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Using Planning As A Way of Improving Writing in Narrative Texts

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Research Report submitted

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### **Abstract**

This action research study investigated the use of planning as a way to improve narrative writing. The participants were a group of 23 eighth graders between the ages of 13 and 15 whose English level was A1 (CEFR), attending three hours of English class per week in a rural public school. The study emerged from the need to help learners improve writing in narrative texts in EFL. They were asked to use some strategies of planning such as graphic organizers, brainstorming, and organizing ideas to write a story. The results obtained from the data analysis and comparison of the previous students' productions to the final writing products revealed that learners improved vocabulary, syntactic and rhetorical structures and were motivated and confident to write short stories. In conclusion, the findings of this study displayed that the use of strategies of planning facilitated the writing of narrative texts in L2 in spite of the students' English level. Additionally, the pedagogical implications focused on planning as a way to improve writing skills, autonomy, and interest to write in English and extend planning to other types of texts.

*Key words:* Planning, writing, narrative, EFL.

### **Resumen**

Este estudio de investigación acción se centró en el uso de la planeación como una forma de mejorar la escritura narrativa. Los participantes fueron un grupo de 23 estudiantes de octavo grado entre las edades de los 13 y 15 años cuyo nivel de inglés era A1 de acuerdo al Marco Común Europeo, y que asistían a clases de inglés 3 horas a la semana. El estudio surgió de la necesidad de ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar la escritura en los textos narrativos en inglés como lengua extranjera. A los participantes se les pidió que siguieran las estrategias de la planeación tales como el gráfico, la lluvia de ideas, la organización de ideas para escribir cada historia. Los resultados obtenidos del análisis de la información y la comparación de los escritos

previos de los estudiantes con los productos finales revelaron que los estudiantes mejoraron tanto su nivel de confianza y motivación como el vocabulario y las estructuras sintácticas y retórica en la escritura de historias cortas. En conclusión, los resultados demostraron que el uso de la planeación fue una estrategia que facilitó la escritura de textos narrativos en lengua 2 a pesar del nivel de inglés de los estudiantes. Adicionalmente, las implicaciones pedagógicas se centraron en la planeación como una forma de mejorar las habilidades de escritura, autonomía, interés y el uso de la planeación en otro tipo de textos.

*Palabras claves:* planeación, escritura, narración, inglés como lengua extranjera.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

One of the challenges that most people have to face when they are at school or any moment of their lives is how to write, not only for academic purposes but also for personal reasons. Despite all teachers' efforts, the strategies and tips they implement to help students improve their writing skills do not seem to be effective. Teachers from Colombian schools complain that most of their students face difficulties to compose their writing at any level of competency. They do not know how to start and develop their ideas in a coherent way in order to make sense to their writings. For this reason, they get frustrated because they do not feel confident to write, especially when writing in another language, which implies transforming the way of thinking and embodying their ideas into a new system of communication. According to Richards (2002) writing implies more than a process of applying accurate grammar and a good variety of lexis or joining written words. The process is much more difficult for EFL learners because at the beginning they just try to transfer their native language structure to English.

In general, Ashworth (2004) stated that learners build some concepts and opinions about the world that help them organize their perception about their environment and adjust it to the world. But when they have to structure these concepts and then write them, especially in a foreign language, they find it complicated and challenging due to their lack of knowledge and confidence to start developing ideas through the writing process. In this stage, teachers play an important role to help them face these kinds of concerns. Teachers should provide students with strategies and show them the way to write and involve them in this new path of academic life. Perhaps, all efforts and strategies will never be enough, but just the beginning of a new adventure.

Based on the previous concerns about writing the researcher decided to develop this study implementing planning through narrative texts with eighth grade English learners whose ages were between 13 and 15 years at Técnico Industrial School in Boavita, Boyacá, in order to provide them with strategies to help them enhance their writing in narrative texts and to offer learners and teachers a new experience to transform their fears into a new opportunity to write in English.

This first part of the dissertation contains: the statement of the problem, the research question and objective and the justification of the study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The researcher started to work as an English teacher three years ago in rural public schools where most students have a low level of English and are reluctant to learn it. They feel very uncomfortable when they have to describe a topic of their interest in this language since they do not know how to communicate their ideas in English. Perhaps, it happens because they have not had the chance to use English as a means of communication and because they have only been exposed to this language through a traditional approach in which they have learned English through translating and memorizing vocabulary.

Nevertheless, when the participants started to learn English in the researcher's classes, they noticed they did not have to focus on many grammar exercises but on talking, listening, reading and writing. These skills were very difficult for them. However, when the researcher spoke to students, they were able to understand short instructions and expressions. In the same way, when they had to talk, they said just some single words. But when they had to write, the researcher observed that they got stuck because they did not know how to do it, how to start and how to develop their ideas. In the first writing they tried to do, they began by writing their draft

in Spanish; then, they looked up the words in the dictionary and started writing their ideas as if they were doing it in Spanish. Additionally, writing was a time consuming activity. In the second assignment, they did not know what ideas to write, what to say, and some of them were not able to write anything. It was very worrying not only for learners but also for the researcher. However, the researcher thought it was her challenge to offer learners an opportunity to enhance their writing skill, taking advantage of their interest and the motivation they displayed in her classes.

The researcher had been working with this group of 23 eighth graders for six months; during this time, she noticed the students would like to speak and write in English. In a questionnaire about writing, 95% of students answered they would like to write in English because writing is something important in this global world; furthermore, 66.6% agreed that writing is a way to build knowledge about the world (

**Appendix A**). They also stated that writing is a process that involves the development of various elements carefully such as organizing and connecting ideas, and applying grammar. Finally, they concluded that the type of text they would like to write the most was short stories. Based on these criteria, the idea of the proposal was to involve the students in writing narrative texts in English using some planning strategies in order to write a comprehensible text.

### **Research Question**

In the early teaching days of the researcher, she started to reflect upon her role, questioning many aspects of this process such as: Had she used the writing strategies in a correct way? Had she motivated her students enough? Had she implemented an appropriate methodology to teach English? What types of strategies must she implement to help learners write clearly in her classes? In addition, she questioned the role of the students in learning a



foreign language. Some questions were: Why did some students not like to write? Why was it difficult for learners to write comprehensible texts? Why did they write in English as if they were writing in Spanish? Did they have any concentration problems? Were they interested in writing in English? And what would happen if they learned a strategy to improve their writing? Could they use planning as a way to learn to organize and write coherent texts? Could they be trained in planning strategies to help them write clearly? These concerns among others were a base to focus on the main question which would guide this project and prompt the researcher to seek solutions.

**Main question.** What improvements, if any, can be observed when A1 eighth grade students introduce planning in writing narrative texts?

**General objective.** To describe and document what improvements, if any, can be observed when A1 eighth grade students introduce planning in writing narrative texts.

### **Rationale**

The purpose of this research project was to encourage eighth graders to improve writing narrative texts in English through the use of planning. According to a questionnaire (

**Appendix A**) applied to this group, 100 % of the learners pointed out that nowadays writing is very important because it lets them learn many concepts about world. Other students agreed that writing is a way to strengthen other skills. While 33.3 % of the students stated that their most common type of writing has been taking notes in the class and the most difficult aspect in writing was grammar and structuring ideas. Nevertheless, in spite of those concerns, learners expressed that they would like to write stories. Now, based on this statement, one of the objectives was to help them write their own thoughts, their insights, fantasies and experiences as a way to explore their fantasy, applying what Wiener (2003) stated: “in a magical world of expression by which a child experiences joys and pains of daily living” (p. 1). In this way, learners might stop seeing

writing as a requirement, ‘a wasting of ideas that does not make sense for any reader but also as a need and inspiration that is born from awareness’ (Byrne, 1988). Accordingly, students might write because they desire it and want to learn and not because it implies an obligation. In this respect, they needed to be taught how to write clear texts in English in which they could express what they thought and imagined. But to do this, they must learn that writing is a process that takes time, study, work, interest, effort, input as White and Arndt (1991) suggested. Input was provided by the teacher and learners through strategies, examples, materials and tasks. Students also had to learn to plan and reflect upon their learning and engage with the activities they would carry out such reading, planning, writing, rewriting and peer feedback, or as Tribble (1996) stated applying the four stages of the writing process such as prewriting, composing/drafting, revising, and editing. The idea was to offer students a new experience in which they would have the opportunity to use some planning strategies to improve their narrative texts feeling more confident about what they were doing.

Finally, the researcher expects this study will become a useful tool for teachers to get ideas on how to encourage learners to write clearly in English, taking into account that nowadays, the majority of students are required to use this language, especially in our contexts where the current project of Colombia Bilingüe is being implemented. It aims to improve the level of proficiency in English by 2019 (MEN, 2006). However, one of the reasons is not for obligation but just for desire and interest in writing comprehensible texts in L2 in which the teacher will become a guide and will use some planning strategies to help learners improve their ability and feel comfortable when writing.

## **Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework**

In this chapter, three constructs are stated to support the rationale of this project: writing, metacognitive strategies (planning), and narrative. The first section discusses writing in EFL as a creative process and writing as a cognitive process. The second section focuses on planning, a metacognitive strategy that involves setting goals, generating ideas and preparing the learner to write. The third section describes how the meaning of written stories is constructed and organized and the use of a temporal framework that relates the actions through a sequence of events. Finally, some research studies about writing and planning are included in order to understand and lead this project objectively.

### **Writing**

Writing has been one of the most difficult skills to develop in L2. Beginner writers not only need to have and master ample knowledge about grammar, lexis, and rhetorical organizations but they also need to strengthen their power of creation, a way of self-expression to develop their ideas, insights and reality to communicate effectively. In other words, writing implies the capacity to communicate effectively and convincingly more than capability to sit and start to write on a page (Scott, 1996). In this way, learners can be encouraged to develop writing based on a creative and cognitive process.

Wiener (2003) stated that through writing, novice writers can explore the magic expression of any child that resides in his mind which is full of joys and pains of the daily living and through the act of writing, his personal vision and his perceptions are revealed. Due to this act of personal expression, writing becomes a permanent record of experience that allows the writer to be free to communicate his visions and everything he knows about his world. Additionally, through writer's

words and sentences, he keeps the essence of the language evoking meaning that he wants to express and represent.

Wiener prompts teachers to encourage students to develop their imagination, to express their thoughts and feelings creating possible worlds in writing narrative texts. This differs from the types of writing that learners usually do in school. In the same way, learners can have an opportunity to express what they think and want focusing mainly on the meaning of their ideas more than on grammar issues (O'Brien, 2004).

Wiener (2003) also stated that a person can express what he has seen and stored in his mind either in a conscious or unconscious way. This experience comes from an event, a momentary flash of time, an action performed or thought that exists in the person's brain, and due to language, this experience is transformed into intelligible and meaningful texts that represent his world as he perceives it. In other words, Wiener has stated that learners should write about something significant not only for them but also for any reader. This fact would allow readers to enjoy the experience and creativity that writers offer through their texts.

However, learners rarely have the opportunities at school to represent their self-expression and creativity. Most of the time, writing tasks focus on developing rhetoric and complex structures in which learners have to write summaries and essays strictly avoiding grammatical errors. Additionally, teachers ask students to write more grammar exercises than stories that teachers could use to promote students' imagination and creativity. Nevertheless, students must learn to intertwine the creativity of their thoughts with the rhetoric structures to achieve to communicate the message. Kaye (1989) pointed out that in writing writers must generate a connection between self-expression and organizational writing to create an opportunity for a

powerful communication. In this light, these two notions: self-expression and creativity should be a way in which learners attempt to discover and express their insights in a creative way, but at the same time, these emotions and thoughts should be presented in a comprehensible and organized way for the reader. In other words, learners must combine not only the structure and meaning but also imagination and creativity in writing stories, especially in EFL.

Writing in a foreign language represents several difficulties that students have to face. For instance, when low proficiency L2 students have to write in the target language, their texts contain many grammatical and rhetorical errors which makes the message difficult to understand (Myles, 2002). The learners may have a lot to say, but due to their lack of L2 knowledge, they cannot express it in a comprehensible way. Many times students also feel frustrated due to the lack of knowledge of the correct usage of the language. They sometimes tend to over-generalize the rules they have learned when learning new structures. Badger and White (2000) pointed out writers weaknesses in L2 are focused on the lack of organization, ideas, lexis and knowledge of the target language, and in various occasions writers in L2 think that their writings are not correct and for this reason, they lack self-confidence. Furthermore, teachers and students state they do not have the opportunities and the time to practice writing. Mendoza (2005) also argued that students do not practice writing in the target language, which makes it an even more complex process.

Despite the complex process in writing in a foreign language, students with low L2 proficiency may benefit from their skills in L1. Hyland (2009) stated that L1 writers “transfer strategies across to the L2 and display skills similar to those of L1 writers” (p. 217). Accordingly, if L1 writers are skillful in L1, they could transfer their writing abilities to L2; or, low proficiency

writers who experience difficulties in their L1 may have also difficulties in L2.

In this sense, teachers need to be very careful to guide learners in the writing process. For instance, if a student displays difficulties in writing in L1, he may also display difficulties in writing in L2, which indicates that learners could be facing serious problems in writing, and they may not be able to write confidently, easily, and quickly; in this way, their capacity to write fluently must be affected. Richards and Schmidt (2002) defined fluency as the ability that a writer has to produce language with ease, not necessarily to write perfectly. Accordingly, learners need to be provided with the strategies, tools, tasks and spaces to face writing problems and be able to overcome their weaknesses, and thus to be able to produce language confidently and fluently.

