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MAESTRÍA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

Reporte del Proyecto de Aplicación Innovadora del Conocimiento

The use of Rassias® method: micrologues
to improve writing on a basic English course

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ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the most important aspects of language teaching, as “it is likely that most business and technical writing in the world are done in a second language” (Lee, 2012, in Seifoori, 2012, p. 107). Moreover, writing is used in our everyday lives, as well as in EFL learning. However, writing is often seen as a boring skill. In fact, many teachers appear to use a rather monotonous way of working with writing. “Students are often left on their own with a blank piece of paper and a pencil without any guidelines, inspiration or a defined purpose” (Ahlsén & Lundh:2007, p.1). This action research, in contrast, was based on the implementation of an adapted version of the Micrologue technique. This technique was implemented in order to determine whether or not, it could help twenty-five students, on a basic English course in a local public school, practice and improve their writing. Four micrologues were designed for this purpose, based on the contents of the formal curriculum. During this study, a questionnaire, three external observations by colleagues, four field notes by the teacher, and the students’ compositions were used to gather data. The findings indicate a positive improvement in students' writings in the classroom setting.

KEY WORDS

Writing, Rassias® Method, micrologue technique, error code correction, indirect feedback, writing process, interactive methodology, philosophy of the method, action research.
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<td>Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
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<td>PO</td>
<td>Peer observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ</td>
<td>Students questionnaire</td>
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<td>SW</td>
<td>Sample of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELF</td>
<td>Professional teachers of English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
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<td>VT</td>
<td>Verb tense</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is a very important language worldwide. Educational institutions in order to fulfill employers’ demands for well-prepared professionals have been increasing the amount of English in their curriculum. As a result of the need for a better education in the world, professional teachers of English as a foreign language (TELF), now have to guide students, not only in an efficient, but also in an easy, fast and enjoyable language learning process to achieve the goals set.

The need for improvement in the development of professional TEFL teachers emerges mainly from the fact that English is taught not in a ‘real’ context, but in a monolingual context, in their own country (Brown, 2001 in Krieger, 2005). Therefore, students are not immersed deeply in a target language context. Hence, teachers need to use a variety of methods and techniques to meet students’ needs when learning a foreign language. Furthermore, according to Krieger (2005), in an EFL setting, English may not seem relevant to the students since it is not part of their daily lives. To overcome this situation, West (2011 in Seifoori, 2012) suggests some general features of effective EFL teachers, such as: motivating students with variety, keeping in shape (looking at new EFL materials) and using humor to liven up the class, among others. Moreover, to actually acquire the English language, it is important to develop the four skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing.

In the Mexican EFL context, educators have to consider that writing has not always been regarded as an important skill to emphasize in the English language classroom, despite its apparent importance. Tan (2008), for example, states that “good English writing competence is widely recognized as an important skill for educational, business and personal reasons” (para. 1). Similarly, Ahmed (2010) claims that writing is certainly an important element of learning English, as it reinforces the grammatical structures, vocabulary and idioms that we have been teaching to our students, which become evident when they write.
Additionally, it is argued that ESL/EFL writing is one of the most important aspects of language teaching, as “it is likely that most business and technical writing in the world are done in a second language” (Lee, 2012, in Seifoori, 2012, p. 107). Therefore, writing should receive more attention in EFL classes in order to guide learners to cope with the communicative demands of real life situations. Teachers should also pay attention to writing because it strengthens the grammatical structures and provides the basis for learning a language, as long as writing is actually developed as a process.

1.1 Context
This action research took place over the course of one fall semester in a public language school run by the local University. At this school, students take three levels of English courses which are basic one and two that are compulsory subjects for their curriculum. In this public language school, the main objective is to teach the four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Teachers are required to design lesson plans that include all these skills in their classrooms. Moreover, the methodology can be eclectic, the teacher might use a variety of methods based on the communicative approach. During the course the teachers must use the textbook and workbook, which is Top Notch, as a guide to cover the content of both books. In English basic one, teachers have to cover nine units, and five units in English basic two of the textbook. There are two quizzes during the course which correspond to 5 percent of the evaluation. In each quiz, there are two sections of vocabulary and grammar with 25 items, maximum. During the semester there are also one partial exam and one final exam with sections that test reading, vocabulary, grammar and writing. The evaluation criteria of the courses consists in participation 5%, two quizzes 5%, a partial exam 10%, homework 10%, learning logs 10%, final exam 40% and 20% for the final oral exam, which adds up a total 100%. This can be seen in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quiz 1</th>
<th>First partial exam (four skills)</th>
<th>Quiz 2</th>
<th>Final exam</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English two</strong></td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100% as a total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Evaluation criteria of a Basic English II course

