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MAESTRÍA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

Reporte del Proyecto Terminal de Aplicación Innovadora del Conocimiento

Improving the Writing Skill of MEIF Students at the Open System through Semi-controlled Writing Tasks for homework at a Basic Level

Línea de Generación y aplicación del conocimiento

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Abstract

This qualitative research project attempts to investigate the improvement of MEIF students’ writing skill at the Open System. The teacher researcher proposes to apply semi-controlled writing activities to enhance students’ writing ability at a basic level. The aims of the study focus on discovering why students did not hand in homework tasks, how students could improve their writing skills practicing with semi-controlled writing activities and how the application of such activities might help students to increase their writing skills and at the same time raising awareness of the importance of the role of homework when learning a second or foreign language. In order to develop the research project, nine participants were considered. Then, data was collected through three qualitative instruments: journal entries, class documents and two checklists. Finally, results are discussed to show how students improved positively or negatively their writing skills.
Introduction

The role of writing has been evolving during the last two decades. It is clearly seen that people use technology more frequently in their daily life; however, this does not mean that they have increased their writing communication (Scrivener, 2011: p 234). On the contrary, it seems that people usually write according to their needs of daily communication. They might write more but less formal. Consequently, this can be recognized in the language classrooms when students have to write more academic texts (Scrivener, 2011: p 235).

For some reasons, writing seems to be the least developed of the four main skills in the English language teaching. Firstly, it can be called the “forgotten skill” because it is often taken last in a series of teaching priorities. Secondly, it sometimes takes longer for students to develop and make corrections. Thirdly, it is commonly associated with doing grammar exercises, written sections on tests and performing pieces of homework (Bowen, 1994: p. 143). Finally, it is true that there is not enough practice on writing tasks. We might ask students to write without a specific purpose or the wrong way, or we might forget the communication purpose. In words of Kaye (2007) writing has become the Cinderella of the four skills.

From my own experience as a teacher of English, I have noticed that students hardly ever complete most of the writing sections in the handouts that they are given to review. They only complete two or three sections of the exercise assigned for homework. They hand in their task with mistakes or, simply, they do not hand it in time. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore what is affecting the students’ performance when doing homework in issues such as students’ attitude against homework, the topics that could demotivate them, the lack of organization skills, and time devoted to do homework, an appropriate place for doing homework, or if they have a tendency to procrastinate.

This Action Research paper is divided into the following sections. Firstly, I will provide the context of the research, the objective, the research questions and the rationale. Secondly, I will present some approaches to teaching writing, and I will discuss the key concepts used in this research such as writing ability, learning and communication strategies, homework and semi-controlled writing tasks. Then, I will describe the
participants, the data instruments and procedure to be administered in order to accomplish the aims of this action research and the data analysis. After that, I will present the findings. Finally, I will present the conclusions and considerations of this research paper which could be considered for future research.
1. Context/focus

The work of this presented research was conducted in the Language Center-Orizaba at the Universidad Veracruzana. The Universidad Veracruzana currently offers a program called MEIF (Modelo Educativo Integral y Flexible). In this program, university students taking any of the Bachelor degrees have to take two Basic English courses compulsorily. All these students take English 1 and English 2, among other subjects, in a common area at the beginning of their professional studies. These two learning experiences are part of the Area de Formación Básica General (or AFBG). English 1 and English 2 allow students to acquire the knowledge of the English language and develop the speaking, reading, listening and writing skills; and a strong attitude to communicative and self-learning competencies in a basic level. There are various learning environments in which students can take these two experiences of English 1 and English 2: classroom learning (presencial), autonomous learning (autónomo), blended learning (semi-presencial) and virtual learning (virtual). I will focus my research on the blended learning environment due to the fact that I teach courses of English 1 and English 2 at the Open System (SEA). This system was founded in 1980. It accepts students who have finished their Junior High School. The educational sessions are taken only on Saturdays. Students attend a six-hour class during a six-Saturday course. It is called block mode subject studies. Therefore, students are offered with a blended mode of learning experiences.

Some of these SEA students who attend English lessons at the Language Center come from very far towns. So far, that they have to walk or travel by car or bus from several hours to attend their classes in Orizaba. They might take English 1 and English 2 courses offered at any of the block mode subject studies during the first two semesters of their Bachelor of Arts degree. In my case, my students took the second six-Saturday class period. After finishing their English class at the language Center, they have to travel from this school to the other school where they take disciplinary subjects from their area of study. Thus, they study all day long on Saturday having classes in the morning and in the afternoon. Also, a great majority of students have a job during the week. Most of them are married and have children. Some live in towns where there might not be electricity or even internet access. Some of them come from a low socioeconomic level.
These SEA students who attend classes at the Language Center in Orizaba are from very different ages, interests and attitudes, ways of learning and English backgrounds. First, their ages range from 18 to 30 years old. Second, they have different learning interests. Third, they bring different attitudes against learning a language. Fourth, they can be extrinsically motivated. Finally, they may also be identified as visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners. In addition, students from this system come to the English language classroom with different levels of English and study backgrounds. For example, there are some students who know little or no English. There are also some others who know some English because they have taken lessons in private institutions or they have attended classes as mandatory courses at Junior or Junior High schools.

**Problem/focus**

For the purposes of this research, I will focus on writing activities which may help students on accomplishing their homework tasks. I have always considered this topic as an important aspect of teaching but overall of learning. That is because I have seen that students usually do not bring to the class their homework complete. They partially answer sections of the written exercises or leave out three or more answers in each part of the exercise. This is my main concern because I think this affects students’ learning negatively. As a result, students’ performance in the writing section of their partial and final written examinations is been affected. This is a situation of interest because at the end of each semester of English 1 and English 2, students have to apply for a final written examination where, in its second part, they need to write a text or composition about a specific topic which might have been worked in the class time. However, and as I stated before, this research may possibly portrait the “hidden” reasons of why students might fail writing coherent and cohesive compositions. Therefore, the experience of investigating this complex but interesting issue would definitely help my students develop their writing skill and I improve professionally.

**Objective**

The purpose of this action research project was to examine how semi-controlled writing tasks for homework could help students improve their writing skill.
Research questions
Why do students of the Open System (SEA) hardly ever complete their homework compositions?
How could I help my students to improve their writing skill through semi-controlled writing activities?
How could MEIF students’ learning at the Open System be affected by using semi-controlled writing activities?