Additionally, learners need to develop a cognitive process in the writing tasks. Hyland (2009) stated that writing focuses on a cognitive process, which is seen as a problem solving activity in which the writers apply a series of tasks and strategies such as pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing in order to solve the problem intellectually. Pre-writing includes all the elements used before writing as the purpose, the audience and the organization and in which learners may also brainstorm; while writing encompasses the drafting of the paper focusing on communication. Post writing involves revising the paper considering each linguistic and social issue.

In this sense, the learners need to understand and learn how to think, plan, write, rewrite, and edit the ideas they intend to communicate through their stories. Furthermore, learners need to have some knowledge to convey not only the linguistic structures but also the meaning of their ideas. For this reason, teachers need to offer students strategies and tasks that help them

understand and apply the writing process step by step with confidence to motivate them to write (Dörnyei, 2001).

For instance, a strategy would be the cognitive process model that Flowers and Hayes (1981) proposed, in which they pointed out some elements such as setting goals, planning extensively considering the context, exploring texts parts, finding solutions, and finally translating ideas to the page that beginner writers may choose to implement in their writing process. In this sense, teachers can offer learners ideas to start to write a draft and finish it, revise it, and finally edit it. Each one of these elements becomes a guide for learners to develop the writing in order to minimize the level of complexity of writing. Additionally, learners can use other elements such as brainstorming, planning, and re-reading to improve their confidence in writing (White and Arndt, 1991).

Likewise, Scott (1996) pointed out that the writing process is a set of actions which include “planning, generating ideas, organizing, analyzing, synthesizing and revising” that learners must implement to write effectively. In the same line, O’Brein (2004) highlighted the importance to implement the writing process as a way to discover meaning which can be achieved by means of the following steps: pre-writing, first draft composition, feedback, second draft writing and proofreading. Accordingly, learners can be encouraged to write, concentrating on ideas production, working also on the syntactical cohesion and the coherence between sentences in order to write short stories with clarity and meaning and at the same time communicate their ideas and thoughts creatively. In the same way, the teacher must propose a model or set of strategies that allow learners to write confidently according to their needs and styles. Accordingly, perhaps writing process is an approach to engage students to develop

writing not only through self-expression and creativity but also through a cognitive process which must be guided.

Wiener (2003) emphasized that guidance is important to transform children's ideas into writing. For this reason, a teacher plays an important role to encourage learners to improve their writing skill. She must provide learners with steps and models to offer knowledge and ideas to improve their writing process. This means that if a learner receives effective writing guidance in the school, he could make good progress and will gain confidence when writing.

In brief, writing should be understood as a creative process in which learners express what they think and imagine, and second, as a cognitive process in which they may implement some strategies and steps such as planning, generating ideas, organizing, drafting , receiving feedback and proofreading so that learners may gain confidence writing in EFL.

### **Meta-cognitive Strategies**

Mitchell and Myles (2002) proposed that teachers must implement strategies to help learners have an effective and long-lasting learning. In fact, many researchers and teachers have designed and proposed a great variety of strategies to teach writing. For example, Brown (2007) proposed cognitive, affective and meta-cognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring and evaluating. However, this study only focused on meta-cognitive strategies as a way to help learners develop writing skills.

Ramesh (2009) argued that metacognitive strategies enable learners to enhance their learning in a second language. Accordingly, teachers must provide students with strategies that help them solve writing problems and at the same time, be aware of their learning process. They can select a strategy by which they can plan, monitor and change their activities. They should be



able to assess the effectiveness of the strategy used in order to achieve their goals. Additionally, Dohrman & Gómez (n.d) stated that students must be trained to implement the metacognitive strategies through mindful efforts to have control of their learning. This training has to be guided in an informed way with appropriate materials, which allow learners to be responsible, to be autonomous and to be able to develop their communicative competence. The strategy implemented in this project was planning considered as a metacognitive strategy, not as a phase of writing which is another way of approaching it. According to Harris and Grenfell (2004) a strategy is associated with plans, tactics or movement to achieve a learning goal. In this way, planning was used to help learners improve writing. They were to be trained in the use of some planning strategies which guided them as they wrote their story and communicated their ideas clearly.

### **Planning**

According to Waters and Schneider (2010) planning is a “fundamental and essential component of skillful writing that occurs before and during text production” (p. 233). Most writers spend a lot of time in this phase of the writing process which allows them to plan and constantly reflect upon their goals. Additionally, Hillocks (1986) affirms that trained writers tend to spend meaningful amounts of time organizing and planning what they are going to write. Consequently, teachers need to teach learners how to use planning strategies that allow them to reach their goals in the writing process. From these points of view, learners should devote a significant amount of time to plan their text using the strategies that allow them to feel more confident to write. In addition, they should reflect upon planning their text in order to make the improvements in their story. Ramesh (2009) stated that when learners reflect upon their strategies, they make conscious decisions about what they can do to improve and facilitate their

learning during the time of the task. In this study, the researcher highlighted the importance of implementing reflection in the writing process to encourage learners to use strategies that help them improve their writing. Accordingly, strategies are established to empower learners to facilitate the process of learning a language and focus on the writing areas they want to improve. For instance, in this study learners needed to plan what they were going to write, focusing not only on content but also on form; each strategy of planning allowed them to revise what they were writing and how they were doing it in order to write clearly.

Hewitt (2008, p. 82) stated that planning includes diagrams and notes to develop content, vocabulary, quantity and quality of the given task in spoken and written methods. He also affirms planning involves comprehension of the task and resources available to the learner. In this sense, it is important for learners to understand what they are going to do in order to use strategies and materials which help them develop their learning activities about writing. However, learners might not have an idea about what strategy to use in order to achieve their task. Thus, it is necessary to offer students different types of techniques and materials that allow them to have a reference to lead and plan their task.

Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins (1999) presented a model to write a folk tale using organizational planning. They defined organizational planning as a preparation before writing, which provided students with the direction for development and completeness of the task. And at the same time, it gave them confidence to keep the control of the process. Chamot (1999) explained that organizational planning can be defined as the use of brainstorming and grouping the ideas to use in the activity. In this model the authors introduced a “graphic organizer” (p.218) (see figure 1 below) to plan the story. This was a good example of planning that the participants used to plan to write the story.

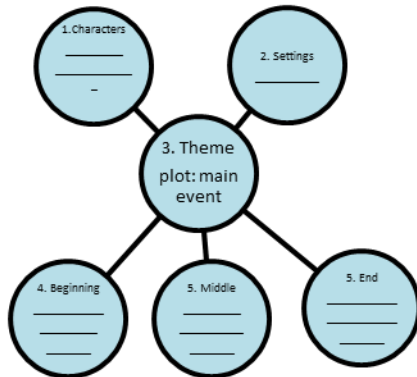


Figure 1. Graphic organizer.

Another contribution to planning was made by Flower and Hayes (1980) who divided planning into sub-categories such as setting goals, generating ideas and organizing ideas which might help novice writers plan what they want to write. Based on this statement, learners may incorporate generating and organizing ideas in the process of planning of their writings as a way to direct and enhance their writings effectively.

Raimes and Jerskey (2013) suggested some tips to use during the stage of generating ideas. One of these is using prompts such as examples or facts (think of stories relating to the topic), descriptions (give details) and comparisons (help reader understand the story describing what is similar and what is different). Accordingly, learners can take into account these suggestions to generate ideas that can enrich their stories making them interesting, and thus they may have more opportunities to produce language more fluently.

Seow (2002) stated that planning is any activity that activates learners' brains and helps them get started, such as group brainstorming (all participants let their ideas come out with no right or wrong answers), clustering (grouping ideas), rapid free writing and wh-questions (students ask questions using what, who, why, when, how about the topic). These activities may allow learners to plan, guide and write a story through a more conscious and confident writing process.

In conclusion, planning was conceived as a strategy that included graphic organizers, brainstorming and organizing ideas that the participants implemented to guide and structure their story.

### **Narrative**

One of the ways to encourage young learners to write in a foreign language is using narratives. Hyland (2009) pointed out that teachers must teach learners to write through a variety of texts that allow them to achieve their purposes and at the same time, explore and interpret the human experience. Through the narrative genre, a writer can recreate an experience and learn to organize a story. The narrative genre used in this research project was to write stories that describe what happened through a series of events that entertained the reader and let him perceive the writer's expressions, attitudes, feelings and fantasies. Additionally, through a story the researcher can have a better idea to analyze the student's ability to write identifying his weaknesses and strengths.

Branigan (1992) described narrative as a way to organize spatial and temporal information through a chain of events with a beginning, middle and end that expresses a judgment about the nature of facts and the way to be narrated. Accordingly, teachers must guide learners about how to organize a story coherently. Many times when the teachers ask students to write a story, they forget to emphasize the use of an effective rhetorical structure and a coherent organization of the information that learners must implement in their stories. As a result, students write their texts with a lot of difficulty and lack of coherence. Proper teachers' guidance will make their writing process more logical and enjoyable.

Moreover, Rhodes (2001) stated that a narrative is “the way people recount events, reconstruct experience, reformulate opinions and tell readers about what is going on” (p. 3). In this respect, learners can write their stories from different points of view. However, learners must bear in mind that to guide a reader through a story, they need to use a sequence of connected events (Toolan, 2001). In this way, they may organize their knowledge and thus create a comprehensible text. Furthermore, a writer allows the reader to create textual images of the story in which he can understand what the writer tries to communicate. A good written story can allow the reader to live a new experience from the story.

In addition, Brophy (2009) pointed out that a narrative implies a way of organizing the complexity of real experience and of passing it on to others (p. 33). One of its characteristics that he explains is the use of a temporal framework that relates the actions through cause and effect with a starting point, generally a story begins ‘Once upon a time’, a telling of what happened, to whom, where and when, and an end that explains what the result was. Accordingly, teachers must teach learners how to use these elements to enrich and organize the content of the story and thus, readers may understand the story easily.

To conclude, the type of writing that the participants were interested in was inventing stories (Schank, 1990) in which they talked about the events of the story, and then wrote a story. Additionally, the researcher decided to guide the students to write short stories considering the elements that Lucke (1999) proposed: characters, actions and a plot organized by means a beginning, a middle and an end, and at the same time, through a conscious process of writing and planning in order to create a comprehensible story.

The following studies emphasizing the effects of planning in writing in EFL and the students' perceptions in writing stories were used by the researcher to support this study.

This first study was carried out by Honeycutt (2002) in North Carolina with a group of eleven fifth grade students (12 years of age). They were identified as good readers, but poor writers based upon their academic history of passing the state-required End-Of-Grade Reading Test. The author's findings revealed that good readers who were poor writers understood that reading was defined as acquiring information and writing as generating information/knowledge. They were able to identify the similarities of text features in reading and writing narrative texts. However, they experienced difficulties to develop concepts in texts they read to the texts they composed because they lacked knowledge and application of prewriting strategies and story grammar schema to plan and generate narrative texts. The study also indicated they did not employ self-regulation strategies to evaluate and to revise the texts they composed. Finally, they were inhibited due to their lack of confidence when writing because they thought that they were poor writers.

This study showed that novice writers may present similar difficulties in writing narrative. The participants of the previous study and the participants of this study stated they did not know how to write, writing was difficult, and they considered themselves poor writers. This fact also shows that learners can improve their writing skill through the implementation of strategies and opportunities that encourage learners to be better writers.

Rahimpour (2011) conducted the second study: The effects of planning on writing narrative task performance with low and high EFL proficiency carried out in the Tabriz University with a group of 172 Iranian participants, between 18 and 25 years old. They were

divided into two groups based on their level of proficiency. The L1 of the participants varied, but the majority were speakers of Azari. At the time of data collection, most of them had been learning English as a foreign language. The aim of this project was to analyze the impact of planning and proficiency on their written task performance regarding concept load, fluency, complexity and accuracy. Planning was operationalized at two levels: pre-task planning and on-line planning. In the pre-task planning condition, the participants were requested to finish writing a story within 17 minutes and to produce at least 200 words. In on-line planning condition, defined as planning during performance, the participants were given a piece of paper and told to write down the story. They were told they could take as long as they liked.

The outcomes of this study were explained through four variables: concept load, fluency, complexity and accuracy. The first variable revealed that the low proficiency learners may use planning time to focus on content of their linguistic output which in turn gives rise to more concept load performance, defined as “a measure of the ratio of different words to the total number of words in a text” (p. 122). Regarding fluency, in terms of ease to produce language, the research illustrated that more fluent performance was produced under planned condition by low proficiency learners. On the contrary, the high proficiency learners produced more fluent performance under unplanned condition. In complexity, in terms of syntax, the participants in low proficiency produced more complex performance only in narrative tasks under planned condition. Conversely, more complex performance was produced by the participants in high proficiency under unplanned condition in all tasks.

The study also discovered that planning did not lead to more accurate, error-free performance, in which syntax, morphology, lexical choice, and spelling errors were considered,

in narrative tasks for low proficiency learners. In contrast, planning leads to the production of more accurate performance in narrative for high proficiency learners.

Based on the results of this study, planning became a strategy to help learners improve some writing aspects and to encourage learners to implement planning from the beginning of their first writings, especially with low English proficiency learners.

Finally, Melgarejo (2009) conducted the following study focusing on the process approach in the language institute of the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas in Bogota. The participants included 21 children between the ages of 10 and 13 with an intermediate level of English. The objective was to analyze children's perceptions of writing in English as a Foreign Language.

The outcomes showed that the students changed their perceptions in writing in EFL. They were motivated and interested in writing because they had improved their writings and were aware of the writing process in EFL.

The researcher pointed out that motivation played a significant role for any writer. When writers are motivated to write, the results are much better partially stemming from a desire to read the drafts over and over again, editing them as many times as necessary to create a successful work.