Moreover, there are courses throughout the day from 7 in the morning to 7:30 at night from Monday to Saturday. They consist of one hour per day for five days, there are also courses of two hours and a half per day, and five hours class on Fridays and on Saturdays. Students can choose the most suitable course according to their needs and time availability. In addition, the school has an overhead projector and internet connection which are available for teachers at any time.

1.2 Participants

The group under study was a class of twenty-three beginner students on a six-month Basic English course. They ranged from twenty to twenty five years old. They were six females and seventeen males. The students were placed in this level after passing the English one course as a mandatory subject in their curricula program. Therefore, the majority of the students had a basic level of English; that is, they lacked vocabulary; they could only speak short expressions and write isolated sentences. Five of them were repeating the course, as they had failed the final exam. There were 5 students who had a slightly higher level than the others; they could speak more fluently and understand all the instructions in English.

Furthermore, there were three observers; one was a colleague from the same institution. She has twenty three years of experience in teaching English. The
second observer was a professor who has used the Rassias® method in his classes, and he has also around fifteen years of experience in teaching English. The last observer was a professor of English from another institution with a teaching experience of 5 years; this in order to have a different point of view. The selection of the observers was done according to their experience in teaching English as foreign languages and experience with the Rassias® method.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants:</th>
<th>Gender:</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6 women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observers (teachers)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Participants’ information**

It is relevant to mention that before using the action plan in the Basic English Course II, students were working with the course book and completing the writing exercises without any guidance. They were bored and had many questions concerning how to do the exercises. Some of them were demotivated because they were repeating the course.

1.3 Description of the problem

The problem that was identified in this research was related to the writing skill. The context where this action research was carried out was the Language Center of a public higher education school with students in a Basic English course. Writing is one of the four skills to be developed during the course. Therefore, for the first partial and final exams, students need to write a small paragraph. Due to time constraints, writing has been neglected at this level. This is reflected in the students’ written production, as they can only write short sentences with many spelling and tense mistakes and without any concern for punctuation, presumably due to the lack of practice. This problem has been observed in the previous courses at the same level, and thus it was considered as a priority to be addressed with this project.
1.4 Objectives
The aim of this research was to understand the nature of the problem, and improve students' writing on a Basic English course, by using a micrologue technique from the Rassias® Method, that uses images, dictation and repetition. In order to achieve this goal, the action plan was implemented during a month to observe students’ attitudes and improvements towards their writing practice.

1.5 Research Questions

- To what extent does the Rassias® Method micrologue technique help improve students' writing?
- What are the students' attitudes towards the examples and practice with the micrologue technique in their writing learning process?

1.6 Map of research report
The current action research consists of five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction of this study, where the context, participants, objectives, and research questions are presented. Chapter two is the literature review, which includes a general description of the writing process, its importance and development, the coding of errors in feedback, the Rassias methodology and its micrologue technique. Chapter three gives a detailed explanation of the methodology, which involves definitions of Action Research, as well as the action plan, the implementation carried out, and the data collection techniques that were used in this AR. Chapter four presents the evaluation of the action plan and the results observed. Finally, in chapter five, the discussion and implications are provided, as well as the limitations of the study, and suggestions for possible future work based on this research.
CHAPTER 2: THE WRITING PROCESS

This chapter includes a general description of the concepts involved in the writing process, its importance and development, the coding of errors in feedback, the Rassias methodology and its micrologue technique in the writing process. The descriptions will guide the reader towards an explanation of the objective and context of this study.

2.1 The writing process

Teaching writing has often been considered a challenge. Ahlsén and Lundh (2007) have expressed their concern about developing the process of writing in a classroom:

...we have experienced that many teachers use a rather monotonous way of working with writing. Students are often left on their own with a blank piece of paper and a pencil without many guidelines, inspiration or a defined purpose.