Rationale
The writing skill has often been underdeveloped in the English language classrooms due to different factors. For one reason, this skill is not included in the English language courses because it is often not contemplated as writing texts or compositions; language textbooks more often only contain grammar and structure writing activities. Secondly, to develop this skill means time-consuming for the teacher and the students. Teachers might spend time checking and making comments on students writing tasks. Students, for their part, might take longer to rewrite a text or composition more than three times. Both teachers’ comments and the time devoted to make corrections could not help students’ motivation for learning. Thirdly, it might be possible that we teachers overemphasize language accuracy. Thus, this could have a negative effect on students if they see that their written works are all over marked. Fourth, teachers might have a tendency to emphasis the final product. Although we teachers could base more the emphasis on the product, we cannot neglect at all that there are some steps students could follow in developing their writing skill. Finally, it could be possible that we teachers do not have a way of assessing students’ writing tasks. Therefore, this is a very important concern due to the fact that in the final written examination of MEIF students are given a mark on a composition section.
2. Literature review

Approaches to teaching writing

Back to the 1950’s and the early 1960’s, the period of the major dominance of the Audio-lingual method in second-language learning/EFL, writing took a second place in learning a language because the speaking skill was the main focus. Writing activities only emphasized the mastery of grammar and syntax. Thus, students were “… first given sentence exercises, then paragraphs to copy or manipulate grammatically by changing questions to statements, present to past or singular to plural [forms]” for the work of writing. The tasks were so controlled that students could not show errors in their compositions at all, and it was easy for them to accomplish their writing activities. However, this change from controlled-to-free approaches was sequential (Ghaith: 2002).

At the end of the 1970’s, writing was not taken properly as a language skill but as a support skill with which the learner could learn a language. Based on this assumption, students were asked to work on handwriting, to copy reading and writing exercises, and to write the exercises the teacher dictated. According to Reid (2008: 28), it was later that the teaching philosophy changed to a composition teaching theory.

Starting in the 1970’s, continuing in the 1980’s until the present time, the communicative approach continues as a contraposition of the mechanical practices of the Audio-lingual method. Its main focus was on the design of activities that engaged students in the use of meaningful and authentic language (Bowen, 2013) with communicative purposes. In this approach, students imitate and manipulate the teacher’s writing models. In addition, activities followed a sequence during the lesson: a familiarization stage for studying grammar and vocabulary, the stage of controlled writing with fixed patterns, the guided writing stage where students imitate model texts and free writing patterns like a letter (Richards, 2001).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a new pedagogy had emerged. It moved from more teacher-centered approaches to more learner-centered courses; and beside this, “academic writing [was] viewed as a communicative social act (Reid, 2008: 29)”. In more recent times, the importance of writing might have been increased at the
university level. This might be due to international qualifications. Most, if not all, of the certification and international examinations might have now included a writing section.

At the present time, writing has become a “dynamic multimodal process”. The writing technological practices have brought students new opportunities for becoming multimodal designers of texts. Therefore, technology has enabled students with different capacities so that they can create new computerized texts (Edwards-Groves: 2012, 99). In their real life students can write texts of different kinds. They can write e-mails, formal or informal letters, work or school assignments or essays, and work on blog and websites. As all these tasks have a communicative purpose and a target audience (Kaye: 2007), there is no reason why they could not be brought to the language classroom if we consider students should be professionally competent.

In order to develop the writing skill, the study of some researchers has provided us with the product, process and genre approaches in EFL writing. The product and process approaches have played the most important role in the EFL classroom over the last 20 years. However, the genre approach has been gaining dominance during the last ten years (Hasan: 2010, 78). In this genre-based approach to teaching writing, emphasis is placed on “the teaching of particular genre students need for later communication success”; but overall, the focus is more directed towards the reader (Hasan: 2010, 81).

According to Shojaee (2013) writing as a productive skill can help students to produce language actively when they write. They can consider including “grammar, vocabulary, word order, spelling and logical arrangement of ideas” in their writing tasks; however, students frequently make mistakes as they try writing sentences to start a task. Thus, in order to help students overcome committing mistakes, teachers can plan their lessons with a step-by-step way to “… build up students’ confidence by starting from controlled and guided activities and move towards less-guided and more student centered and creative activities”. Therefore, short and easy guided writing activities might help students develop their confidence as they commit less mistakes and their interest to write is being increased.

Definition of concepts

In this paper, concepts like writing ability, learning and communication strategies, homework and semi-controlled writing activities are provided with the idea of clarifying
the terminology used throughout the development of this research. They are defined as follow.

**Writing ability**

When we write, we connect “words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, and put [them] … in a coherent text” (Lindsay, 2010). This can be done by working with constant, coherent and cohesive writing tasks or activities. If students write “longer texts as part of [their] studies, for communication, a short story, or an examination” (Lindsay, 2010. p 85), they might be in the way of developing their ability to write. This ability could also be developed as students know how and practice this art of forming sentences, paragraphs and texts (Harmer: 2004, 55).

The concept of ability might be defined as a sub-skill that the student needs to develop in order to be a good English language learner. Lindsay (2010: 87-92) discovered eight writing sub-skills that the student needs to develop in the foreign language learning process; for example: handwriting, spelling, punctuation, using appropriate layout, forming sentences, using the appropriate level of formality and study skills. Harmer states that students who have some difficulties with English handwriting, it is possible to help them following a two-stage approach. Firstly, students should be able to recognize the English letters primarily; and then, specific strings of letters in a sequence. Secondly, once students could do that, they would be on the production stage. Here students could be able to produce the learnt words with practice activities like word dictation, a word classification according to the headings given and asking questions to students so that they can write down answers on their notebooks or the board (Harmer, 2004: 45-50).

Harmer (2002) states that there are some conventions which are not presented in speaking but they are more notorious in writing. Some examples are “… issues of letter, word and text formation [which are] manifested by handwriting, spelling, layout and punctuation”. As there are differences in writing in other languages, he also points out that non-native language learners need to be trained, and they have to practice handwriting in order to improve their writing skill. Spelling also plays an important role in developing the writing skill because non-native students might have some problems when writing in English. Firstly, words are pronounced differently from the way they are written; and secondly, there are some varieties of English in the world that might
affect the spelling of words. Harmer (2004: 47) states that reading longer texts could help students with their English spelling. With regards to the layout and punctuation, conventions slightly differ from one language to another in gender and formality. Therefore, these two issues might cause some problems to foreign language students as they try to write something in a language that is not their mother tongue (Harmer, 2002). However, students could overcome some of these problems if they are provided with exercises which help them develop their writing ability. Coping and parallel sentence are two teaching techniques that could be a starting point for a later more creative writing (Harmer: 2009, 44). Copying involves writing simple or combined letters, words from a list or classifying words in columns. The idea is that students can firstly learn letter and word formation by doing it with a model (Harmer, 2009, 52). Once students are able to learn that, they can use words to construct sentences and then paragraphs and texts (Harmer, 2009, 55). In the case of parallel sentence writing, students “…rewrite the sentences [from model sentences from the board or a written text provided by the teacher], making it true from themselves, using the model sentences to get the grammar right (Baker, 2005: 73-74)” . Thus, students could have a better idea of how to write their own paragraphs and increase the development of the writing skill.

The writing ability is not the only aspect that students need to consider if they have to start a writing task. They have to consider the use of their own learning and communication strategies.