Based on the findings of the previous study, it is important for this study to consider motivation as an important element to encourage beginner writers. When learners are provided with meaningful tools, they are more interested in improving their writing skill. Accordingly, learners can be encouraged to use some planning strategies in order for them to feel interested and confident to write their stories in EFL.



### Chapter Three: Research Design

This chapter describes the design of the research study, the type of study, the research question, the research objective, the context in which the study was carried out, a description of the participants, the instruments used to gather data, the ethical considerations to take into account, an approximation to how to achieve triangulation and validity and the action plan. All these useful aspects support the implementation of using planning as a strategy to improve writing narrative texts.

In the following chart, the former aspects are summarized. Afterwards, each one of them is explained in detail.

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Type of study          | Qualitative action research (Burns, 1999)   |
| Research question      | What improvements if any can be observed when A1 eighth grade students introduce planning in writing narrative texts?                       |
| Setting                | Institución Educativa Técnico Industrial “ Mariscal Sucre”,(State school in Boavita, Boyacá)  |
| Participants           | Twenty three eighth graders (between 13-15)   |
| Instruments            | Questionnaires, logs and documents (portfolio)  |
| Ethical considerations | Responsibility, Confidentiality and anonymity.  |
| Triangulation          | Collect all the sources of information to create one interpretation.  |
| Validity               | Criteria and principles that set the credibility of the results obtained from the data collection and interventions made by the researcher. |

Table 1: *Research design framework.*

#### Type of Study

This project was based on qualitative action research in which the teacher becomes a researcher and through the observation and reflection upon her teaching context, helps improve the professional practice (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). According to this view, the teacher

researcher reflected and implemented strategies to solve the problematic situation which emerged as a need to help students enhance their writing skill in writing narratives. During this process, a cyclical action research was implemented which was based on a series of stages to identify and analyze the situations and then implement the strategy of planning step by step.

According to Burns (1999), action research is characterized by evaluation and reflection on the practices which generate changes and improvements. Accordingly, the teacher must analyze her teaching and learning context to identify and deal with the students' needs and difficulties in writing in EFL in order to create a proposal to help students improve their writing. Additionally, the teacher assumed a reflective attitude about what happened in her daily practice, making decisions and implementing strategies and changes to benefit learners.

Burns also stated that "changes in practice are based on the collection of information" (p. 30). This means the process of data collection allowed the researcher to make decisions on what changes and strategies she should implement in her practice in order to provide learners with better opportunities to learn English. Moreover, action research was considered as a way "to raise awareness of the complexity of teachers' work" (Burns, 2010, p.7). As a result of the awareness process, the teacher was a more reflective and committed person in her professional practice. She was more aware of students' needs and their effort to try to write narrative texts in English. In this regard, the researcher proposed the use of some planning strategies as a way to help learners improve their writing skill in narrative texts.

Based on the previous statements, the researcher focused on answering the following question: what improvements, if any, can be observed when A1 eighth grade students introduce planning in writing narrative texts? and the general objective: to describe and document what

improvements, if any, can be observed when A1 eighth grade students introduce planning in writing narrative texts.

Through the implementation of planning and the use of some activities in writing, the researcher described the improvements that resulted when students of eighth grade applied this strategy in their narrative texts.

### **Settings**

This study was carried out at the Institución Educativa Técnico Industrial Mariscal Sucre. The school is located in a small town in the north part of Boyacá. It offers the levels of elementary, middle and high school, and the three technical programs: electricity, mechanics and metal working. According to the Educational Institutional Project (PEI, 2011), the school mission is “to educate integral persons in the three programs of Mechanics, Electricity and Metal working and at the same time, to teach academic knowledge and values that shape the students under the principle of learning to do in order to be able to face the new challenges in their community” (p. 18). Its vision is to be a flexible and innovative school that focuses on learning and promotes the creation of micro- enterprises related to mechanics, electricity and metal working in the community.

The students who are in elementary school attend English class once a week. This reduces the opportunities to learn English. Additionally, elementary and middle teachers express they are not trained to teach English and have had many problems fulfilling their responsibilities. From sixth to eighth grade, students attend three hours, and from ninth to eleventh grade, two hours per week.

The institution follows the traditional approach focused on grammar. However,

the teacher has implemented some changes based on Common European Framework standards. The syllabus is organized from the simple structures to the most complex ones. The topics are focused on teaching grammar rules. The teachers have not defined a specific methodology to help learners develop the four skills according to their needs and styles. The learners are not required to follow any course book guide. Due to this, the teacher administers and designs her own materials. In this way, the teacher is in charge of providing the students with the materials that she designs according to the contents proposed in the syllabus. At the same time, she is implementing the communicative approach.

### **Participants**

The selected participants were a group of twenty three eighth graders, between the ages of 13 and 15, and included 8 girls and 15 boys. Their English level was A1 according to the Common European Framework. Most of the participants practiced English in class. However, a few students who were more motivated implemented other resources such as watching movies and listening to songs. Despite the lack of opportunities to learn English, most of them expressed interest in learning it.

Additionally, during the classes, it was observed students did not know how to write a text in English. They were confused, disappointed, and bored. They expressed they had not had any experience writing a complete text in English. Furthermore, based on the students' needs questionnaire administered before the implementation ( Appendix A, they pointed out they would like to write in English. Thus, the researcher requested them to sign a consent letter (Appendix E) to participate in this research project and they showed a positive attitude at being selected for the study. She also informed them that their names and their written products would be kept confidential.

### **Researcher's role**

According to O'Brein (1998), the researcher's role is to design and implement an Action Research method that generates a mutually acceptable result for all participants. In order to accomplish this, the researcher plays different roles such as a planner, leader, catalyzer, facilitator, teacher, designer, listener, observer, synthesizer, and reporter. In this way, the teacher assumed the role of the observer and guide. The researcher focused on each step of the research and writing process. She observed the situations, analyzed them, reflected upon them and did appropriate interventions according to students' needs in their writing performance.

In each stage of the implementation, the researcher explained each step, guided and supported her participants in the writing process using modeling, scaffolding and feedback. Another role was to promote an environment of collaboration, in which learners would be motivated to develop the activities and would be supported by their classmates. Finally, she was an analyst. She analyzed the students' behavior in the class and identified the situations that could emerge in each class of the implementation in order to provide a possible solution and finally, reported the findings of her project.

### **Instruments**

The instruments to collect data were questionnaires, logs and students' portfolios.

**Questionnaires.** According to Burns (1999), questionnaires involve predetermined questions presented in written form. These are more practical and require less time to apply than interviews. In this respect, the researcher administered two instruments, the first instrument aimed to determine the needs of the students and guide the research proposal, and the second instrument was administered after the implementation to obtain information about the students'

perceptions and improvements when writing in English as well as their perceptions and attitudes about using planning in their writings. (Appendix B).

**Logs.** Mckerman (1991) stated that “logs are record sheets which document researcher’s activities over a specific period of time e.g. a day or a week” (p. 110). He also pointed out that “logs permit the researcher to study the main events or activities carried out by the individual participant” (p.110). Through this instrument (**Appendix C**) the teacher aimed to find out the changes that the students perceived after using planning in their writings. For instance, their improvements and difficulties they experienced writing their stories, and the benefits to use planning in other types of writing. Through this instrument the researcher also identified and confirmed students’ reactions toward the written activities using planning.

**Documents – students’ portfolios.** Burns (1999) points out that this instrument is a collection of various papers that allow the researcher to identify obvious signs of the learning development and at the same time, to observe the writing process of the students.

The researcher used this instrument to find out if the students had made some progress in writing narratives using planning and to help them be aware of the writing process, their weaknesses and strengths when writing stories.

For the application of the three selected instruments, the researcher used a calendar in which she followed each one of the dates for the implementation and data analysis. Then she used a systematic process to classify the information from the most common and relevant aspects to the least common information. Finally, the researcher interpreted the results and categorized them.

### **Ethical considerations**

This project was carried out under the parameters of ethical considerations. O'Brien (1998) described a list of ethical principles which have been taken into account:

- to make sure that the relevant persons, committees and authorities have been consulted, and that the principles guiding the work are accepted in advance by all. To follow this principle the consent letters were sent to the principal and students (**Appendix D, Appendix E** ).
- All participants must be allowed to participate in each project activity and the desires of those who do not wish to participate must be respected.
- The development of the work must remain visible and open to suggestions from others.
- The researcher must accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality.

Each one of these principles was complemented with the principles of responsibility and confidentiality stated by Burns (1999). Responsibility is understood as the researcher's commitment that she assumed with the participants, academic institutions, authorities and herself during the implementation of the project. The purpose, the objectives, data collection, the methodologies and the findings of the project were explained to them. Confidentiality involves protecting the identity of the participants. Therefore neither the names of the participants nor any of their documents were made public without their consent. Nothing was done to harm the participants.

### **Validity**

Burns (1999) stated that validity is an essential condition to evaluate the acceptability and quality of research. This means that a research study must be conducted using criteria and principles that ensure the credibility of the results. Burns also pointed out that this term

encompasses to two types of validity: external and internal validity. External validity allows the researcher to generalize the results of study to other participants in similar contexts taking into account similar methods and procedures, and internal validity inquires how reliable the interventions of the researcher are in the outcomes obtained from data in order to avoid manipulation of the information, and in this regard, the researcher may present clear evidence that supports the reliability of the study. According to Benz & Newman (1998), internal validity may also be enhanced when the researcher implements other methods such as longer period of time, member checking, and triangulation. Accordingly, the researcher can use more time to analyze and check the information obtained. She also can apply different methods such as the use of several instruments and grounded theory which will allow her to verify the information accurately.

Burns also states that validity holds other criteria such as democratic validity in which the results must represent benefits for all the parties. Accordingly, all the participants acted freely in the activities and their outcomes were taken into account to gather and analyze the information which allowed the researcher to show that the study kept connection between the problem and the possible solution, and the participants and the context to determine its validity.

### **Reliability**

To determine the accuracy of the data, there were some patterns to take into account such as the number of participants which was kept during the implementation, and the length of the time for the implementation of the planning strategies which lasted 25 hours. These two patterns offered a guarantee to the researcher to determine that the data obtained was accurate.

### **Triangulation**



Denzin (1978) stated that triangulation is a way that allows the researcher to determine whether using different methods of investigation the same findings can be produced. If this happens, then data are more likely to be valid. It means, if the researcher uses three types of instruments to collect data, she must confirm that each instrument produced similar results.

Burns also (1999) stated that triangulation is a way of correlating through different techniques the validity of the outcomes of the research.

Accordingly, triangulation was understood as a way of bringing together all sources of data to build one interpretation and recognize it valid. In this project the instruments used to collect data and build the interpretation of the results were questionnaires, logs and documents. Additionally, the researcher monitored the application of the instruments carefully to collect data, analyze, classify and present it in a coherent and valid way.

## **Chapter Four: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation**

This section describes the steps and processes implemented to solve the problem, a description of materials, the units and lessons and the ICELT lesson sample.

This pedagogical design focused on the writing process of narrative texts in which some planning strategies were used to help students improve the writing of narrative texts and at the same time, to understand and apply the characteristics of a narrative text.

### **Pre-intervention**

As soon as the problem was identified, the researcher proposed to use planning as a way to improve writing in narrative texts implementing the following strategies as brainstorming and graphic organizers. Then she taught the students the process to implement the strategies to write their stories. First, they read a story, talked about the characters and the main ideas of the text. Then, based on the story, the learners began to fill their graphic organizer in which they wrote the characters, the settings, the theme, the beginning, the middle and the end for their story. In the next step, they used brainstorming and started to write the story.

Additionally, the teacher provided the participants with scaffolded activities to help them learn simple grammar structures. In this regard, learners developed each step mentioned bearing in mind the grammar issues and the teacher solved the students' doubts using examples of each strategy of the planning.

### **While-intervention**

After teaching the students how to use the planning strategies, the researcher designed an action plan which was then implemented by the students. During this process, the students

developed a series of activities and executed the planning strategies which were intended to help them plan and write their story. The action plan consisted of eight steps:

1. a focused activity
2. talk about the activity
3. design a graphic organizer
4. brainstorming
5. organize ideas
6. write the story
7. revise the text and receive feedback
8. re-write the story

The participants must develop each one of these steps in each class to write five stories.

The focused activity included reading two stories from the British Council page and using a picture from a magazine, a mishap (anecdote) and a set of pictures of the Lion King. Each focused activity allowed students to have a theme to write a story. Then, learners talked about each activity and described what they thought about characters, characteristics, places and other details. Then, from the focused activity the students started to write the story using a graphic organizer, brainstorming, organizing ideas, writing, receive feedback, revising and rewriting. Additionally, the teacher reminded them to use each strategy and the syntactic structure, simple past, possessive adjectives and connectors such as first, after, but, then, and finally in their writings. At the end of each story, learners reflected upon how they developed their story.

One of the characteristics of planning that Hewitt (2008) pointed out is the comprehension of the task that students must develop and the type of materials that the students used.

Consequently, before the students started to carry out their assignment, they should understand the purpose of the activity, in which the researcher explained the purpose of using the planning strategies to them, and the materials they used. Thus they began to develop the first session

implementing each activity and strategy having the opportunity to clarify doubts and questions. In this way, the participants could have their first experience to write a story in EFL.

The planning strategies that the researcher selected to implement in the proposal were taken from Flower and Hayes (1980) and Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins' (1999) which included brainstorming, organizing ideas and using graphic organizers which helped students plan and write the structure of the story. Taking into account these strategies, the activities for writing and the researcher's ideas, finally, she proposed to apply the following model.