(p.1)

In fact, writing has been neglected and some teachers have failed to guide students by using an interactive method. What is more, the authors also claim that some teachers have experienced little progress when it comes to students’ development in writing. In order to improve this situation, teachers need to bear in mind the importance of the writing process, and consider that there are plenty of methods to teach writing. One of these methods, is the writing process, which according to Tompkins (2004), cited in Cavkaytar (2010), is “a road map through which students’ thoughts and actions are monitored from the beginning of writing to the production of work” (para.6). Furthermore, Hedge (2005, in Ahlsén & Lundh, 2007) states that

...writing is more than producing accurate and complete sentences and a phrase, writing is about guiding students to produce whole pieces of communication, to link and develop information, ideas, or arguments for a particular reader or a group of readers.

(p.4)
Learning to write gives students the power to share thoughts, ideas and opinions with others in the present or across time; writing is ingrained in every aspect of our way of life. Therefore, guiding students in this process is essential, and EFL educators should know how to do it so that they actually improve their writing skill.

Moreover, authors such as Tompkins (2004), as well as Ahlsén and Lundh (2007) agree that using the writing process is an effective method in language teaching. Ahlsén and Lundh (2007) suggest that this process functions as a guide to lead students in their writing. There are four stages of the writing process (Tompkins, 2004): prewriting (a planning stage for writing), drafting (going from the planning stage to writing the paper), edition (reviewing the written draft, sharing the draft text with a writing group that was formed in the classroom, and rearrange the content according to feedback from friends in the writing group) and publishing (sharing the text with the readers who have been determined in the prewriting stage), as the following figure shows:

![Figure 1: The Writing Process (Tompkins, 2004, p. 6)](image-url)
Tompkins (2004), as well as Ahlsén and Lundh (2007) coincide in that applying this process empowers classes by improving students’ writing. In particular, Graham (in Ahlsén & Lundh, 2007) affirms that this approach emphasizes the importance of feedback. Strömquist (2007, in Ahlsén & Lundh, 2007) further states that the writing process gives students the opportunity to use both expressive writing, and to use writing as a tool for learning and thinking.

2.2 The importance of writing and its development

In an EFL class, writing is one of the four skills taken into consideration to develop lessons. However, students are not keen on writing, since writing has been painful for many students not just in their mother tongue, but also in their second or foreign language Gilmore (2009, in Ahmed, 2010). Furthermore, during the lesson, students use their own knowledge, and are introduced to the writing activities through the instructions in the textbook or workbook, which teachers use as classroom activities.

When EFL learners in basic courses start writing, they write as they would in their mother tongue without paying attention to the English structures. They may even write some sentences without considering the correct punctuation or the differences between capitalization and lower case. Some learners may know how to write short sentences, but they may not use correct punctuation or have any knowledge of how to use connectors properly. According to Burgess (2005), it is important to tell learners their mistakes and provide feedback in their writing tasks. He points out that “it is important that they understand exactly where their strengths and weaknesses lie” (p.50). To a certain extent, the feedback helps students to gain an overview of their learning.

As a possible solution for beginner students’ weaknesses in writing, some experts have found that teachers are able to use some sample sentences for the class to edit and revise in groups. Tan (2006) claims that “After group reporting, the teacher then makes further feedback and explanation to clarify confusing concepts” (para. 24). He lists several suggestions regarding how to lead students in their writing by
which motivation is encouraged through stimulating reading, related to daily life experience, and supported by relevant vocabulary. Tan (2006) supports that pre-writing activities are crucial for unskilled writers, which can serve to stimulate ideas and learning of relevant vocabulary and structures.

2.3 Error Correction Code

For the purpose of this study, the beliefs of the importance of guidance and the use of feedback are crucial for teaching writing, as some experts have indicated (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ferris, 1995 cited in Hosseiny, 2014). Using indirect correction methods is a kind of feedback. One of them is the coding of errors and it consists of an indication of the error that has been made, which leaves the learner to correct his own errors. Ferris (2002, in Bae, 2011) also suggests that the use of error codes helps the learners identify the specific mistake, and she says that using the error correction code not only saves time, but is also a tool for learners to focus on important words through a corrective written feedback as symbols. For example, to indicate a student’s error in using a verb tense, teachers can simply write the error code “vt.” instead of writing the complete phrase. Thus, a correction code helps the learners identify and correct their own mistakes through the use of symbols and it brings long-term benefits to students’ writing development. Before using the error code, it is also necessary to give the learners the meaning of all the symbols to help students recognize the errors by themselves.