**Learning strategies**

Various are the researchers who have been widely defining the concept of strategies. On one hand, learning strategies are defined as “… any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information (Rubin, 1987: 19 cited in Hismanoglu, 2000)”. Oxford (2003, 8) terms learning strategies are those individual actions which help the learner “ make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more affective and more transferrable to new situations”. It is the learner himself who is in charge of his own learning, finding and applying more ways to learn the target language. In addition, a learning strategy is stressed by Faerch Claus and Casper as the student’s “attempt to develop linguistic and
sociolinguistic competence in the target language (Faerch Claus and Casper, 1983: 67 cited in Hismanoglu, 2000)

As writing is considered now a part of the learning process, students could find difficulties to accomplish writing a composition in English if they do not follow some steps. They would often consider that in composing they have to think on “cognitive, linguistic, logical, [and] critical strategies (Kavaliauskiené, 2009)”. In other words, students have to think on the way how to develop the writing task assigned, the application of the target language being learned, order ideas in a logical way and being critical. The use of all these strategies might cause also, as mentioned above, some problems to students who are not used to composing longer texts. Therefore, students have to be trained on certain aspects in order to develop their writing skill.

Communication strategies

Brown differentiates between a learning strategy and a communication strategy. On one hand, he states that “a learning strategy is a method of perceiving and storing particular items for later recall”. While, on the other hand, he believes that “a communication strategy is a method of achieving communication, of encoding or expressing meaning in a language (Brown, 2000: 122 cited in Xhaferi, 2012)

The development of the students’ writing ability and learning and communication strategies are not the only aspects that students have to think when doing writing activities. These issues play an important role as they are needed to the writing of tasks for homework.

Homework

Generally speaking, homework can be defined as “… work outside class …” As can be seen, homework means an activity that students do at home but not in class or at the beginning of the school time. In addition, Harris (2010) states that homework “…reinforces the lessons of the classroom, gives the student practice in mastering (vocabulary, grammar and/or reading strategies)…, helps [students] engage in deep learning and challenges [them] to go beyond classroom learning”. In other words, there are some characteristics or positive aspects of homework. First, the activities assigned might help students to support what they have done in class. Second, it is with practice how they might acquire and master more vocabulary, grammar structures and develop
strategies which can be used in the other three main skills (speaking, reading and listening). Finally, students might analyze and solve problems on how to do an activity, which of course, could represent a challenge for them.

Gill and Schlossman states that doing homework is “essential to raise educational standards [and] foster high academic achievement….(Gill and Schlossman, 1996 cited in The Center for Public Education, 2007)” In addition to this, some other researchers claim that when students do homework, they “… develop responsibility, life skills … and academic benefits (Corno and Xu 2004; Counts 2004; Xu and Corno 1998) cited in CPE, 2007). This is true at the present time. Doing homework does not only mean to complete an academic activity but to learn and develop skills that might be useful for future personal and professional life. Homework activities, then, represent an opportunity for students to review the contents seen in class, improve their four skills for comprehension and even develop their habit formation of studying materials for future classes and final examinations (Suttor, 2012).

According to Harmer (2002), setting homework is not an easy task for teachers; and it is as well for students to do it right and complete. He adds that homework represents for students a time out of class in which they might have to work without their teacher’s support. He also mentions that it could be advisable to discuss with students the amount of homework to be assigned, if we take into account that there are other subjects they study at their school; and their busy schedules during the weekdays because of jobs and family.

Writing activities as homework can help students develop their writing ability. However, it is by implementing semi-controlled writing tasks that students could increase their writing skill.

**Semi-controlled writing activities**

In the past most writing work was viewed in three kinds of writing activities which might be considered as traditional in language learning: controlled sentence construction, free compositions and the homework function (Richards 2008: 178-179). As we know writing is one of the productive skills. At an elementary level, students’ confidence in writing could be increased if they work on writing activities like coping sentences, matching the beginning of sentences, substitution drills and sequencing
jumble words. Thus, students should pass from more controlled writing activities to a more semi-guided or semi-controlled tasks. In addition, students working with short tasks will have more opportunities for practice, helping them commit fewer mistakes, but over all, they will hopefully gain interest and confidence in their development of the writing skill (Shojaee, 2013).

Some examples of semi-controlled writing activities include: gap-fill sentences, changing sentences or question, completing sentences and parallel sentences or paragraphs (Shojaee, 2013). The last activity is the one which is considered to be applied in the language classroom for the present research.

**Why to teach writing**

To some point, we all write in our native language; however, it is not the same doing it in a foreign language. We might see it reflected in our language classroom because the developing of the writing skill is lessened, if we compare it with the other three main skills: reading, speaking and listening. Even it is more notorious when we read our students’ pieces of written work and notice interference from students’ first language. In addition, most students do not frequently review, work on making corrections or follow some steps in the writing process. Consequently, there are some reasons why students should work on writing tasks in the English language classroom. First, students should consolidate their knowledge of the target language which they have been learning, by guiding them on their writing activities and indicating them what to write about (Semi-controlled composition techniques, 2010). Second, students should improve their learning of English with practice. Writing in this case should reinforce the language that has been taught in class so that teachers could make sure that students are working on accurate structures and vocabulary. Besides, students could apply some communication strategies. Third, writing is also a means of social communication. Students could have an opportunity to communicate something by a writing activity to the teacher or a classmate or someone else out of their classroom (a student of a different group but the same level). And this is the best way on how communication takes place: “exchanging ideas, opinions or information with another person” (Holden, 2008, 59).
For all the above seen, we can now understand the development of writing as a skill on the scene of teaching and learning during late 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries, on one hand. And on the other hand, how researchers have defined the terminology in this setting, and which is being used in this investigation for the purpose of giving a general overview of the concepts being used throughout the paper.
3. Methodology

The context of the research

The main objective of this study is to investigate how semi-controlled writing activities can help students of the Sistema de Enseñanza Abierta (SEA) to improve their writing skill. As they come to the language Center in Orizaba to learn English, I decided to work with nine students of my English class at this Open System (SEA). The idea was that with teaching English to this group, I would know to what extent these students could develop their writing skill starting with controlled writing activities, and passing to semi-controlled writing tasks. On one hand, researchers have developed the concept of controlled writing activities as follows: Brown (2007, 344) describes the term of controlled writing as the model paragraph a teacher presents to students so that they can alter the structures given in the whole text for their own information. Baker (2005, 70-72) provides some other examples like copying correct sentences, matching the beginning and endings of sentences, substitution drills and sequencing jumble words. In addition, Bowen (1994, 145) explains that, in general, teachers ask their students to copy examples of “grammatical structures, grammatical rules and items of vocabulary.”

On the other hand, the semi-controlled writing activities are those tasks which student can use to practice English like the ones described below:

“… resembling jumbled sentences to form paragraphs, shadow paragraphs, where students write according to a model with predetermined key words replaced in their version, multiple choice for options to form a coherent paragraph, choice of linking words (multiple-choice or gap filling) and writing paragraphs around link words following a basic model. … ”

(Bowen, 1994: 146)

Baker (2005: 72-74) also gives examples of four guided writing activities like gap-filling sentences, changing sentences, completing sentences and parallel sentences.

Participants

The participants of this research project were nine students registered at the Basic level of the English program at the Open System. The following information will provide some general information about the students. The first student is Fernanda. She studies medicine. The second, Christian, is a nursing student. The third is Anahí. She studies Food Engineering. The fourth is Jose Alberto. He studies mechatronics at the
Engineering School. The fifth is Irving, an administration student. The sixth and the seventh students, Surizadai and Concepción both study sociology. Giovanna, the eighth student, takes classes at the Accounting School. Last but not least, Carlos Alberto who is a nursing student.