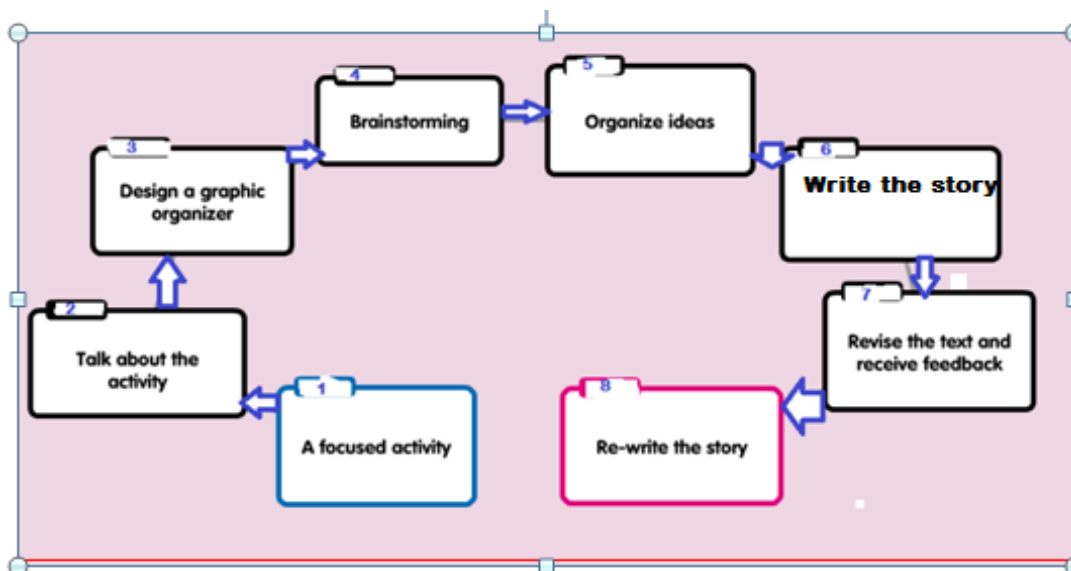


Figure 2. *Model of implementation.*

The model consisted of eight steps implemented in the following way: first, a focused activity was selected, and then the learners had to talk about the theme and characters. Next, they designed a graphic organizer based on the previous activity, after this, they brainstormed and organized the ideas, then they wrote the story, they revised the text and received feedback, and finally, they re-wrote the story. The process of implementation of the model was conducted in

five classes, each of which was developed in five hours in which the students applied the eight steps of model to write the stories which were five in total.

The idea of writing stories came from a questionnaire that was applied at the beginning of the research. The students stated that they would like to learn how to write stories. Furthermore, in a lesson in which reading was the main topic, they enjoyed reading a story taken from British Council web page. They were able to talk about the characters, the main theme and places where the story took place. For these reasons, the type of narrative that the students wrote was short stories.

In chapter two, narratives were defined as chains of events organized in a spatial and temporal way, including the beginning, the middle and the end of the story. During the implementation process, the students learnt how to develop the plot of their stories by choosing and organizing events to be narrated. To write the plot, learners identified and analyzed each part of the story using the graphic organizer; then they used brainstorming to get details, organized the ideas and started to write their story. Additionally, learners used their imagination, created details and organized the events to make a more coherent story. To carry out this process, the researcher used a story to guide learners. In this way, learners understood how to invent a story following the model.

In summary, planning was the strategy that learners used to improve the way of writing stories in English as a foreign language, allowing them to use their imagination and knowledge of language in order to develop meaningful learning.

### **The materials, the units and the lessons**

The first two readings: *The Princess and the Dragon*, and *Why Anansi Has Thin Legs* were

taken from the British Council web page. These were selected because of their didactic and interactive characteristics which motivated students to read and write a story. Accordingly, learners found the activities attractive, easy and interesting to develop. The third material was a picture taken from a magazine. The fourth material was an anecdote. And the fifth was a set of pictures of the *Lion King* movie used to reinvent a new story. These materials were the theme of each story and were varied in order to catch students' interest. These were used in the focused activity of the model proposed by the researcher. (Figure 2. Model of implementation.)

Participants used their notebooks to write the drafts and take notes, the dictionary to look up the words they did not know in English and the portfolio in which they collected all the activities developed to write their stories and to check their strengths and weaknesses acquired from this experience.

The lesson plans developed in each session of the implementation were designed according to the syllabus that the institution proposes, focusing on *Traditional Method*: teaching grammar. Although the teacher has implemented some changes considering the communicative method, and following the ICALT format (**Appendix F**) which can be seen in the appendix below.

The instructional topics were based on the theme of the stories.

| Topic                       | Outcome                |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| The princess and the dragon | First Students' story  |
| why Anansi has thin legs    | Second Students' story |
| A magazine picture          | Third Students' story  |
| A mishap " Embarrassing "   | Fourth Students' story |
| Lion king movie images      | Fifth Students' story  |

Table 2. *Theme of the stories.*

In summary, each step of the model of implementation was monitored by the researcher, supporting and providing learners with ideas and suggestions in order to apply the planning strategies and use the resources appropriately in the solution of the problem.

### **Chapter Five: Results and Data Analysis**

This chapter reports the data analysis and findings of this study carried out in ten weeks. The researcher organized and analyzed data from different perspectives according to the Grounded Theory Approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this chapter the researcher presents the category and subcategories that emerged from data obtained from the three instruments, namely a log, a questionnaire and the students' portfolios in order to answer the research question. The log was written after the three first sessions of the implementation. The questionnaire was administered at the end of the last session. In this part the first questionnaire was not taken into account due to the fact that its information was used to determine the students' needs before starting the proposal of research, and the students' portfolios were used during and after the implementation.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the grounded theory is defined as an inductive method by which a theory is discovered and built using a systematic process of data collection and analysis pertaining to the phenomenon. In the study, the researcher gathered data from participants' experiences and perceptions that the log and questionnaire reported. Then she organized and analyzed the data from different perspectives to determine the final outcomes. Additionally, Charmaz (1996) pointed out that grounded theory involves a series of features such as collecting and analyzing data simultaneously, using systematic codes and categories, enhancing categories through the use of theoretical sampling and integrating the categories supported with a theoretical framework.

To carry out this process, Strauss and Corbin (1990) stated that a researcher must have "the ability to give meaning to data, to have the capacity to understand, and capability to separate

the pertinent from that which is not” (p. 42). Accordingly, a researcher must use her previous knowledge and experience to recognize and understand what the most important patterns and the most common concepts in data were that allowed the researcher to define and explain the concreted categories to, finally, build a theory .

In this way, the researcher used her knowledge, awareness, sensitivity and ability to store, interpret, intertwine and classify the information through the steps of the grounded theory such as coding, conceptualizing, categorizing, theorizing and explaining the results.

### **Data Management**

After collecting data, the researcher created a file on her laptop and used a pen drive to store, retrieve and classify information. This file contained three sub-files for each instrument. For the log, the researcher designed a format (**Appendix G**) which contains one chart listing the students’ names which were labeled with numbers in order to protect their identities and a second chart for students’ answers which were typed because the originals were hand written. For the questionnaire (Appendix H), the researcher applied the same procedure that she used to classify and analyze the information from the questionnaire, and for the students’ portfolios, the researcher used a teacher’s checklist (**Appendix I**) that was applied in the last session. Additionally, the information obtained from the three instruments was organized chronologically. The researcher stored it in a file after being classified, and finally she printed it.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to analyze data, the researcher started by reading students’ answers in the logs. Then, she used color coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to identify the main and repetitive patterns in each answer bearing in mind the ‘similarity and frequency’ (Hatch, 2002). In this way, four



patterns emerged: vocabulary, organized sentences, creativity and planning as a guide to write easier and faster. After that, these patterns were grouped in a new format which was used in order to triangulate the information identified as relevant (**Appendix J**) including the log's statements and the research questions. In order to simplify the information, the researcher used color coding to group the patterns into units. This time, she used her creativity, knowledge and intuition to produce a preliminary structure of the category and subcategories which indicated that learners improved some writing skills regarding confidence, vocabulary, organized sentences and writing easier and faster, and students were motivated because they used their creativity.

Regarding the questionnaire, the researcher analyzed the information bearing in mind the same parameters applied in the log (**Appendix K**). Color coding was used to identify the following units: increasing vocabulary, being more confident at writing, ability at writing, planning is useful in writing stories with rhetorical structure and developing creativity. Finally, for analyzing students' portfolios, the researcher observed and read the students' stories and teacher's comments. She applied a checklist to identify the main and frequent patterns which demonstrated that the learners used the steps of planning in their stories. Each text contained the graphic organizer, brainstorming, the feedback and the corrected story. In addition, the researcher observed that all the stories were written in English, contained cohesive and coherent sentences but still presented language mistakes. During the process of obtaining and analyzing data, the researcher triangulated the information taking evidence from each instrument which was placed in another file (**Appendix L**). In this way, it was easier to determine the categories avoiding biases (Hubbard & Miller, 1993). Axial coding was also used in this stage to identify the relation among the concepts found. Thus, the researcher compared the information and refined the

concepts into categories and subcategories by reconstructing the information from different perspectives in order to have a better understanding of the phenomena.

### Categories

The researcher discovered two categories and their corresponding subcategories which allowed her to determine the first glimpse to answer the research question and the objective: To describe and document what improvements, if any, can be observed when A1 eighth grade students introduce planning in writing narrative texts. The table below shows the research question, the categories and subcategories defined in this stage, considering open and axial coding:

| RESEARCH QUESTION   | CATEGORIES  | SUBCATEGORIES  |
|---|---|--|
| What improvements if any can be observed when A1 eighth grade students introduce planning in writing narrative texts? | Promoting affective factors and developing writing skills | Confidence.<br>Ability at writing.<br>Speed in writing.<br>Learning and increasing vocabulary.<br>Using the syntactic structure (S+V+C).<br><br>Planning as a guide to write a story with coherence (a beginning, a middle and an end) |
|   | Motivation  | Developing creativity  |

Table 3. *Research question, categories and subcategories.*

Based on the analysis of axial coding, the category named promoting affective factors and developing writing skills revealed the students improved some writing skills, and gained confidence and ability to write which were reflected on the students' answers taken from the log,

the questionnaire, and portfolios. The subcategories were: confidence, ability, speed, learning and increasing vocabulary, using the syntactic structure (S+V+C.) and planning as a guide to write a story with coherence (a beginning, a middle and end). Additionally, the portfolios displayed that learners used a variety of vocabulary in their stories and were able to write various cohesive and coherent sentences bearing in mind subject + verb + complement. The portfolios evidenced that students learnt to use planning as a guide to write a story taking into account the rhetorical structure which was defined by a sequence of events that contained a beginning, a middle, and an end. When learners started implementing the planning strategies such as brainstorming and the graphic organizing, they stated in the log that these strategies allowed them to address their story, organize their ideas and write faster. Based on these findings, it was also concluded that the second possible category was motivation due to the creativity that learners could develop when writing stories.

After the researcher had a general idea about the categories and subcategories, she presented a more detailed description of these in order to obtain one core category bearing in mind selective coding, which was the last step of the analysis of information that allowed the researcher to refine the category and subcategories. In this last part of the analysis, the teacher refined the categories and subcategories through a deep and rigorous work which consisted of reading, rereading and analyzing the information presented in Table 1. She also designed a diagram in which she visualized and established relations between the categories, subcategories and concepts, and integrated subcategories around the category (Appendix M). In this regards, she, finally, discovered the core category and the subcategories which are displayed below.

| RESEARCH QUESTION  | CORE CATEGORY  | SUBCATEGORIES  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| What improvements if any can be observed when A1 eighth grade students introduce planning in the process of writing narrative texts? | Through the use of planning, beginner writers improve their writing skill. | Planning influences affective factors in a positive way. | Confidence<br>Motivation                                   |
|  |  | Enhancing language factors.                              | Building vocabulary<br>Accuracy of the syntactic structure |
|  |  | Improving rhetorical structure.                          | Structure: beginning, middle and end                       |

Table 4. *Final category and subcategories*

The researcher identified the core category entitled *Through the Use of Planning Beginner Writers Improve their Writing Skill*. After she analyzed the data more in detail, the findings revealed that when the learners implemented planning strategies in writing narratives, they made progress in writing stories in the target language. In the same way, the subcategories confirmed that planning influenced affective factors in a positive way (increasing students' confidence and motivation), enhanced language factors (building vocabulary and accuracy of the syntactic structure), and implemented rhetorical structures (planning as a guide to write stories with a beginning, middle and an end). These factors allowed learners to be motivated to write stories in English expressing what they thought. In this way, the researcher confirmed what Melgarejo (2009) reported in his study that motivation is an important element to encourage learners to improve their writing skill.

### **Subcategories**

#### **Planning influences affective factors in a positive way.**

**Confidence.** The results displayed that learners strengthened some affective factors causing a positive effect in writing their stories. According to Brown (2007), affect is an emotional factor that may contribute to the success of language learning. In this sense, the

learners gained confidence because they were skillful and fast when writing the stories.

Accordingly, learners could also write their stories fluently. Fluency understood in terms of Richards and Schmidt (2002) as the ability that a writer has to produce language with less difficulty, not necessarily perfect vocabulary or grammar without affecting comprehension. This fact also showed what Raimphour (2011) found in his study, that the low proficient learners produced language fluently under planned conditions.