In sum, Ferris (2002, in Bae, 2011) claims that error correction codes are useful and offer an effective tool that should be used in writing activities, since it actively engages students in the correcting process so that they can acquire grammar and structures. There is a variety of symbols, thus the teacher should choose the symbols that he or she wants to implement in their writing activities. In this particular research, the symbols were taken from the textbook *American Traveller* by Michelle (2010). In the error correction code the capitalization symbol (C: capitalization) was added owing to the stipulation in the syllabus that at beginner level, the teacher must assess the correct use of capitalization in student writing.
Table 3: Error code correction (Michelle, 2010)

2.4 Rassias® Method

For this research, the method created by John Rassias was consulted; it consists of forty techniques. Rassias stresses that in this method “the significance of comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary is acquired through memorization and active use” (Rassias, 1967, p.8). Furthermore, he emphasizes that

...the only formal preparation a trainee undergoes before the beginning of the experiment is a familiarization with a basic vocabulary, on an elementary level, this is crucial.

(Rassias, 1967, p.8)

At an initial stage of this method, students can start writing ideas with short or long sentences, and eventually move to paragraphs. In addition, Rassias’ philosophy establishes rules for the language teacher:

1. Always be on time for class.
2. Always stand and move about.
3. Do not write on the blackboard.
4. Pronounce everything distinctly.
5. Keep trainees’ books closed.
6. Do not follow a set pattern in your interrogation.
7. Do not name the trainee before asking him to recite.
8. Do not wait for a delayed answer.
9. Do not answer questions, generally; they can be answered during the last five minutes of the class.
10. Do not be too slow or too fast.
11. Correct every mistake and make the trainee repeat the correction correctly.
12. Do not abandon a subject which the trainees do not grasp.
13. Do not stray from the direct purpose of the lesson.
14. Speak only in the target language, in and out of class.
15. The laboratory is as important as the class.
16. Never conduct your class on the lawn.
17. Insist that all work be fully prepared at all times.

(Rassias, 1967, p.9)

As indicated above, teachers should abide by these rules to enhance students’ interest and learning. The teacher, along with the students’ textbook, forms a fundamental starting point for the learner.

According to Rassias (2013),

The goal of Rassias Method is to help the student feel comfortable and natural with a new language in a short period of time. This is accomplished through a specific series of teaching procedures and dramatic techniques which seek to eliminate inhibitions and create an atmosphere of free expression of the sunset.

(p.3)

It would appear that the Rassias Method is perhaps the most comfortable and interactive methodology for teaching languages. The question under consideration is whether or not writing should be taught in tandem with this method. Due to the development of high-order thinking skills to solve problems, I believe that this method can help students improve their writing. In fact, the Ministry of Education in Mexico (2013) has worked with this methodology in order to motivate students to become life-long learners. Rassias (2013), in stating his philosophy of the method, explains five concepts:

1) **Know thyself**: The Rassias method asks teachers/ students to explore their own inhibitions, prejudices, values. Classes aim at eliminating natural self-consciousness and fear of making mistakes.
2) **Connect**: The Method increases awareness of others and how to relate to them in various contexts. Students discover how to act, speak, and learn in the context of another culture.

3) **Special Delivery**: Teachers create and maintain a dynamic classroom pace and atmosphere. While this section mainly addresses drills, it is also a key in stressing the importance of weaving together Master Class and drill. The Rassias drill system focuses on repetition and manipulation while fostering spontaneity and creative use of the language studied even in the earliest weeks of class.

4) **State Presence**: Teachers use Rassias technique for exploiting and exploring the content of the moment and helping the student perform as the star of the show. This thought is the most important underpinning to the philosophy. If the students or even other members of the team feel threatened in anyway, true learning/team work will be impeded. The students must feel at ease within themselves in order to reach comfort in speaking in class or in country.

5) **Senses and Emotions**: The Rassias Method calls for teachers and students to engage their emotions and all of their senses to their fullest capacity. In addition, to elaborate questions to have different and more descriptive meanings. (For instance, teachers ask students not only to look, but to examine using all the senses: What is happening in the classroom? What is happening between the people in a dialogue? What are the people feeling? What are the cultural cues? How does the action/lesson make you feel?)