**Data instruments**

As I have mentioned before, these students take English as a compulsory subject at the Language Center in Orizaba. In this system students only attend classes on weekends. They study English at the Language Center in Orizaba for a six-hour class. They attend their English course for six Saturdays which is defined as block mode subject studies. Besides this, they take other subjects which are part of their area of study. They are registered in the second block mode subject studies from March 16 to April 27. In addition, it is worth saying that they should attend three more sessions after finishing the linguistic contents of the course. This is done with the idea of helping them increase and develop their confidence in their speech and getting ready for the final standardized speaking test.

On the first Saturday, students reviewed grammatical and vocabulary aspects of English 1 working with speaking, reading, listening and controlled writing activities. Students practiced with oral pair and group work interaction activities to remember what they had acquired in their previous English course 1. Almost at the end of the class, I explained students that I was doing a research project; and I had planned to do it in their group. I also told them that my research was about writing compositions as homework. I could notice that students in the class accepted my petition of doing my research project without longer hesitation. Besides, I asked them for their permission to use the information they could provide me. Then, I asked them if I could use their names in my research. Again, anybody refused my proposal. After giving some information about what I had decided to do in the research process, I informed students that, as part of the project, they would have to write four journal entries about the writing activities assigned for homework from the previous session, and the composition tasks they had to accomplish during the course. I asked them to do it that way due to some reasons: first, I wanted to know what they thought about doing some writing activities as homework. Second, I wanted to see if they knew or at least remember how to write
sentences and how to connect them into paragraphs. Thirdly, I wanted to know about the students’ feelings on writing paragraphs and longer compositions.

For this research, I decided to work on semi-controlled writing activities which could help students to increase their writing skill. Thus, I focused my research on three methodological instruments: students’ writing journals, some students’ classroom documents and a checklist.

a) Students’ journals
Writing a journal is a good opportunity for students to start developing their writing skill. According to Baxter (2009), “writing to learn is thinking as you write”. This means that students need to think as they write because one of the best ways of developing the writing skill is by writing. Therefore, keeping a journal is a feasible form of accomplishing a writing goal. It is also a valuable tool in teaching and learning. It is how both the teacher and students can “build the knowledge of the course” (Baxter, 2009: 22).

Other authors have suggested some more reasons to write journals. According to Burns (2010), journal writing is a ‘classic’ tool in Action Research. It is “… a way of capturing significant reflections and events in an ongoing way”. However, we have to be cautious when using it. We need to consider how and when the entries could be written because journal writing is something that not every teacher research likes (Burns: 2010, 89).

Baxter (2009) also provides with some suggestions on why it would be a good reason to write a journal in the English language classroom using students’ mother tongue. Firstly, writing a journal in the students’ first language could help students feel more comfortable as they write. It would also help them feel less worried about committing grammar and vocabulary mistakes in the target language. Secondly, students could discuss a question at the beginning of the class: for example: ‘what confused you about [doing your writing activities for homework]?’ Therefore, if we think that we have a learner-centered classroom, our students’ voices are of great value for our own English course and professional development (Young, 1999: 18 cited by Baxter, 2009: 23, 24).

In addition, Braddock (2012) points out that journal writing is in itself a goal to pursue.
It is a form of “building the writing habit”. As writing is a skill that needs to be developed, it is by means of practicing that students will become more fluent. Harmer (2004: 126) highlights some more reasons why journal writing could be useful in the language classroom: students could be favored on their learning, and they will have more opportunities to self-express. It would also impact the students writing ability; but overall, both teachers and students would benefit of a new and different form of dialoguing. Besides, journal writing would have a powerful effect in students’ motivation if it is successfully encouraged (Harmer: 2004, 127).

b) Classroom documents

To collect data in this research, I am using classroom documents. Burns defines classroom documents as “… all kinds of written documents – syllabus guidelines, lesson plans, textbooks, … students’ written texts [and] exercises … [which] can become a means for collecting data and identifying key issues …” (Burns: 2010, 91). Therefore, for this Action Research I took my students written texts or compositions as the final product to have a proof of the writing process. These classroom documents served as factual examples for later analysis in the research.

The writing tasks for this research were focused on topics students could have developed as classroom activities. Thus, students were asked to write three compositions during the development of the course. In the first composition, students were asked to write was about personal information, routines and weekend activities. In the second, students described their last vacation activities in one paragraph. However, if they did not go to any place on vacation, they had other option for writing their composition. They could write about the activities they did last time they were on vacation. Third, students received a letter from the teacher inviting them to his birthday party. Students had to write a similar letter inviting the teacher, a classmate or any other person the student wanted to invite.

c) Checklists

I also decided on using checklists as a tool to obtain data. Checklists are defined by Rowlands (2007, 61) as “tools to capture and catalogue information about student performance and to inform instruction or provide evidence on which to base evaluation….…” She also points out that …
“Used effectively, checklists can help students develop metacognitive awareness of their intellectual processes. Metacognitive research consistently suggests that students who know how to learn, know which strategies are most effective when faced with a problem or a task, and have accurate methods of assessing their progress are better learners than those who don’t…” (Rowlands: 2007, 62)

Rowlands (2007, 62) also states that “checklists … function to help learners develop confidence and independence as they internalize newly encountered operations and strategies”. In addition, checklists can be designed by the teacher focusing on particular issues (Burns: 2010, 63), and used by the students themselves (Rowlands: 2007, 61).

A first checklist (see Appendix 3) had the purpose of helping students to develop their writing sub-skills mentioned before. It helped them to analyze how well they had done as they checked and rewrote their compositions. Although there are three types of checklists (evaluative, corrective and strategic) that could be useful for our language classroom, I am focusing on two checklists: corrective and strategic. A checklist is corrective when the students themselves have the opportunity to identify and self-correct their mistakes on the written texts; and it is strategic due to the fact that it can be a reminder for the students to self-monitor and check their performance (Burns, 2007, 66).

The second checklist was applied at the end of the course (see Appendix 4). It was used to find out if students still had some weaknesses or their writing skill had been improved by applying some sub-skills regarding writing compositions in English. The students themselves could only use a tick on the list of some sub-skills to check how well they had written their compositions. It was applied in Spanish because students might feel more comfortable if they clearly understand the purpose of checking their written tasks. They firstly read the information; and then, they had to check their options from always to never.

**Description of the implementation**

A description of how this Action Research started is explained as follows. In the first class students worked on reviewing the topics from English 1 working on reading, writing, listening speaking exercises. Then, they were asked to work on three different exercises for homework: a matching exercise with verbs and pictures about daily
routines, writing a three paragraph composition in which students should include personal information, daily routine and weekend activities.

In the next session, students brought their first composition. They were asked to paste the written texts on the walls of the classroom. After that, they read at least three of the texts and highlighted any grammar and vocabulary aspect they could identify as incorrect or/and that needed improvement. Doing the marking on their classmates’ pieces of work was good for students. They seemed to enjoy doing the task. However, the activity lasted more time to accomplish than expected. Later, students were asked to make corrections of the marks done by their classmates and the teacher for homework. Then, students were given some examples of written mistakes, and together the teacher and his students worked on the correct forms. In two days term, students received the same examples used in class by e-mail so that they could analyze and correct their grammar and vocabulary erroneous forms at home.