Additionally, the data revealed that the use of planning increased students' self-confidence when writing stories. Before the implementation, the participants expressed that were frustrated because they did not know how to write. The level of anxiety was high, especially in these students with very rudimentary English. However, after using planning in their stories, they expressed they were confident and comfortable because they had learnt to use the strategies of planning and had gained linguistic knowledge to write with less difficulty. When the participants applied the planning strategies, they automatically knew what they had to do in a chronological order and thus they could write more fluently. Additionally, during the process the teacher was a guide for learners to write. She provided learners with formative feedback highlighting the positive aspects of their writings and guiding them about the areas they must improve. Considering these elements, learners increased their confidence to enhance their writing skills in narratives. In this way, one of the benefits of planning for learners was to build confidence at the moment of writing. In the excerpts the researcher observed that when the participants used the strategies of planning to write their stories, they were able to write them better structured because they felt more confident and engaged.

**Questionnaire****September 26th, 2012****Question 6: ¿Observó algún beneficio de la planeación de sus escritos?**

Student: 2, 3, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18

Question 10: Cuando planeó la escritura de sus historias, ¿Cómo se sintió? Explique por qué  
 Student 8: muy bien, en las últimas ya más seguro de lo que iba a escribir.  
 Student 21: tranquilo sabía un poco de lo que iba a escribir.  
 Student 22: más seguro en realizarlas.

Excerpt 1

**LOG September 4th, 2012**

**Question 8: 8. Los pasos que sigo en la planeación de mi escrito en inglés son\_ porque**

Student 3: es más fácil y la historia me queda ordenada.

Student 4: con eso queda fácil para escribir

Student 7: los apliqué todos--- para que me quedara mejor la historia y escribir rápido.

Student 13: se me facilita crear y escribir más rápido

Excerpt 2

*Motivation.* Based on the aspects mentioned in the section about confidence, the researcher also found that learners were motivated to write. The participants demonstrated interest in writing their stories through planning because they could express what they imagined, their fantasies, and they could write their stories confidently. In the last stories, learners felt they had acquired enough preparation in the strategies of planning, and for this reason, they were motivated to write in the target language because they already knew how to write the story. Dörnyei (2001) stated that one of the methods to motivate learners is to offer them appropriate preparation in order to increase their confidence and motivation in writing. Accordingly, learners were encouraged to use planning as a way to improve their writings and feel confident when writing.

Additionally, students were motivated because they could recreate their minds, were able to express their insights and invent possible worlds without being judged. Armstrong (2006) stated that through individual work, children can discover their creativity, and develop their imagination. In this sense, when students filled the graphic organizer, they were thinking about every character and place they would use in the story; in the brainstorming step, they produced a

variety of ideas they could write in their story. Thus, planning was a means for learners to develop their creativity and motivation expressing what they had imagined and stored in their mind (Wiener, 2003).

**Log DATE: September 4th, 2012**  
**Statement 1: 1.Me gusta escribir en clase de inglés. Si\_\_ No \_\_¿por qué)**  
 Student 2: mediante la escritura desarrollo mi imaginación  
 Student 12: estamos aprendiendo a escribir en inglés y desarrollando nuestra creatividad.  
 Student 14: es muy divertido aprender inglés, mirar los dibujitos y con esa guía hacer historias es muy chévere.

Excerpt 3

**Questionnaire DATE: September 26th, 2012**

**Question 10: Cuando planeó la escritura de sus historias, ¿Cómo se sintió? Explique por qué**  
 Student 2: motivación porque tenía muchas ideas y podía utilizarlas en mis escritos.  
 Student 6: interesado porque me puse a pensar que personajes debería ir en el cuento y el lugar.  
 Student 12: muy bien ya que desarrollé mi creatividad.  
 Student 14: me sentí muy bien porque cuando estaba escribiendo mis ideas me sentía como si estuviera presente en los sitios.

Excerpt 4

Students realized that motivation emerged when they developed their imagination expressing what their mind made up and could write it on a piece of paper.

### **Enhancing language factors.**

**Building Vocabulary.** The excerpts below show that the students recognized that one of the main aspects of the language they learnt was vocabulary. When planning their stories in each session, they found that they could learn more words to write in the following stories for example, *story, queen, once upon a time*. The lexis was used in the graphic organizer, then in the brainstorming and in the story. In this way, they also retained the words. Lee (2003) pointed out

that writing tasks provide the learners with opportunities to maximize L2 vocabulary through retaining learned words and already known lexis. In this respect, when students wrote a new word in the graphic organizer, they used it in the next stages of brainstorming, writing the story, and rewriting it. They did this for each session which allowed them to have more opportunities to learn new words.

The following extracts taken from the logs and the questionnaires indicate what the learners perceived as progress.

---

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| <b>LOG</b>   | <b>September 4th, 2012</b> |
| <b>Statement 7. Uno de los posibles beneficios de la planeación al escribir es (son):</b>                                |                            |
| Students 2,3: Aprendo más vocabulario.   |                            |
| Student 4: Aprendo vocabulario y cómo se escriben las palabras   |                            |
| <b>Statement 9. Creo que lo que he aprendido a través del uso de la estrategia de la planeación hasta el momento es:</b> |                            |
| Student 2: Escribir con más claridad y rapidez, además aprendo vocabulario   |                            |
| Student 4: La utilización del vocabulario y el uso de nuevas palabras en inglés  |                            |
| Student 11: Vocabulario a escribir mejor en inglés y a plantear ideas de una historia y palabras en inglés               |                            |
| Student 14: He aprendido mucho sobre los animales y vocabulario  |                            |
| <hr/>  |                            |
| Excerpt 5  |                            |

|   |
|---|
| <p><b>QUESTIONNAIRE    September 26th, 2012</b></p> <p><b>Question 4. Cuándo utilizó la planeación en sus escritos ¿Observó algún cambio?</b></p> <p>Si <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ¿Cuáles? _____</p> <p>Student 3: aprendí vocabulario</p> <p>Student 19: aprendí a escribir otras palabras</p> <p>Student 22: aprendí vocabulario,</p> <p><b>Question 7: ¿Observó algún cambio en su última historia en relación con la primera que escribió? Si ¿Cuáles?</b></p> <p>Student 2: la presentación y vocabulario</p> <p>Student 14: ya tenía mejor vocabulario.</p> <p>Student 20: cuando aprendo más vocabulario y verbos me facilita redactar.</p> <p>Excerpt 6</p> |
|---|

The above excerpts indicated that participants also learnt the meaning and spelling of the



new words. Each story the participants wrote using planning allowed them to learn new words, and to realize that when they already know the vocabulary, it was easier to write.

***Accuracy of the syntactic structure.*** With regard to this concept, there was clear evidence that the learners were aware of the correct use of the syntactic structure to write cohesive and coherent sentences. The excerpts below indicated that learners focused on syntax to write clear and organized sentences. Before learners started to develop these writing tasks, they wrote their texts in Spanish and then translated them into English producing unclear sentences. The excerpt below demonstrates this point better. As a result, the teacher had to emphasize the use of the correct structure to help learners write organized sentences. Sumerset (2009) asserted that if the sentences are not organized according to a syntactic structure, they all together will not make any sense. Based on this view, during planning, the learners were aware of the structure *S+V+C* to write clear, simple and logical sentences (see Excerpt 8). They also stated that the use of the structure allowed them to write clearly in English.

**LOG****September 4th, 2012****Statement 7: Uno de los posibles beneficios de la planeación al escribir es (son):**

Student 7: Las ideas me quedan más claras y organizadas.

Student 8: Cuando se unen las ideas---- es muy fácil y puedo iniciar mi historia.

Student 9: Ordenarlo por oraciones con sujeto, verbo, complemento y conector-----porque se aprende más su escritura y su lectura.

Student 11: Ayuda a tener más claro lo que uno va a escribir y a no enredarnos--- porque aprendo a escribir en inglés.

Excerpt 7

**QUESTIONNAIRE****September 26th, 2012****Question 5: ¿Le pareció útil la planeación en la escritura de los textos en inglés?**Si  X ¿por qué?

Student 9: aprendí a manejar el s+v+c.

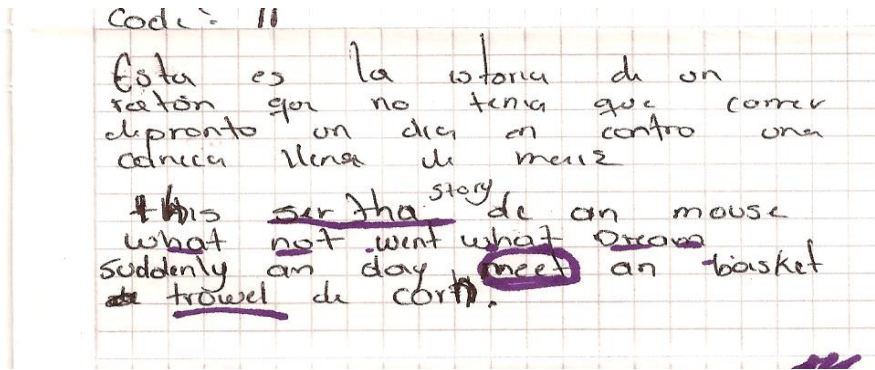
Student 12: aprendí la estructura de la oración.

Student 14: porque las ideas me quedaron en orden lógico, mi texto queda más claro.

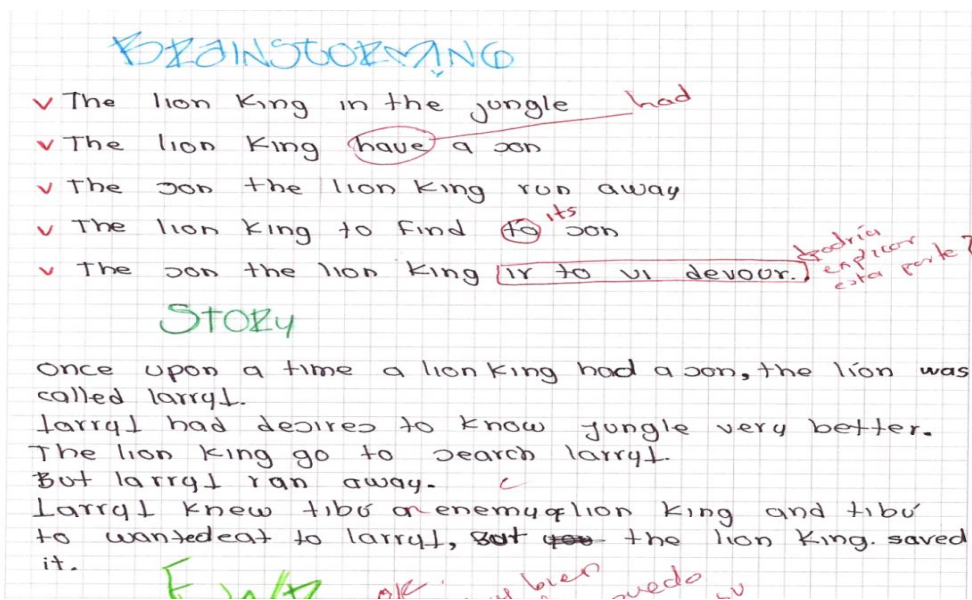
Student 19: las ideas me quedaban más ordenadas.

Excerpt 8

The following are examples of how the students used to write before the pedagogical intervention and how they wrote after it:



Excerpt 9 before planning.

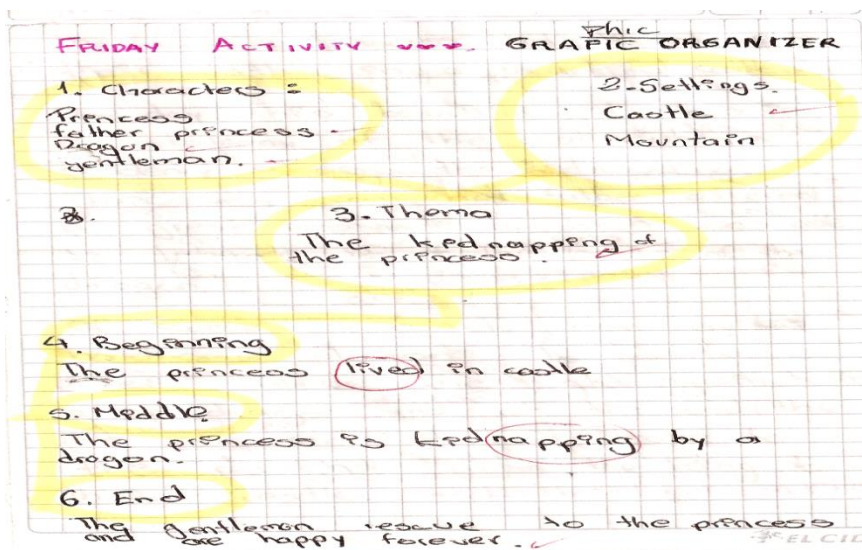


Excerpt 10 after planning.