The methodology includes interactive techniques that help the students to learn the target language by integrating the four skills in an enjoyable form. The students are aided by gestures and body language, which are natural when people are communicating in close proximity. The Rassias Method attempts to make teachers lead the learners through a dynamic and relevant exercise. To this end, it advocates for the teacher to use the target language as much as possible throughout the entire class session.

### 2.5 Micrologue technique

This micrologue technique was implemented in this research in order to improve students' writing. It is one of the forty techniques of the Rassias Method, and it includes dictation, repetition, the use of images, as well as speaking and writing.
practice. It is one of the most complete techniques that this methodology offers: it uses instructions from beginning to end and uses instructional scaffolding to promote a deeper level of learning to achieve communication skills in general, using multiple intelligences (Rassias, 2013).

Rassias’ micrologue is a one-minute talk on a subject of a cultural interest. It begins by dictating a series of sentences to all but one student, who is asked to come in front of the class. The rest of the class is asked to listen carefully as the teacher recites the micrologue, which should not exceed sixty seconds. The specific procedure for this technique consists of following some steps:

1. Recite the micrologue to the student, following visuals that will use a prop while the rest of the class listens.
2. Repeat the text to the student, following visuals drawn on the board for all to see. The student listens, the rest of the class writes.
3. Go over the micrologue a third time. The student listens, the rest of the class writes.
4. In this phase clarify the vocabulary for the student, and then ask the student questions on each sentence of your presentation.
5. The student then reads the copy on the overhead projector, while the rest of the students correct their versions.
6. Now, ask the student to repeat the micrologue to his/her classmates, following your lead through the visual aids. Provide words the student has missed.

(Rassias, 2013, p. 28)

As can be seen, repetition is an important technique in Rassias micrologue, and other authors, such as Cavakaytar (2010), also consider that writing is an ability which can be learned through repetition. Another important element of this micrologue technique is modeled writing, which is also proposed by Seifoori (2012) as a possible approach to teaching writing, in which the teacher is the person who guides students in the writing process by using models. The micrologue procedure provides such modeled writing, as the teacher must write in front of the students, creates the text, and controls all underlying stages in writing: prewriting, drafting, editing and publishing.
In conclusion, in teaching languages, some researchers (Tompkins, 2004; Ahlsén & Lundh, 2007; Strömquist, 2007) suggest that writing should not only be practiced more in classes, but it should also be reinforced with learning strategies to make writing for students easier by making them aware that writing is a complex process. The students must also realize that writing is considered important and it is an activity that requires serious thought, since when we are writing, we are communicating and expressing our ideas in a written form. Teaching writing, however, is not an easy task. Therefore, teachers should focus more on written activities in classes to help students practice the writing skill, and Rassias' micrologue can be used for such purposes.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

An action research study can guide teachers’ practice into a more appropriate way of teaching according to the classroom context. Furthermore, it is a tool to improve teachers’ performance in classes. In this chapter, definitions of AR are defined; also, the data collection techniques to identify the existence of a problem in a Basic English course, as well as to analyze the instruments for discovering the outcomes of the implementation are described. As a result of the analysis carried out and verified by triangulation, it was discovered that there was a lack of practice and examples in learning the writing skill. Consequently, an action plan was implemented in the English course; the micrologue technique was developed with a variation provided by the teacher. This plan was evaluated by three external observations, field notes, and a questionnaire.

3.1 Definition of Action Research

One way for teachers to improve their professional practice in ELT contexts is to identify and solve a problem that exists in their classrooms, and in this way grow and learn through their experiences. Action Research provides a way of learning through our experiences as teachers in a specific context. Mills (2003, in Donato 2003) provides the following definition of action research:

Action research is as any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information about the ways that their particular school operates how they teach, and how well their students learn. The information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes.