My first source of collecting data was about asking students to write four journal entries. Students were asked to write a ten minute journal entry at the beginning of each class starting in the second session. In each entry, students wrote about their impressions, comments and doubts about homework and writing composition. This activity had the purpose of understanding students’ perceptions about writing tasks and doing homework in general. Students wrote four journal entries in total. They were written in the students’ mother tongue because students studied English at a basic level. They wrote the first journal entry on March 23rd.

After that students have written their first journal entries, I read them all and started to make some changes of the tasks planned to use during classes. The first activity to be done was about a format in which students could work on how to write paragraphs. Thus, I included some introductory sentences for each one of the paragraphs. For example: My name is ... I am 19 years old.... for the first paragraph. In the second paragraph, I included the following key words: Every day I get up at… First, …. Then … After that,… and … After breakfast/lunch … Finally, … Then, on the third paragraph: On Saturday I … On Sunday I …. These two actions were implemented to help students identify and make corrections of their mistakes on their written
compositions on the one hand; and in the other hand, to support students in the organization of their paragraph development.

The second journal entry took place on April 6th, 2013. This time the homework assigned was about reviewing the comments highlighted with a colored highlighter on the students’ written texts. This was done during the class time and by all members of the group and as whole class activity including the teacher researcher. In the second task students had to answer three exercises making comparisons. These exercises were checked as a whole class activity.

The third journal entry was written on April 13th. This time students were provided with a checklist (See Appendix 3) to help them identify and make corrections of their mistakes on the composition task. Homework exercises and the composition about last weekend were also checked in class to avoid misunderstandings.

Before asking students to work on the second writing task, they did some writing in class and homework exercises. In class they wrote a composition about their last weekend based on a model paragraph. Then, they received by e-mail other controlled writing activities for homework. The first task was about matching routine phrases with pictures. Then, students matched the present and past tense forms of some regular and irregular verbs. Finally, they filled in the gaps of a text with the past of the verbs classified in the previous activity. For the second task, students had to do firstly a word search puzzle finding the past tense of some verbs. Secondly, they had to complete sentences with verbs from the puzzle. Finally, students did an exercise about last vacation matching the beginning of a sentence with the ending. The following class students received written comments about their last weekend texts done in the previous class. They could also check their answers of the other exercises observing the correct answers on answer sheets which were placed near the board.

The fourth journal entry was written on April 20th, 2013. Students wrote about the activities they did during their last vacation. They also answered some simple questions about a famous philosopher, scientist, writer, etc. searching for information in internet. After that, they had to write all the answers to the questions together to write a biography.
For the third composition assigned, the process was as follow. First, students read an example of an invitation letter for the teachers’ birthday party. Its format and content was checked during the class. After that, students received the same letter by e-mail. However, the lines of the letter were scrambled. Students had to unscramble the lines and check the correct organization below on the same page. Finally, students were instructed on writing a similar letter. They had to invite any person they wanted to their birthday party. The letter this time had some questions to be answered with students own information.

Data analysis
The first research question referred to why students of the Open System (SEA) hardly ever completed their homework compositions. The second focused on how these students could improve their writing skill. The third was addressed to how MEIF students’ learning at Open System could be affected by using semi-controlled writing activities. Thus, to find an answer for the first question, students at this system were asked to write ten-minute journal entries at the beginning of the class. The primary goal was to understand what students thought about homework and writing exercise.

For the analysis of the information provided by the participants, I translated only some excerpts of the students’ journals. These journal entries are presented in Appendix 1.

After collecting information from the journals, semi-controlled writing activities were implemented so that students could have the opportunity to work on the writing skill. Therefore, the development of the writing activities could help students improve the writing.

Students handed in the first draft in the second session, and they received feedback from their partners and the teacher. This was done in class as previously described. Then, students read the written comments, checked marks on their writing compositions and made corrections for homework. The second time they handed in their writing tasks as a second draft, they received the teacher’s verbal feedback so that students could write a corrected last version to hand in.
Students worked on previous controlled writing activities in class and at home in order to improve their writing ability. Then, for the second draft of the first semi-controlled writing activity students did, they received the format which helped them write better paragraphs. It was with the second drafts of the second and third semi-controlled writing tasks that students could have an opportunity to self-reflect on their compositions, applying a checklist. They also served of the teachers’ verbal feedback to make corrections and hand in the writing tasks.

In the last writing task students wrote an invitation letter. They knew how to write a letter with an example seen in class. Later they organized the same letter for a better way of understanding of its parts. They finally were asked to write a similar latter but they had to answered questions using their own information where they had to invite another person to his/her birthday party. They also received the same checklist (see Appendix 3) for analyzing their writing task and making corrections. This time the activity was done during the last three extra sessions students were asked to attend after finishing the six-Saturday class.

At the end of completing the three semi-controlled writing tasks, students received a checklist (see Appendix 4) by e-mail to analyze their overall process and product of doing the writing tasks. The checklist tried to make students reflect on three main issues: the students’ performance on writing composition, their attitude as students of English and the feedback they received from their teacher. This checklist was designed based on the teacher researcher experience and the students’ comments in their journal entries. The goal of doing this way was to find if students’ learning had been affected when doing writing tasks or if there were hidden reasons of why they did not hand in their homework complete and in time. Thus, the reader could see how the implementation of semi-controlled writing tasks could help students at the Open Education System improve their writing skill at a basic level in a positive or negative way.

4. Findings

Findings are presented and supported with excerpts of the students’ journal entries. As students wrote them in Spanish only some excerpts are used in this session (See
Appendix 1). There are some of those examples of the students’ journals in the following session.

Some students express about having a similar learning experience. They think that doing homework is considered a way of reviewing and learning to reinforce their knowledge of the target language. Homework means for Fernanda “… una manera de poner a prueba nuestros conocimientos adquiridos, así como también una forma de repaso.” In Irving’s words “no sólo nos ayuda a repasar lo ya aprendido sino a reforzar el conocimiento.” In addition, Irving also thinks that homework “…debería ser muy practica y dinámica, mezclando mucho de todo y así pueda adaptarse a nuestra vida ‘rápida’ ya que a veces no sólo vamos a la escuela, algunos trabajamos o tenemos que viajar grandes distancias para poder llegar a la escuela y normalmente no es la única, tenemos tareas en todas partes, tanto en la escuela o cualquier otro lado, pero aun así tenemos que darnos el tiempo para todo.” Besides this, José Alberto thinks that “…así repasas lo que ves en las clases anteriores, y de esta tarea de escribir rutinas o cosas que haces en tu vida diaria me gusta ya que así aprendes o tienes que investigar lo que no entiendas y con este aprendes, a mí la forma de auto-aprendizaje en ocasiones como esta la considero fundamental para tener una buena enseñanza…..”