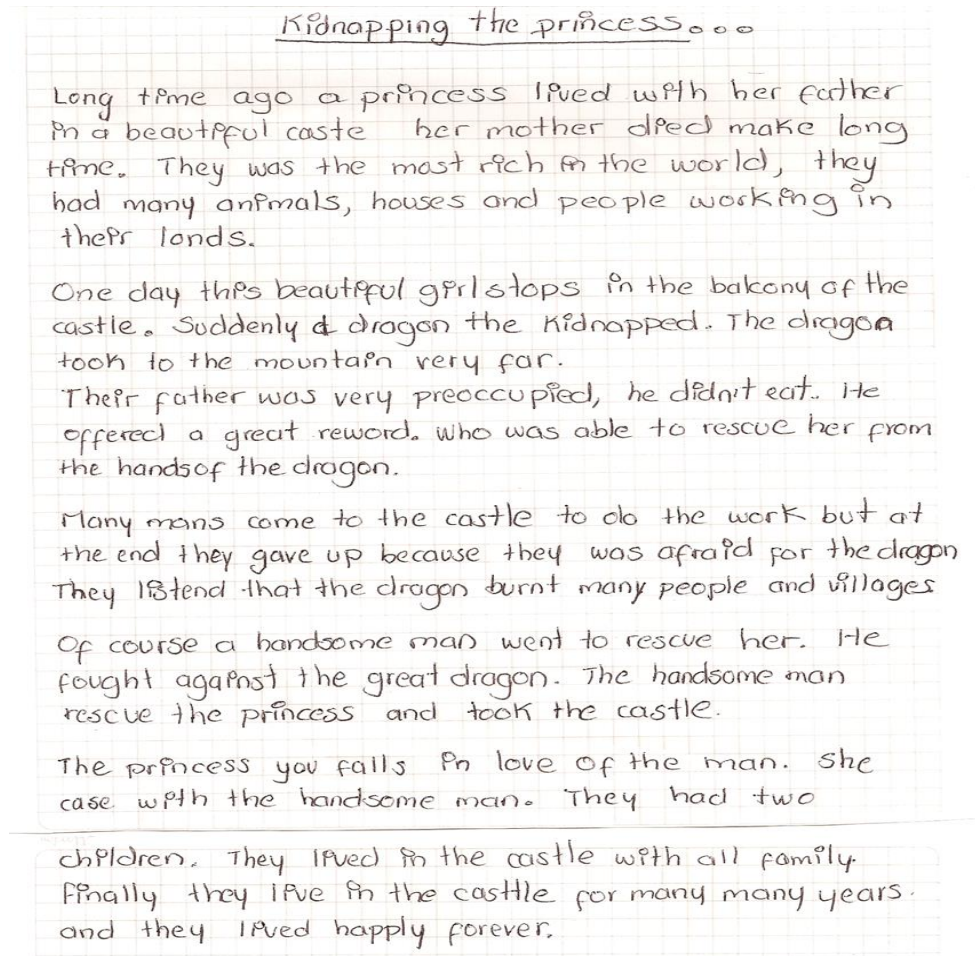
Before the intervention the students transferred the L1 structure to L2 which made them write incomplete and meaningless sentences. For this reason, their texts were difficult to understand. But after using planning, their texts were clear and organized. They realized they could write comprehensible sentences organized according to the English syntactical structure. In

this respect, they became aware of the fact that using the correct syntactic structures allowed them to write more cohesive and coherent stories (Nunan, 2005).

**Rhetorical structure.** The use of planning became an attempt to organize the content of a story more coherently and naturally. According to O'Malley and Chamot, planning is “a key metacognitive strategy to direct the course of language reception and production of a text.” (1990, p. 47). In this way, planning was the strategy to write a story taking into account the rhetorical structure. The results of the data analysis indicated that the use of planning strategies allowed learners to produce an acceptable story in the English language using the elements that Lucke (1999) proposed such as characters, actions and a plot with a beginning, middle and an end (see excerpt 10). In the portfolios, it was clearly observed that the use of the graphic organizer (see excerpt 9) and brainstorming permitted the students to plan and write the story using different events in a temporal, spatial and coherent order to facilitate its comprehension in spite of grammar and lexis mistakes.



Excerpt 11 after planning



## Excerpt 12

The extract above illustrates that the student was able to write a coherent story in spite of her language mistakes.

**Log      September 4th, 2012**

**Statement 3: Para mi planear mi texto es**

Student 1: Tener unos pasos como las ideas, el inicio, el nudo

Student 8: Escribo los personajes, los sitios, después las ideas y por ultimo comienzo a escribir la historia

Student 17: 1.El tema 2.Lugar 3.Personajes 4.Ideas 5.historia

Student 18: Pensando qué voy a escribir, sacando personajes, lugares, temas, ideas y el escrito con un inicio, desenlace y final.

Student 20: Pensar en un plan como empezar por los personajes, sitios, el tema de la historia y hacer la lluvia de ideas

Student 21: Lo primero fue dónde sería mi cuento, personajes, tema principal y el final.

**Statement 4: Considero que una (s) de las etapas más útiles de la planeación es (son)\_ porque**

Student 1: Gráfico---- me puedo guiar

Student 2: Gráfico--- me guio más fácilmente para poder escribir

Student 4: Gráfico y la lluvia de ideas --- porque con el gráfico uno puede idear el tema y los personajes .

Student 11: Crear un gráfico con la lluvia de ideas y los personajes de mi historia---porque me ayuda a no enredarme en mi historia.

Excerpt 13

**Questionnaire September 26th, 2012**

**Question 6: ¿Observó algún beneficio de la planeación de sus escritos? Si X ¿Cómo? Marque con una x en las siguientes opciones :**

Students 2, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21: Ya sé cómo escribir un cuento.

**Question 8: ¿Cree que después de aplicar la planeación, sus historias mejoraron la estructura, es decir estaban organizadas, presentaban una introducción, un desenlace y un final? Si X No\_ ¿Por qué?**

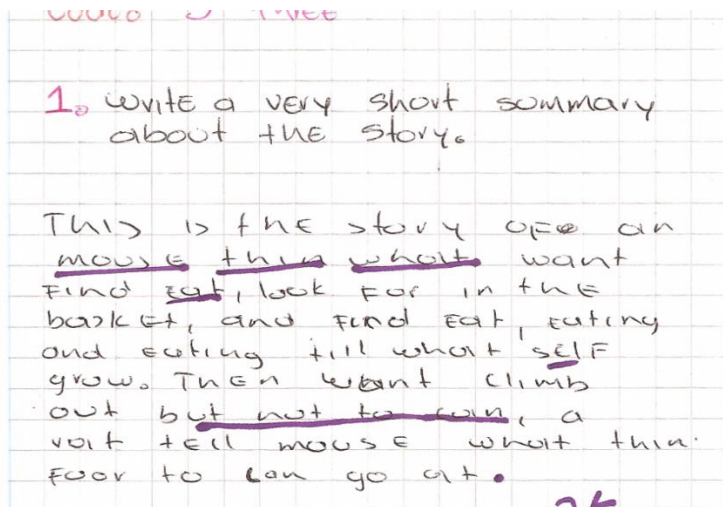
Student 2: el escrito tuvo más orden y éste me ayudó a que éstas se entendieran con más facilidad.

Student 3: me ayudó a organizar mi historia tuvo un principio, un desenlace y un final.

Student 12: si no hubiera hecho ese paso no sabría de qué iba a escribir y no tendría un comienzo ni final.

Student 13: al utilizar esos pasos sé organizar mi historia.

Excerpt 14



Excerpt 15 before planning

Before the implementation of planning, the students wrote without organizing the ideas and the sentences. For this reason, the texts were difficult to understand.

In conclusion, the core category and subcategories evidenced that due to the use of planning, the participants, who at the beginning did not know how to write a story in English, were able to improve some factors in writing narratives such as vocabulary, the correct use of the syntactic structure, and the rhetoric structure with a beginning, a middle and an end. Additionally, they were more confident and motivated to write in English. In this sense, these findings aimed to answer the research question: What improvements, if any, can be observed when A1 eighth grade students introduce planning in writing narrative texts?

Finally, this study revealed that writing narratives is a continuous process that is learnt through practice and experience in which planning plays an important role.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusions, Pedagogical Implications, Limitations, and Further Research**

This chapter presents the conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations, and further research that emerged as a result of the research study.

### **Conclusions**

This study determined that the use of planning in writing narrative produced a positive effect in students' writing skills. Participants demonstrated confidence in writing because they learnt vocabulary, learnt how to organize sentences and wrote their stories in a better structured way. In addition, they could express what they thought and imagined more freely. In this sense, the research question was answered.

Using the planning strategies in each story, the learners expressed that they gained confidence, language knowledge, and motivation while writing their stories. When they developed these factors, they were more confident and able to write their stories. Furthermore, they felt they were motivated to write not only for the vocabulary and the correct use of the structures, but also because they could use their creativity and imagination in their stories. Accordingly, it was evident that the use of planning was effective when learners had the opportunity, the tools, and experience to carry out the writing process. Additionally, they recognized their progress and felt motivated to enhance their learning process.

The students' responses revealed they improved vocabulary. When a student wrote a new word, he could use it many times in the same story allowing him to retain the word. In fact, students used the same words in the plot, then in the brainstorming, then in the writing and rewriting stages. In this way, the learners could write the words many times in a context, so that they could learn them easily. In conclusion, the more opportunities the students had to write, the more vocabulary they learnt.

Another improvement in writing was evidenced in the structure and the logical order of the sentences. Before the implementation of this study the learners did not know how to write organized and coherent sentences. They wrote them as if they were in their native language which made their text difficult to understand. For this reason, the learners had to learn to use the syntactical structure (S+V+C) from the first strategy of planning to the end of the story. They were aware if they did not write organized sentences, their story would be difficult to understand.

Planning was a way to guide the students to write a coherent story that included a beginning, middle, and an end. These patterns allowed the learners to write a story in a sequence of events in L2.

In summary, the researcher, based on the category and subcategories, found that the use of planning in writing narrative produced a positive effect in students' writing skills. They demonstrated confidence in writing because they learnt vocabulary and they learnt to organize the sentences according to a coherent structure. They also felt freer to express what they thought and imagined according to their planning.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The pedagogical implications found in this study were planning as a way to improve writing skills, autonomy, raising interest to write in English and extending planning to other types of texts. the researcher states that planning can be a useful strategy to improve any written work. When learners used this strategy, they realized that their final product displayed a clear and coherent text due to the confidence they gained through the use of planning. This also helped them to improve their autonomy. As Littlewood (1996) pointed out, there are three components of autonomy in foreign language learning: confidence, motivation and knowledge. In this study,



the development of these three components became an element to promote autonomy in the students. When they realized they could use the strategies of planning confidently, they could write their stories by themselves without the teacher's help.

In regards to raising interest to write in English, the teacher should continue fostering this task. Sometimes, when a teacher observes that his students have learnt a skill, he assumes the learners do not need to keep working on that skill. Additionally, writing is an endless process which means this has to be worked continuously and integrated with the other skills. Thus, teachers should help learners create good writing habits implementing effective strategies and tools to strengthen writing in EFL.

Another implication was the lack of L2 vocabulary which makes the writing process difficult. The learners can show a negative attitude towards writing because they do not have vocabulary knowledge and cannot express their ideas as they would do in their native language. Accordingly, teachers need to provide learners with strategies, tools and opportunities to allow them to enrich their lexicon and assume individual responsibility to learn new words.

Finally, the findings of this study could be applied to other types of texts, such as essays, summaries and letters, which may also be meaningful for learners because they can transfer the knowledge they have learnt to other writing contexts. Additionally, they might have more opportunities to communicate effectively and strengthen their writing skill depending on their needs.

In general, planning not only improves writing skills but also other areas of learning such as autonomy. For this reason, teachers should take advantage of this strategy from different perspectives and guide learners to put it into practice.

## **Limitations**

One of the limitations of the project was the lack of time. In the school where the project was conducted, many cultural and sports activities were held which interrupted the process of each session. For this reason, in three cases the learners had to develop the rewriting stage at home. However, the assimilation of knowledge about planning allowed the learners to develop the activity without difficulty and the lack of time did not affect the process.

Another limitation was peer feedback. After students wrote their first draft, their classmates were supposed to provide them with feedback. However, this strategy could not be developed due to low English level of the students. Some of them found that the story was well written and did not have any error. Accordingly, the teacher recognized the learners could not offer appropriate feedback to their classmates. Furthermore, peer feedback requires training, so it takes time for it to become really effective. Thus, she decided to provide the learners with feedback which was more useful for them.

## **Further Research**

Reflecting on this study, there are additional factors that could be investigated in order to enhance writing in a foreign language such as the global coherence of a text. Even though most students tried to write coherent stories, they still needed to keep a connection between the sentences and the whole text in order to make it comprehensible and interesting. For this reason, it will be necessary to continue enhancing this part of writing with the same group of learners and other groups.

Another aspect to research would be promoting peer feedback in the writing tasks in which learners would be involved in the process and learn to be aware of the decisions and

criteria they would have to make using rubrics or checklists to provide feedback to their classmates. In the same way, learners would have the opportunity to strengthen their skill and enhance their learning outcomes.

Finally, the researcher questions what would happen if in a future research other strategies of planning were implemented in writing narrative with low English proficiency learners in order to help them improve coherence and accuracy, and to implement more complex structures in their writings.

In conclusion, writing encompasses several linguistic, social, cultural aspects that learners should learn, enhance and strengthen. For this reason, the teacher should continue her research role looking for solutions and opportunities that enhance teaching and learning practices.

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## Appendix A

### CUESTIONARIO

#### INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA TÉCNICO INDUSTRIAL MARISCAL DE BOAVITA

CURSO: \_\_\_\_\_ EDAD: \_\_\_\_\_

OBJETIVO: Identificar las dificultades que presentan los estudiantes del grado octavo A de la Institución Educativa Técnico industrial Mariscal del municipio de Boavita en el momento de escribir en Inglés, con el fin de buscar la manera de superar estas debilidades.

**Estimado estudiante, conteste de la forma más clara siguiente cuestionario**

1. ¿En cuál de las siguientes habilidades presenta mayor dificultad?

Escucha \_\_\_\_\_ 0%

Habla \_\_\_\_\_ 29.1%

Lectura \_\_\_\_\_ 20.8%

Escritura \_\_\_\_\_ 33.3%

Gramática \_\_\_\_\_ 12.5%

Vocabulario \_\_\_\_\_ 4.1%

2. ¿Te gusta escribir? Si \_\_\_\_\_ 95.8% No \_\_\_\_\_ 4.1% ¿Por qué?