(p.4)

Action research has increasingly become popular in second language teaching circles as a practical tool for EFL. Regarding this, Burns (2010) expresses her insights and defines Action Research as a part of a broad movement that has been going on in education for some time. Action Research is related to the ideas of ‘reflective practice’ and ‘the teacher as researcher’ which takes a self-reflective,
critical, and systematic approach to explore a teacher’s own teaching context. Additionally, Rust and Clark (2003) also provide their insights and state that Action Research is a rather simple set of ideas and techniques that can initiate the teacher in the power of systematic reflection on his/her practice. In sum, Action Research is carried out by teachers to find out a problem and develop a self-reflective practice in the classroom through steps to improve students’ outcomes. Moreover, Burns (2010) states it is a qualitative method that gathers theory and practice by analyzing and observing to plan an action.

### 3.1.1 Features of Action Research

Kemmis and McTagger (1988 cited in Burns, 2010) describe Action Research as “a qualitative method that follows a dynamic and a complementary process” (p. 8), as it is shown in figure 2. It includes: Planning action to improve what is already happening, acting to implement the plan, observing the effects of action in the context in which it occurs, reflecting on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action and so on, through a succession of cycles.

![Kemmis & McTaggart's action research spiral](image)

*Figure 2: Kemmis & McTaggart’s action research spiral taken from Burns (2010, p.8)*
The above action research spiral proposed by Kemmis and MacTaggart’s (1988, cited in Burns 2010) depicts the main purpose for Action Research: to discover a plan for innovation or intervention. Furthermore, it is collaborative in nature, which includes both teachers and students improving students’ writing by using indirect written feedback – error code correction and the micrologue technique. Donato (2003) emphasizes the spiral process to explore what changes need to be made or what actions need to be taken in an action research process. Burns (2010, cited in Donato, 2003) suggests using action research to explore an issue in teaching or learning, identify areas of concern, observe how those areas play out in the setting of the study, discuss how the issue might be addressed, and collect data to determine the action to be taken.

The characteristics above are the ones that the teacher-researcher may follow during this action research in a specific context that the teacher desires to explore. Burns (2010) identifies how a teacher can have a variety of instruments to find the problem: questionnaires, interviews, observation notes and protocols, videotapes, photographs, journals and diaries, and narratives. After analyzing the instruments, the teacher can design an action plan to implement and possibly solve the problem. These steps were used in this study. Many authors, such as Burns (2010), Donato (2003), as well as Rust and Clark (2003) believe in the use of Action Research. They affirm that it enhances not only the students’ development in their language learning, but also the teachers’ knowledge of their practice.

In conclusion, Action Research is a reliable tool for improving the teaching of a foreign language which starts by identifying the problem in the classroom, collecting data, and interpreting it. Likewise, Action Research is a descriptive method, where the main participants are the teacher and the students in the learning environment. It ranges from general to specific and follows steps that can be verified through the instruments of data collection, and it can re-start in cycles which repeat the same steps.
3.2 Identifying and understanding the problem
This AR sought for further explanations, solutions and improvements in both the teachers and students’ learning process, as well as in the teachers’ performance on a Basic English course. I am currently teaching an English basic course, where I have observed some weaknesses in my students’ writing. To confirm the problem and discover its characteristics, initial research was carried out with the aid of three instruments: field notes, samples of students’ work, and a questionnaire, these are explained later in section 3.4.

3.2.1 Outcome of initial research
After analyzing the collected data and verifying it by means of triangulation (explained in section 3.5) it was found that students talked about the need of more examples before performing the writing activity from the textbook, indicating that the use of examples would be helpful and, make them feel more secure when writing. Specific difficulties related to problems with the third person and a variety of spelling errors and punctuation were found in students’ writing example. The results of this initial research also suggested that students were having difficulties understanding instructions apparently due to the lack of vocabulary.

3.3 Action plan
After reviewing the findings that the previous cycle revealed, this action plan to improve students’ writing was designed using the micrologue technique from Rassias Method. The use of micrologue technique includes images, writing, repetition, speaking and model writing. It was developed during a Basic English course with the aim of improving students’ writing with the aid of an error correction code as a variation to the aid of the micrologue, to lead students to improve their writing. The use of the error correction code, based on Michelle (2010), was implemented to enable the learners to become aware of the writing process. This variation was implemented because the micrologue technique has not been used for specifically teaching writing; it is a technique conducted to involve students in a multiple intelligence task (Rassias, 2013).
Another important reason for using this methodology is the impact that the Rassias Method has on teaching (Rassias, 2013). The methodology is used as a tool to teach any foreign language following teaching procedures and dramatic techniques. This study attempted to promote the micrologue as a way to implement a more engaging and enhanced writing process with EFL students. This innovative implementation provided new examples of how students should be guided to improve and practice writing. In sharing accounts of the procedure implemented in this study, students were prompted to practice and develop their writing by using a four-week micrologue activity action plan (see Appendix 1), using code correction, rewriting and completing a second written activity followed by a model.

