rewrite their writing pieces after giving them feedback?

> Yes/No

Appendix 3

Observation Tally sheet

High school : _____ Time: _____ #of lessons: _____

Topic: _____Date: _____

Writing Process stages	Time	Type	Tallies of the actual application per lesson
1. Planning			
2. Drafting/writing			
3. Revising			
4. Editing and **proofreading**			
5. Feedback			
Comments:			

Designed by Diego Garro Bustamante.

Appendix 4

Universidad Nacional Sede Regional Brunca

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 or 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 have 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.

Sex: _____ High school: _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____

_____

Appendix 5

Assessment Scale for Writing Tasks at the 10th Grade Level

Based on the "ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Writing: Revised 2001

		ADVANCED
Grade	**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.

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	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.