Para aprender \_\_\_\_\_ 66.6%

Permite escribir lo que le gusta \_\_\_\_\_ 8.3%

Permite desarrollar otras habilidades \_\_\_\_\_ 20.8%

Se le facilita \_\_\_\_\_ 4.1%

3. ¿Consideras que es importante escribir? Si \_\_\_\_\_ 100% No \_\_\_\_\_ ¿Por qué?

Permite aprender \_\_\_\_\_ 66.6%

Permite ayudar a otros \_\_\_\_\_ 4.1%

Permite desarrollar otras habilidades \_\_\_\_\_ 16.6%

Facilita la comprensión \_\_\_\_\_ 4.1%

Abre mejores oportunidades \_\_\_\_\_ 8.3%

4. ¿Qué tipo de textos has escrito?

Poemas \_\_\_\_\_ 8.3%

Resúmenes \_\_\_\_\_ 16.6%

Cartas \_\_\_\_\_ 0%

Tomar notas en clase \_\_\_\_\_ 33.3%

Mensajes para amigos \_\_\_\_\_ 0%

Mensajes en Facebook \_\_\_\_\_ 12.5%

Otro(s) \_\_\_\_\_ ¿Cuál (s)? \_\_\_\_\_ 8.3% todos \_\_\_\_\_ 12.5%

5. Cuando escribes ¿qué aspectos te parecen difíciles?

Gramática \_\_\_\_\_ 25%

Puntuación \_\_\_\_\_ 12.5%

Conectar ideas \_\_\_\_\_ 12.5%

Poner y organizar las ideas en palabras \_\_\_\_\_ 16.6%

Todos los anteriores: \_\_\_\_\_ 33.3% Otro (s) \_\_\_\_\_ ¿Cuál(es)? \_\_\_\_\_

6. En tu caso ¿Por qué razón crees que es difícil escribir?

Porque no entienden ----- 8.3%

Escribir es complicado ----- 8.3%

Dificultad en las \_\_ 12.5%  
 No saber gramática \_\_ 20.8%  
 Dificultad en conectar ideas \_\_ 8.3%  
 Ortografía \_\_ 4.1%  
 Pereza \_\_ 8.3%  
 No es difícil \_\_ 20.8%  
 No responde \_\_ 4.1%

7. ¿Qué tipo de textos te gustaría escribir?  
 Mensajes de la vida diaria \_\_ 8.3%  
 Cuentos \_\_ 8.3%  
 Historias \_\_ 62.5%  
 Ensayos \_\_ 0%  
 Resúmenes \_\_ 8.3%  
 Cartas \_\_ 8.3%  
 Otro (s) \_\_ ¿Cuál (es)? – Cancion \_\_ 4.1%

8. ¿Cómo crees que podrías mejorar tus escritos?  
 Escribiendo \_\_ 29%  
 Reescribiendo \_\_ 12.5%  
 Planeando: \_\_ 0%  
 Leyendo \_\_ 20.8%  
 Aprendiendo gramática y vocabulario \_\_ 12.5%  
 Todos los anteriores \_\_ 20.8%  
 Otro (s) \_\_ ¿Cuál (es)? \_\_\_\_\_

2. ¿Qué aspectos consideras importantes en el momento de escribir?  
 Conocimiento sobre cómo escribir \_\_ 25%  
 Concentración \_\_ 16.6%  
 Dedicación y entrega \_\_ 0%  
 Interés \_\_ 8.3%  
 Todos los anteriores \_\_ 50%  
 Otro (s) \_\_ ¿Cuál (es)? \_\_\_\_\_  
 ¿Por qué? \_\_\_\_\_

3. ¿Qué tipo de lecturas te gustaría llevar a cabo para trabajar en tu proceso de escritura?  
 Cuentos \_\_ 54.1%  
 Artículos de revista \_\_ 12.5%  
 Diálogos \_\_ 33.3%  
 Otros \_\_ ¿Cuál (es)? \_\_\_\_\_

**Gracias por tu colaboración.**

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire

de La Sabana AUTONOMOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS Adriana Yasmin Zea

Using Planning as a Way of Improving Writing in Narrative Texts

**CUESTIONARIO**

INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA TÉCNICO INDUSTRIAL MARISCAL DE BOAVITA

Student 2

Apreciados estudiantes del grado octavo los invito a contestar el siguiente cuestionario. Recuerden que la información será utilizada para propósitos del proyecto de investigación.

- ¿Qué hizo antes de comenzar a escribir sus historias en inglés?
  - Pensé sobre qué iba a escribir \_\_\_\_\_
  - Pensé sobre cómo lo iba a decir \_\_\_\_\_
  - Pensé a quién se lo iba a contar \_\_\_\_\_
  - Todos los anteriores
  - Otros \_\_\_\_\_ Cuáles \_\_\_\_\_
- ¿Planeó sus historias antes de escribirlas? Si  No \_\_\_\_\_ Marque con una x cómo lo hizo si la respuesta es positiva.
  - Utilicé un plan \_\_\_\_\_
  - Utilicé lluvia de ideas
  - Organicé mis ideas
  - Elaboré un gráfico de las principales ideas
  - Utilicé un mapa conceptual \_\_\_\_\_
  - Elaboré una telaraña \_\_\_\_\_
  - Utilicé otros aspectos tales como \_\_\_\_\_
- ¿Qué pasos utilizó con más frecuencia para escribir sus historia en inglés?
  - Generar ideas (lluvia de ideas)
  - Centrarme en las ideas que iba a escribir
  - Organizar las ideas
  - Utilizar un gráfico de las principales ideas
  - Escribir
  - Otros \_\_\_\_\_ Cuáles \_\_\_\_\_
- Cuándo utilizó la planeación en sus escritos ¿Observó algún cambio?
  - Si  ¿Cuáles? que mejora al organizar las ideas y puedo entender mejor lo que escribía
  - No \_\_\_\_\_ ¿Por qué? \_\_\_\_\_
- ¿Le pareció útil la planeación en la escritura de los textos en inglés?
  - Si  No \_\_\_\_\_ Explica porqué porque escribo con mas facilidad y con menos errores
- ¿Observó algún beneficio de la planeación de sus escritos?
  - Si  No \_\_\_\_\_ ¿Cómo cuáles?
  - Ya sé cómo escribir un cuento
  - Seguridad en mí mismo para escribir
  - Mejoró la presentación del texto
  - Otros \_\_\_\_\_ Cuáles \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C**

de La Sabana AUTONOMOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS Adriana Yasmin Zea

Using Planning as a Way of Improving Writing in Narrative Texts

LOG 1

INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA TÉCNICO INDUSTRIAL MARISCAL DE BOAVITA  
Student 2

Apreciados estudiantes del grado octavo los invito a contestar el siguiente cuestionario. Recuerden que la información será utilizada para el proyecto de investigación.

- Me gusta escribir en la clase de inglés. Si  No  ¿Por qué? Porque (así) puedo mediante la escritura desarrollar mi imaginación.
- La estrategia que utilizo para comenzar a escribir en inglés es El cuadro, la lluvia de ideas (x)
- Para mi planear mi texto es Pensar ~~en~~ sobre que voy a escribir y que personajes voy a utilizar
- Considero que una (s) de las etapas más útiles de la planeación es (son) El grafico porque me gano mas facilmente para poder escribir.
- Lo que más se me dificulta al planear mi historia es la lluvia de ideas
- Lo que más se me facilita al planear mi historia es el grafico
- Uno de los posibles beneficios de la planeación al escribir es (son) que puedo escribir con mas facilidad mis escritos y aprendo mas vocabulario. porque \_\_\_\_\_
- Los pasos que sigo en la planeación de mi escrito en inglés son: el grafico, la lluvia de ideas, y comienzo a escribir. porque Puedo escribir con mas facilidad.
- Creo que lo que he aprendido a través del uso de la estrategia de la planeación hasta el momento es Escribir con mas claridad y rapidez, Además e aprendido vocabulario
- Creo que lo que pasaría si no volviera a utilizar la planeación en mis escritos en Inglés es que podría cometer mas errores al no guiarme por esos pasos.
- La próxima vez que escriba voy utilizar el grafico y la lluvia de ideas para poder comenzar a escribir. porque puedo terminar mas rapido y con pocos errores.

Muchas Gracias por su colaboración

Appendix D

Consent letter (1)

Institución Educativa Técnico Industrial “Mariscal Sucre”

## Formato de Autorización- Directivos

Bogotá, D.C. Junio 10 de 2012

ESPECIALISTA  
RAFAEL LEÓN LEÓN  
RECTOR

Institución Educativa Técnico Industrial MARISCAL SUCRE

Boavita, Boyacá

Respetado saludo,

La práctica continua de los procesos de enseñanza- aprendizaje conlleva a desarrollar estudios que permitan plantear nuevas estrategias que contribuyan al mejoramiento de los mismos. Por ende, se pretende desarrollar un proyecto educativo denominado “El Uso de la Planeación para Mejorar la Escritura de Textos Narrativos en Inglés” dirigido a los estudiantes del grado octavo. Lo anteriormente mencionado es requisito para la Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés en Ambientes de Aprendizajes Autónomos de la Universidad de la Sabana.

El objetivo de este estudio radica en la utilización de la planeación en la escritura de textos narrativos, el cual se llevará a cabo en las horas de clase de Inglés en el segundo semestre del 2011, dónde los estudiantes destinarán parte de su tiempo para planear y desarrollar cada una de las actividades programadas bajo la supervisión de la autora del proyecto, las cuales no representarán ninguna incidencia en las notas del curso. Los estudiantes participarán de manera voluntaria bajo la dirección de la autora del proyecto y buscarán de alguna manera contribuir al mejoramiento de la escritura en inglés.

Este estudio se llevará a cabo bajo los parámetros de confidencialidad de la información y anonimato de los estudiantes. Para la recolección de la información se tomarán algunas fotografías, se grabarán algunas actividades y se coleccionará los escritos de los participantes, los cuales serán analizados de manera conjunta con los participantes y la responsable del proyecto.

ESTUDIANTES

GRADO OCTAVO “A”

Institución Educativa Técnico Industrial MARISCAL SUCRE

Boavita, Boyacá

Cordial saludo,

La práctica continua de los procesos de enseñanza- aprendizaje conlleva a desarrollar estudios que permitan plantear nuevas estrategias que contribuyan al mejoramiento de los mismos. Por ende, se pretende desarrollar un proyecto educativo denominado “El Uso de la Planeación para Mejorar la Escritura de Textos Narrativos en Inglés” dirigido a los estudiantes del grado octavo. Lo anteriormente mencionado es requisito para la Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés en Ambientes de Aprendizajes Autónomos de la Universidad de la Sabana.

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Este estudio se llevará a cabo bajo los parámetros de confidencialidad de la información y anonimato de los estudiantes. Para la recolección de la información se tomarán algunas fotografías, se grabarán algunas actividades y se coleccionará los escritos de los participantes, los cuales serán analizados de manera conjunta con los participantes y la responsable del proyecto.

Con el propósito de que quede constancia que se conoce la información y se apruebe la autorización para el desarrollo del proyecto, se solicita autorizar y firmar el presente consentimiento.

Agradezco su atención y colaboración.



Atentamente,

---

Adriana Yasmín Zea Barrera

Profesora de Inglés

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Autorizo: Si

No

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### ICELT LESSON PLAN FORM

Main Aim(s):

By the end of the class, students will write a new version of the princess and the dragon story using each step of planning strategy in simple past.

Subsidiary Aims:

To identify the appropriate verb in every sentence.

To design the graphic organizer

To generate and organize ideas

To recycle and practice vocabulary about fairy tales.

Personal aims:

To ensure that implementation time is appropriate for each stage.

To monitor students' needs

To use appropriate activities to engage students.

To develop learner autonomy by writing a short story in the simple past tense

Assumed knowledge:

Write a description of the language/skills/competences that students already know/have that will serve as a basis for new language/skills input.

- Students are able to use vocabulary related to habits
- Students are able to write short sentences about daily life.
- Students are willing to speak and write about fairy tales
- Students are able to share, read and understand their stories

Description of language item / skill(s)

Form

Using the syntactic structure: Subject + verb + complement.

Meaning

The past simple refers to completed events, states or actions and very often use expressions such as last week, at the weekend, three years ago, etc.

Use

The past simple is used to consider that the event, state or action took place within a finished period of time.

In telling stories, the past simple is used to establish the key time frame of the events and to describe the key events that move the story forward.

Skill(s) and sub skill(s)

Writing: Students will be able to write a short story in the past simple tense using the planning strategy.

Vocabulary: fairy tales, action verbs in the past.

The students will be able to use new vocabulary about fairy tales, connectors and verbs in the past

Materials:

Describe all the materials that you are going to use in the lesson, and attach copies/photocopies with their corresponding rationale and proper referring citation.