According to what students wrote on their first journal entries, most of them mentioned that they had the opportunity of applying what they had learned, acquired or in a way reviewing the language practiced before in the lessons. They also wrote that doing their homework was how they could reinforce their knowledge. Therefore, students could overcome writing problems analyzing their own and the others writing tasks and using the format provided by the teacher on what to include in each one of the paragraphs.
Then, students wrote their next draft and handed it. This time, it was better written than the previous version.

The secondary data sources for this research were the students’ written compositions. These provided the researcher with useful data on how students could enhance their writing skill. These had the form of semi-controlled writing tasks which could help students develop their writing skill during the intensive training of a six-Saturday English course.

After students had worked on controlled writing tasks in the classroom, they started to write paragraphs using the past tense. In their fourth journal entry, students mentioned they did some writing exercises in past tense before starting writing about their last weekend and last vacation activities. Here are some of their feelings about their writing activities.

The writing models used during the lessons helped students in a certain way to have an idea of how to start their writing tasks. For example, Irving wrote that “... [para] la segunda tarea también seguí el ejemplo para formarla, aunque aun me cuesta un poco los verbos en pasado, pero la pude terminar revisando mi lista de verbos.” Although he had some problems in using verbs in past to finish his composition, he used a list of verbs. Something similar happened to Concepción, she wrote that “En este caso de las tareas se me complicó mucho, porque has cosas que no sé cómo se escriben, y por eso me tardé en hacer las composiciones de las vacaciones pasadas.” As she had some problems on how to start writing some things, she began writing her composition until later. From these two cases, it can be noticed that both students needed some more practice using the verbs in past. Thus, their lack of practice took them to postpone starting the writing activities. In another case, a student like Anahí could work on “la estructuración de oraciones y repasar como se escribe en tiempo pasado, esto también aplicó en el trabajo de vacaciones/en mi caso fue a cerca de una visita por parte de mi escuela...” Besides this three cases, Surizadai wrote that “A la hora de hacer la tarea de
‘Qué hice en las vacaciones’ pues me costó un poco de trabajo ya que yo no fui de vacaciones con mi familia, y no sabía que escribir. Pero tuve que leer una, dos y hasta tres veces para poder entenderle y poner lo que hice aunque no haya ido de vacaciones...” Even if these two students did not go on vacation they tried to write about some activities they did during their vacation period using the past tense structures. This was an extra instruction students could follow if they had not gone on vacation. In addition, writing this second composition represented some challenges for some students. Although they had worked with controlled writing tasks using the past tense in class and for homework, the writing tasks took them more time to accomplish or even to start writing it. Students could do the activities when they checked how to write sentences or the verb forms from a list provided during the lessons.

In the last session students did not write a journal entry. During this last class, oral and written examinations were applied. After that, students firstly saw and learned how to start and develop writing a letter in the class. It was a letter where the teacher invited his students to his birthday party. Then, students received the same letter by e-mail. This time the activity focused on unscrambling the letter parts to form the letter again. After that, they were asked to write a similar letter; however, students now had to invite their teacher or any other person they wanted to their birthday parties. To write the letter, students had to write answers to the questions given through the letter. An example of a final product of writing a letter is shown in appendix 2. From this letter example, it can be seen that the student learned how to write a letter and used her creativity in the design. The letter example showed that the student followed the model; and besides, she committed few mistakes.

Finally, the application of a checklist (see Appendix 4) had the purpose of helping students reflect on three main aspects: the instructions for writing the compositions, their attitude with regards to their writing tasks done during the six-Saturday classes, and the teacher’s feedback. The following tables have been analyzed to present the results.

Table 1 represents the students’ self reflection on their three written compositions. In general, instructions were clear and useful to do the writing tasks. Only two students
indicated that instructions often were clear and useful. However, writing two or more paragraphs for each composition was not always considered when writing the tasks. Only one student answered that he/she always wrote two or more paragraphs; the others answered they often did. More than 50% of students mentioned that they always used the checklist to make corrections of their written pieces of work; only one answered he/she sometimes used the checklist. As it clearly can be seen, students need to work more on applying a checklist for correcting their own compositions.

Table 1 The compositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Las composiciones</th>
<th>siempre</th>
<th>con frecuencia</th>
<th>algunas veces</th>
<th>rara vez</th>
<th>nunca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ¿Fueron las instrucciones claras?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ¿Fueron las instrucciones útiles?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ¿Escribía dos o más párrafos en cada una de las composiciones?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ¿Utilizaba la lista de cotejo que me proporcionó el maestro para hacer las correcciones pertinentes en mis composiciones?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 depicts students’ attitudes with regards to writing compositions. They actually handed in their compositions complete but not in time. Half of the group agreed on having used the correct layout when writing their compositions. Almost a half of the group of students answered that the writing tasks were taken as last on a series of activities to accomplish. They prefer doing firstly the homework assigned for the main subjects of their school program. However, it is more notorious that half of the group always made the corrections of their compositions. In conclusion, students need to change their attitude regarding the use of the correct layout for a writing activity, procrastinating to start their writing tasks and writing more than two drafts in order to improve their writing skill.
Table 2 My attitude as a student of English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mi actitud como estudiante de inglés</th>
<th>siempre</th>
<th>con frecuencia</th>
<th>algunas veces</th>
<th>rara vez</th>
<th>nunca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. ¿Entregaba completas mis composiciones?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ¿Usaba el diseño correcto en mis composiciones (carta o párrafo(s))?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ¿Dejaba mis trabajos de escritura a lo último de todas mis tareas de la facultad?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. ¿Hacía las correcciones de mis composiciones al menos dos veces?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 represents what students think about the teacher’s feedback provided on their writing tasks. Most of the students agreed that they always received the teacher’s feedback on their written tasks, and they served from it to make the necessary corrections of the compositions. To conclude, a similar situation seems to be the agreement in most of the students’ answers.

Table 3 Teacher’s feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retroalimentación del maestro</th>
<th>siempre</th>
<th>con frecuencia</th>
<th>algunas veces</th>
<th>rara vez</th>
<th>nunca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. ¿Recibía retroalimentación de mis trabajos de escritura por parte del maestro?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. ¿Me ayudaba la retroalimentación por parte del maestro para hacer las correcciones pertinentes en mis trabajos de escritura?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presented results show that there was not a problem with the instruction for doing compositions and receiving teacher’s feedback. However, the students’ attitudes as students of English when doing writing tasks seems to be what interferes with completing compositions for homework, according to the results presented on Table 2. In addition to the lack of practice, there are other factors like school, job or family.
issues which might take students procrastinate doing or even start their writing compositions. This information was provided by Irving’s comments about homework.

5. Discussion and reflections
Looking at the first research question of why students of the open system hardly ever complete their homework compositions, it seems to be there are some reasons why students might not do and hand in their homework in time and complete. The first reason could be related to time organization to do homework. They need to think about how much time they devote to do homework compositions or writing exercises. They have to schedule their activities very well so that to avoid procrastination. Other reason might be addressed to the amount of homework students handle. Sometimes there are several tasks to do and they have to decide which task is first in priority. This is not a matter of quantity which might affect students learning but quality. Another reason is related to those tasks given to activate student previous knowledge. Students need to remember some things in order to activate their schemata. By doing homework tasks, students will also be better prepared to speak, write, listen and read.