- Board
- Dictionary.
- Fairy tales from British council. These type of stories catch the students’ attentiveness. They enjoy reading the tales because of animation, color, images and the sounds.
- Notebooks

| <u>Anticipated problems</u>   | <u>Planned solutions</u>  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners might not know what type of vocabulary use.</li> <li>• They might have some trouble to use word order.</li> <li>• They might not understand instructions.</li> <li>• Some students might forget how to use the steps for planning.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will be some pictures of reference that will contain the basic vocabulary.</li> <li>• There will be a poster showing the structure (subject+ verb + complement+ connector). They also have practiced the word order orally.</li> <li>• Modeling and demonstration step by step will be implemented.</li> <li>• They will have a model of how to apply each step of the planning strategy.</li> </ul> |

| <u>Stage</u>         | Procedure teachers and students activity   | Time  |
|----------------------|--|---|
| <u>Pre-writing</u>   | Students will listen and follow the reading of the tale.<br>Students will talk about the story through some questions<br>They will identify the new vocabulary and practice it.  | Ss 10'<br>T- Ss 15'<br>S-s 10'  |
| <u>While-writing</u> | T will explain the instruction.<br><br>Students will design a graphic organizer to write a new version of the story.<br>Students will define the type of reader.<br>Students will generate ideas using brainstorming.<br>Students will organize their ideas and choose what of them to use in their story.<br>Students will start to write the story<br>Students will revise their text. | T -Ss 10'<br><br>S - S 15'<br>S - S 15'<br>Ss - 10'<br>Ss - 40'<br>Ss- 10 |
| <u>After-writing</u> | Students will exchange their stories and read them.<br>Students will receive feedback from their classmates and teacher.<br>Students will re-write the story.<br>Students will exhibit their final texts.  | Ss- 15'<br>Ss- 30'<br>S s 20'<br>Ss - 20'<br><br>220'                     |

### Appendix G

LOG FORMAT

| LOG FORMAT |  |   |   |  |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |
|------------|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| STUDENT    | 1.Me gusta escribir en clase de ingles. Si ___ N ___ ¿por qué? | 2.La estrategia que utilizo para comenzar a escribir en inglés es   | 3.Para mi planear mi texto es   | 4.Considero que una (s) de las etapas más útiles de la planeación es (son)_ porque | 5.Lo que más se me dificulta al planear mi historia                 | 6.Lo que más se me facilita al planear mi historia es                 | 7.Uno de los posibles beneficios de la planeación al escribir es (son) | 8.Los pasos que sigo en la planeación de mi escrito en inglés son_ porque | 9.Creo que lo que he aprendido a través del uso de la estrategia de la planeación hasta el momento es | 10.Creo que lo que pasaría si no volviera a utilizar la planeación en mis escritos en Inglés es que     | 11.La próxima vez que escriba voy   |
| S1         | Escribiendo puedo corregir mis errores                         | Primero escribo en español, para escribir en inglés con corrección. | Tengo que tener unos pasos como las ideas, el inicio, el nudo porque así puedo mejorar una historia | grafico--- me puedo guiar para escribir un texto                                   | Las ideas porque tengo que poner atención con lo que voy a escribir | El inicio, nudo y desenlace porque estos pasos hace mejor mi historia | Utilizar el diccionario ---porque puedo conocer las palabras que no sé | La historia--la historia es el último paso que sigo                       | Tener en cuenta unos pasos para que todo salga bien   | No quedaría bien la historia porque en una historia se tiene que llevar unos pasos para que salga bien. | A mirar que mis escritos estén bien o si no para corregirlos-- sino corrijo mis errores nunca los voy a aprender. |
| S2         | Porque puedo mediante la escritura desarrollar mi              | El cuadro la lluvia de ideas  | Pensar sobre que voy a escribir y que personajes  | El grafico--- me guía más fácilmente para poder escribir                           | La lluvia de ideas  | El gráfico  | Que puedo escribir con más facilidad mis escritos                      | El grafico, la lluvia de ideas y comienzo a escribir--- puedo             | Escribir con más claridad y rapidez, además aprendo   | Podría cometer más errores al no guiarme por esos pasos.  | Utilizar el grafico y la lluvia de ideas para poder comenzar a  |



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| <p>no<br/>____<br/>____por<br/>qué?</p> <p>5. ¿Le pareció útil la planeación en la escritura de los textos en inglés? si_x_</p> | <p>por que<br/>escr<br/>bo ue la<br/>con<br/>mas<br/>real<br/>dad<br/>con<br/>men<br/>os<br/>erro<br/>res</p> | <p>x<br/>saca<br/>unas<br/>ideas<br/>sobre<br/>mis<br/>peso<br/>najes</p> | <p>x<br/>plane<br/>ando<br/>me<br/>dient<br/>para<br/>ideas<br/>de la<br/>er<br/>biren<br/>s<br/>mi<br/>histo<br/>ria</p> | <p>x<br/>pue<br/>de<br/>ser<br/>apren<br/>demos<br/>mas</p> | <p>x<br/>apre<br/>endi<br/>a<br/>man<br/>jar<br/>se<br/>que<br/>ar<br/>bien<br/>reda<br/>cibada<br/>y<br/>sigo<br/>los<br/>peso<br/>s que<br/>teng<br/>o<br/>que<br/>toma<br/>r</p> | <p>x<br/>apre<br/>ndi<br/>la<br/>estru<br/>ctura<br/>de la<br/>orac<br/>ion</p> | <p>x<br/>porq<br/>ue<br/>es<br/>de<br/>me<br/>que<br/>ar<br/>on<br/>de<br/>mas<br/>a<br/>mi<br/>texto<br/>qued<br/>a<br/>mas<br/>clara</p> | <p>x<br/>porq<br/>ue<br/>ent<br/>nde<br/>uno<br/>mejo<br/>r y<br/>endi<br/>ende<br/>mas<br/>coher<br/>entes</p> | <p>x<br/>plane<br/>e mis<br/>ideas<br/>mis<br/>histor<br/>ias<br/>me<br/>qued<br/>aron<br/>coher<br/>entes</p> | <p>x<br/>pienso<br/>que es<br/>la<br/>mejor<br/>herr<br/>amient<br/>a q<br/>pude<br/>aplicar</p> | <p>x para<br/>mi<br/>apren<br/>dizaje</p> | <p>x<br/>ideas<br/>me<br/>que<br/>saban<br/>mas<br/>orden<br/>adas</p> | <p>x<br/>apre<br/>ndo<br/>a<br/>escr<br/>ibir<br/>o<br/>reda<br/>ctar<br/>en<br/>tiem<br/>po<br/>pasa<br/>do y<br/>en<br/>tod<br/>os<br/>los<br/>tiem<br/>pos</p> | <p>x<br/>apre<br/>ni<br/>co<br/>mo<br/>hac<br/>er<br/>la<br/>llu<br/>via<br/>de<br/>ide<br/>as</p> | <p>x<br/>apredi<br/>a mas<br/>escribu<br/>ra y<br/>vocab<br/>ulario<br/>en<br/>ingles</p> | <p>le<br/>planea<br/>cion es<br/>uti<br/>l<br/>organ<br/>izacion<br/>de la<br/>oracion<br/>y las<br/>ideas<br/>util<br/>para<br/>escribi<br/>r<br/>vocab<br/>ulario<br/>histo<br/>rias<br/>cohere<br/>ncia</p> |
| <p>no<br/>____<br/>explica<br/>porqué<br/>____</p>  |   |   |   |   | <p>x<br/>por<br/>q<br/>ya<br/>sabi<br/>a<br/>co<br/>mo<br/>hac<br/>erlo</p>   |   |  |   |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |

**Appendix I**

Portfolios checklist

| PERFORMANCE TASK –Student 3   | <i>Story 1</i> | <i>Story 2</i> | <i>Story 3</i> | <i>Story 4</i> | <i>Story 5</i> |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Demonstrate interest and ability in designing the graphic organizer   | √              | √              | √              | √              | √              |
| Brainstorming   | √              | √              | √              | √              | √              |
| Organized ideas   | √              | √              | √              | √              | √              |
| Coherence (Did the stories contain a beginning , a middle and an end) | √              | √              | √              | √              | √              |
| Write the story using the previous stages                             | √              | √              | √              | √              | √              |
| Check mistakes  | √              | √              | -----          | √              | √              |
| Rewrite the story taking into account comments                        | √              | √              | √              | -----          | √              |
| General comments  |                |                |                |                |                |



### Appendix J

Identifying units- Log format

|   |                                  |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|---|----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| E | escritura en la clase de inglés. | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) |
| S | la clase de inglés.              | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) |
| E | la clase de inglés.              | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) |
| S | la clase de inglés.              | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) |
| E | la clase de inglés.              | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) |
| S | la clase de inglés.              | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) | ¿por qué?) |

LOG findings

- The strategy that the learners used to write their story was planning including: the graphic organizer, brainstorming and thinking what was the story about
- Plan is a strategy that facilitates to write a story
- The graphic organizer is a guide to write the story
- The strategy of planning allows learners to
  - to organize their ideas and the story
  - Learn vocabulary
  - To write easier and fast
  - Correct mistakes
  - To write text with coherence
  - Develop creativity
  - Imagine, invent possible words in their minds.
  - Motivate students to learn English
  - Learn more English
  - Learners think that writing is
  - The syntactical structure is difficult
  - (S\*V\*O\*C)

### Appendix K

QUESTIONNAIRE GROUPING PATTERNS

| Questions  |                                     | Questionnaire findings  |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. ¿qué hizo antes de comenzar a escribir sus historias en inglés?                   |                                     | Questionnaire findings  |
| pensé sobre qué iba a escribir _____   | pensé sobre qué iba a escribir      |   |
| pensé sobre cómo lo iba a decir _____  |                                     |   |
| pensé a quién se lo iba a contar _____ todos los anteriores _____ otros _____ cuáles |                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Learners use the planning strategy including graphic organizer, brainstorming, organizing ideas, writing to write their stories.</li> <li>✦ planning is a guide to write</li> <li>✦ most useful and easiest steps were the graphic organizer and brainstorming</li> </ul>  |
| 2. ¿planeó sus historias antes de escribirlas? sí ___ x ___                          | utiliza non planeacion las 3 etapas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ planning allowed learners to                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- write organized sentences and the story-</li> <li>- learn vocabulary</li> <li>- write coherent ideas and texts</li> <li>- facilitate to write in English</li> <li>- be motivated</li> <li>- to develop their creativity and imagination</li> <li>- how to write a story</li> <li>- be more self-confidence at writing</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| no _____   |                                     |   |

### Appendix L

#### Comparing information

#### LOG

- The strategy the learners used to write their story was planning including: the graphic organizer, brainstorming, and thinking what was the story about
- Plan is a strategy that facilitates to write a story
- The graphic organizer is a guide to write the story
- The strategy of planning allows learners to
- to organize their ideas and the story
- Learn vocabulary
- Correct mistakes
- Imagine, invent possible words in their minds.
- Motivate students to learn English
- Learn more English
- To write easier and fast
- Learners think that writing is
- Time consuming
- The syntactical structure is difficult (S+V+C+C)

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

- Learners use the planning strategy including the graphic organizer, brainstorming, organizing ideas, writing to write their stories.
- Planning is a guide to write
- The most useful and easiest steps were the graphic organizer and brainstorming
- Planning allowed learners to
- write organized sentences and the story
- Learn vocabulary
- Write coherent ideas and texts
- Facilitate to write in English
- Be motivated
- To develop their creativity and imagination
- How to write a story
- Be more Self-confidence at writing

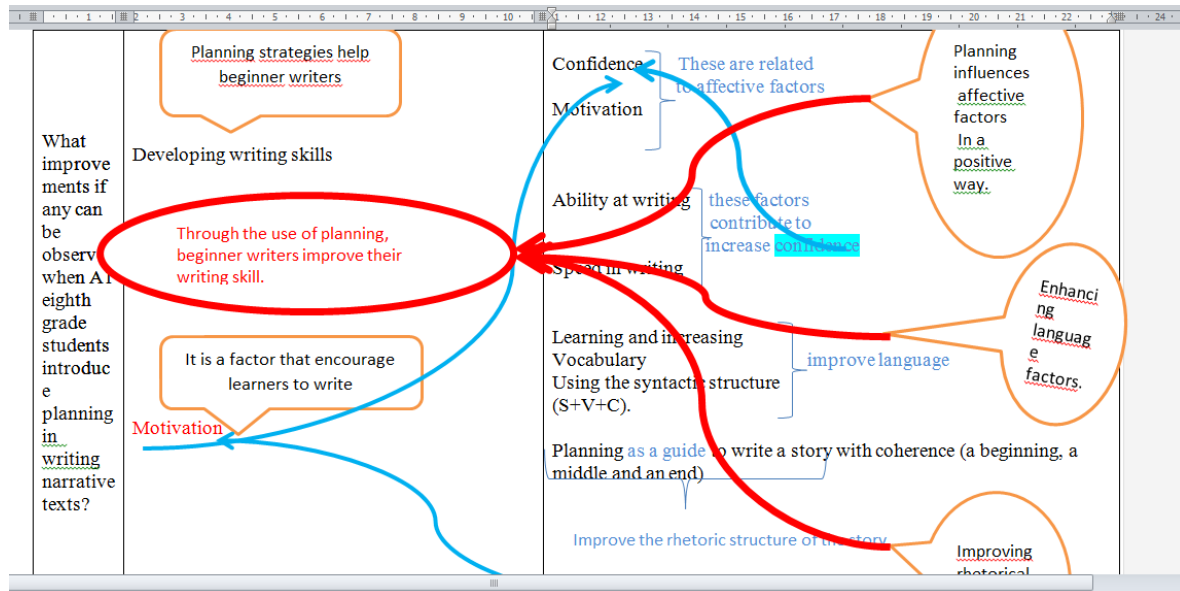
#### PORTFOLIOS

Planning allowed learners to:

- Learn vocabulary
- To organize ideas and sentences
- Use the graphic organizer as a guide to write the story
- To write coherent stories with a beginning, a middle and an end
- Creativity
- Time consuming

### Appendix M

Diagram: selective coding



Using Planning As A Way of Improving Writing in Narrative Texts

Adriana Yasmín ZEA BARRERA

Research Report submitted

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in English Language Teaching –Autonomous Learning Environments

Directed by Maria Sonia Stella JIMENEZ BONILLA

Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures

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