With this research it is expected that both students and the teacher became more aware about why, when and how homework should be done. In addition to this, it is also expected that students’ participation increase by handing in homework in time. It is expected that at the end of the semester students do not only have better scores in their written section of the final examination but develop some studying skills and learn English as well.

The second research question focused on how the researcher could help his students to improve their writing skill through semi-controlled writing activities for homework. It was supported by the intensive writing activities students did during the six-Saturday class. Students handed in their first draft and then they received feedback so that they could make corrections. They handed it again with the corrections done. Then, they finally handed in the final version.

The third research question was addressed on how MEIF students’ learning at the Open Education System could be affected by using semi-controlled writing activities. Students’ learning might be affected as they develop their writing skill. They were
affected positively due to the fact that they practiced the target language with three different tasks: students wrote about personal information, their last vacation and an invitation letter to a birthday party. Students had the chance to learn how to write in English.

All the writing tasks helped students to develop their writing skill by means of using English language structures of the course, the right format and the model examples.

Conclusions and implications

In this section I will make a summary of the findings of this action research. First, I will draw a conclusion. Then, I will mention some implementations for further research.

In conclusion, this investigation revealed that MEIF students at the Open System improved their writing skills to some extend by implementing semi-controlled writing activities. Therefore, these students could develop the writing skill as it is shown in the written documents collected. Firstly, students’ improvement was supported by the development of semi-controlled writing tasks provided considering a combination of the writing process approach and the final product approach. Secondly, their improvement was due to the corrections they did for homework based on the teachers’ feedback. Thirdly, it was very important that students were more aware of their overall performance when writing compositions if they were studying in a blended mode of learning. Finally, doing this kind of research could help students not only to increase their writing ability and the use of sub-skills but developing their learning and communication strategies.

Although all the above mentioned clearly indicates a benefit in students improvement, the students’ answers on the checklist (see Appendix 4) showed an important issue: some students procrastinated in handing in written composition assigned for homework.

There are some limitations in doing this action research. First, there were only nine participants in this Action Research. As it can be considered a small group of students, it is not possible to generalize that the same happens to all students in the other learning environments. This fact might show a weakness in this study. Second, it is important to mention the time dedicated to a) do the research, b) develop the course and c) make
corrections of the writing tasks. Therefore, it was a short period of time to investigate the problem, implementing, observing, making changes, and start again. With regards to the time spent to develop the course, it was a six-hour class for a period of six Saturdays. It was a very short time to teach and learn the contents of the English 2 course if we compare it with a seventy-five hour classroom learning course. In addition to this, it is the students’ time spent to do their writing tasks and make corrections of their compositions. They might spend more time on making corrections, if they are asked to rewrite more than two times their compositions, following the type of process approach for writing. Third, it is the social context. From informal talks with students, some of them mentioned that they sometimes did not have their homework done because they did not have access to internet in their towns.

This project would contribute to the field of language teaching and learning because there is little research on this important issue at the university level in the literature available, and how students could benefit when doing semi-controlled writing tasks for homework at a basic level. It will also serve to start a new action research for me, and for my colleagues who are interested in making some changes in their teaching practices. Perhaps, in a further research, it would be interesting to see how this technique of semi-controlled writing tasks can help autonomous learning students to develop their writing skills. Besides, it would be interesting to do some research on the application of other approaches for writing, and the students’ performance on the final examination in its writing section. Another interesting research would be how students’ mother tongue interferes with the genre approach for writing.
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Appendix 1 Students’ journal samples

SATURDAY 23 MARCH, 2013

Fernanda

Irving

Tarea:
Avéses pensamos que la tarea es sinonimo de aburrimiento, pero no siempre es el caso, no sólo nos ayuda a repasar lo ya aprendido sino a reforzar el conocimiento.
No me gustan las tareas y sin un propósitio claro, yo siento que la tarea debe ser muy práctica y dinámica, mezclando mucho de todo y así pueda adaptarse a nuestra vida “rápida” ya que avéses no solo vamos a la escuela, algunos trabajamos o tenemos otras actividades, otros tienen que viajar grandes distancias para poder llegar a la escuela y normalmente no es la única, tenemos tareas en todas partes, tanto en la escuela a cual quer otro lado, pero a un así tenemos que darles tiempo para todo.
Lo que me pareció la tarea de escribir mis datos me pareció una buena idea ya que hace repasas lo que vez en las clases anteriores, y de esta tarea de escribir rutinas o cosas que haces en tu vida diaria me gusta ya que hace aprendes o bienes que investigar lo que no entendías y con esto aprendes, a mí la forma de auto-aprendizaje en ocasiones como ésta la considero fundamental para tener una buena enseñanza.

La de el cuestionamiento me parece perfecta ya que igual considero que se aprende mejor.

El de las imágenes es la mejor pues comprenderás más los verbos escritos, esta es una forma adecuada de enseñanza.

Considero que el repaso de los temas a la siguiente clase es la mejor forma de enseñanza.

Me gustaría tener lo que vemos en clase en copias ya que por el tiempo me es difícil escribir y considero que tener una guía (copias) nos daría un mejor entendimiento, y con esto no es solo copias de ejercicios sino de gramática.

La tarea por medio virtual es una maravilla por el sistema de enseñanza que llevamos de un día a la clase por semana.

Estoy contento por la tarea aunque a veces estés sorprendido por no saber resolverla por mi falta de práctica.
SATURDAY 20 APRIL, 2013

Irving

La tarea fue muy fácil, la terminé muy rápido. Solo busqué un poco de la información de mi personaje para poder hacer las preguntas, y como tentámos ya un ejemplo fue fácil adaptarlas a mi personaje. La segunda tarea seguí también el ejemplo para formarla, a lo que aún me cuesta un poco los verbos en pasado, pero la pude terminar rebisando mi lista de verbos.

Concepción

En este caso de las tareas se me complicó mucho, porque hay cosas que no se como se escriben, y por eso me tarde mucha en hacer la composición de los verbos pasados. En el caso de la biografía, no se me complicó mucho porque me ayudaron mucho las preguntas y con eso pude terminar y hacer la pequeña composición de la biografía.

En el caso de la tarea de las recomendaciones también se me complicó mucho por que la verdad no le entendi a hice lo que pude.

Anahí

Al escribir sobre un personaje (bibliografía) se puede reforzar la estructuración de horaciones y repasar cómo se escribe en tiempo pasado esto también aplica en el trabajo de vacaciones / en mi caso fue hacer de una visita por parte de mi escuela aplicando en estos trabajos los tiempos en que nació/murió lugares, nacionalidades etc.
Ala hora de hacer la tarea de “Qué hice en vacaciones”. Pues me costó un poco de trabajo. Ya que no fui de vacaciones con mi familia, y no sabía que escribir. Pero tuve que leer una y dos hasta 3 veces. Para poder entenderlo. Y Poner lo que hice. aunque no creo haber de vacaciones.

Y la otra tarea, no la realicé. Por que ese día fui con mi familia al Baztán de mi tío, y me olvidé a completo de esa tarea.
Appendix 2 Students’ writing documents

First task
First draft

My name is Concepcion, my last name is Molohua Ixmatlahu, I am twenty one years old, I come from Atlaahuilco, I am a sociology student, I am single, I was born on December seven, I live my parents, I have one brother, I have two dogs, my favorite colors is blue, I am sincere, I have my friends, I have boyfriend, I love dancing and boyfriend.

My daily routine is...

I woke up at 8 in the morning, I stretch, I tend my bed, breakfast, brush my teeth, I begin to be my duty, wash my clothes, I make tortillas, I feed my pets, I see the tv after a hours, at about 2 pm start to make dinner, get my brother from school and I feed him wash the dishes, sweep the yard, and at night we had dinner and later I shower and go to bed as at 10 pm but before doing task formulation and evaluation of social projects.

Saturday my routine...

This day I wake up at 6 in the morning, I shower, change and prepare me to go to college, I'm on the bus at 7:30 am, arrived at Orizaba as 8:45, took another bus classes for English 2, English classes are from 9 am to 2 pm, we break at 11 am. English classes ending took a bus to the faculty of chemistry, as with my friends at a café, finished eating, and we take a time to rest, and then go to afternoon classes, afternoon classes end at 8 pm. back to take another bus home, I get home at 10 at night, I get to have dinner and go to sleep at 11 pm.
My name is Concepcion. My last name is Molohua Ixmialtahua. I am twenty one years old. I come from Atlahuilco. I am a sociology student. I am single. I was born on December 7th. I live with my parents. I have one brother. I have two dogs. My favorite color is blue. I am sincere. I have many friends. I love dancing and playing soccer.

My daily routine:

I woke up at 8 in the morning. I stretch and tend my bed. I breakfast. I am brush my teeth. I begin to be my duty. I wash my clothes. I make tortillas. I feed my pets. I see the tv after hours, and get my brother from school. I feed him wash the dishes, sweep the yard, and at night we had dinner, and later, I shower and go to bed at 10 pm but before doing.

Saturday my routine:

I wake up at 6 in the morning. This day I shower and change and prepare me to go to college. I’m on the bus at 7:30 am, arrived at Orizaba at 8:45, took another bus classes for English 2. English classes are from 9 am to 2 pm. I break at 11 am. English classes ending took a bus to the faculty of chemistry, as with my friends at a café and finished eating. we take a time to rest, and then go to afternoon classes, afternoon classes end at 8 pm. I back to take another bus home. I get home at 10 at night. I get to have dinner and go to sleep at 11 pm.
My name is Concepción. My last name is Molina Irapalhu. I am twenty one years old. I come from Atlahuitzia. I am sociology student. I am single. I was born on December 7th. I live with my parents. I have one brother and two dogs. My favorite color is blue. I am sincere. I have many friends. I love dancing and playing soccer.

My daily routine

I woke up at 8 in the morning. I stretch and make my bed. I have breakfast and brush my teeth. Then begin my duties. I first, my clothes. Then make tortillas and feed my pets. After that see TV for hours. Then I get my brother from school and feed him, wash the dishes and sweep the yard. At night we had dinner and later, I first shower and go to bed at 10 pm.

My routine on Saturday

I wake up at 6 in the morning. This day I take shower, get dressed change and prepare myself to go to college. I am on the bus at 7:30 am. I arrived Oriented at 8:45. Then I took another bus to take classes of English 2. English classes are from to 9 am to 2 pm. I have a break at 11 am. English classes end at take and bus to the faculty of chemistry. With my friends at a cafe I have lunch. We take a time to rest, and then go to the afternoon classes. In the afternoon classes end at 8 pm. Then I take another bus home.
My last Vacation

I went on vacation last summer. I went to Xalapa City. I travelled there by bus. I went with my parents and my sister Daniela. We stayed in my grandparents’ house. In Xalapa city we visited some churches and walk in the park. The weather was hot and sunny. In the afternoon my family and I ate pizza and drank soda. After that, my father and my grandfather drank some beers. We spent 2 days there. However, we would love to come back again in the future because we liked that place.
Dear teacher Luis.

I would like to invite you to celebrate my birthday. *On August 31 I'm planning to do a small food* and it is going to be in house my parents.

I am going to invite my family and my friends, too. There are going to be about fifty guests, or a little more. The party is going to start at four thirty in the afternoon; and it is going to finish late. *We are going to eat snacks, pizza, gelatin, cake and much more. We are going to have, sodas and some beer. We are going to play different kinds of music.* Let’s play with karaoke. Then we are going to dance the “golden horse”. *We are going to enjoy the party very much.* I hope you can come and have a good time.

Bye.

Best, 
*Surizadai*
Appendix 3 Checklist to help students understand and make corrections

Checklist (lista de cotejo)

Para hacer una buena composición, hay que revisarla. Para hacerlo, piensa y palomea si tu trabajo cumple con los siguientes puntos:

____ Usé letras mayúsculas al inicio de cada oración.
____ Coloqué un punto al final de cada oración.
____ Usé la gramática y el vocabulario que conozco.
____ Corregí la ortografía de las palabras en mi texto.
____ Escribí oraciones completas: sujeto + verbo + complemento.
____ Escribí cuando menos cinco oraciones para formar un párrafo (No en forma de lista).
____ Utilicé palabras como: First, Then, and, After that, After ..., y Finally para conectar ideas en el/los párrafo(s)
____ Corregí el orden que deben llevar las palabras.
____ Hice mi trabajo de escritura a mano y con pulcritud.
____ Le escribí un título a mi trabajo.
____ Evité usar oraciones muy largas.
____ Busqué en un diccionario palabras que desconocía y que necesitaba utilizar en mi(s) texto(s)

Si hubo varios puntos que no marcaste, esto quiere decir que debes revisar tu composición de nuevo, y hacer las correcciones pertinentes antes de entregarla o reenviarla por correo electrónico a tu maestro.
Appendix 4 General Reflection checklist

Piensa en las tres composiciones que realizaste en tu curso de inglés y marca tu respuesta para cada una de las preguntas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Las composiciones</th>
<th>siempre</th>
<th>con frecuencia</th>
<th>algunas veces</th>
<th>rara vez</th>
<th>nunca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ¿Fueron las instrucciones claras?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. ¿Fueron las instrucciones útiles?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. ¿Escribía dos o más párrafos en cada una de las composiciones?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. ¿Utilizaba la lista de cotejo que me proporcionó el maestro para hacer las correcciones pertinentes en mis composiciones?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mi actitud como estudiante de inglés</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. ¿Entregaba mis composiciones completas?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. ¿Usaba el diseño correcto en mis composiciones (carta o párrafo(s))?</td>
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<td>7. ¿Dejaba mis trabajos de escritura a lo último de todas mis tareas de la facultad?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. ¿Hacía las correcciones de mis composiciones al menos dos veces?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retroalimentación del maestro</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. ¿Recibía retroalimentación de mis trabajos de escritura por parte del maestro?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. ¿Me ayudaba la retroalimentación por parte del maestro para hacer las correcciones pertinentes en mis trabajos de escritura?</td>
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