3.3.1 Implementation
This action plan was carried out throughout four weeks of the regular Basic English II course with a total of four-topic lessons based on the content syllabus. Four micrologues were designed and were used once every week at the end of the topic. The time of each activity lasted around forty minutes. In order to fulfill the students' writing necessities of the formal curriculum, the vocabulary, the content, and the grammar were related in creating each micrologue to help students practice their writing. In addition, a second writing activity was added to the original version with an error correction code to give indirect feedback to the student. In the original procedure, an overhead projector is used; in this action plan, instead of using the overhead projector, a student was asked to write the first writing activity on a large piece of paper, which was then stuck on the board for correction. The following are the stages implemented in this action plan.

Stage 1: Micrologue 1 “Giving personal information”
In this first stage,

1. Teacher sticks on the board six printed images (see appendix 2), related to the topic. Then, she asks two volunteers to come to the front of the class, instead of one student, as in the original version of Rassias Method. The first student sits in front of her looking at the board, where
the previous images were placed, and listens carefully to the professor. Instead of using an overhead projector for showing the first writing text, a second student writes it on a large piece of paper.

2. The teacher dictates as all of the students write the first text, except for the one who is just listening to her. While one of the students is writing the dictation on a large piece of paper, the rest of the class writes it on a sheet that was provided by the teacher containing the instructions, and the two activities she had designed (see appendix 3).

3. Teacher recites the micrologue three times (the small paragraph containing six sentences) to the student, following visuals that will serve as a prop while the rest of the class writes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My name is Marisela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am from Mexico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am Mexican.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am thirty three years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an English teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am married.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Micrologue 1 sentences**

4. After going over the micrologue a third time, the teacher asks the students six questions concerning each sentence of the presentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s your name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are you from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s your nationality?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How old are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s your marital status?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do you do?

Table 5: Micrologue 1 questions

5. Then the teacher asks the second student to show the piece of paper to review the spelling, the grammar and the punctuation.

6. The student that was just listening then reads the paragraph while the teacher makes any necessary corrections in the writing, also correcting the student in terms of pronunciation while he reads, while the rest of the class corrects their own writing.

7. The teacher asks the student that was just listening to recite the micrologue to his/her classmates, using only the visual aids. In case the student does not remember all of the sentences, the teacher provides words the student may have missed. This is the end of the original version of the technique.

8. A second activity is then implemented by the teacher. Teacher asks students to do the second activity on their sheet of exercises; students are asked to write a description of a friend, including name, age, profession, nationality, country and marital status, in 25 to 30 words.

9. The students use the previous activity in the micrologue technique as a model. After that, the students give their paragraphs to the teacher, and she provides indirect feedback with the error correction code.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WW: wrong Word</th>
<th>S: spelling</th>
<th>P: punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T: tense</td>
<td>A: article</td>
<td>WO: word order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: capitalization</td>
<td>^: something missing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Error code correction (adapted from Michelle, 2010)
10. Finally, the teacher gives back the students their paragraphs and they are asked to rewrite the exercise in their notebooks, and hand it in to the teacher.

**Stage 2: Micrologue 2 “Describing locations”**

The same procedure was carried out, but the writing activity was changed. The table below contains the sentences and questions for steps three and four. In step 8, for the second writing activity, students were asked to do the second activity, write sentences, about themselves, including profession, transportation and location of home or work, in 25 to 30 words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am a <strong>doctor</strong>.</th>
<th>What do you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My <strong>name</strong> is Jasper White.</td>
<td>What's your name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I go to work <strong>by train</strong></td>
<td>How do you go to work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and I go home <strong>by car</strong> with my colleague.</td>
<td>How do you go home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is my <strong>neighbor</strong>.</td>
<td>Who do you go home with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He lives <strong>down the street</strong> from my home.</td>
<td>Where does your colleague live?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7: Micrologue 2 sentences and questions*

**Stage 3: Micrologue 3 “Describing daily routines”**

The same procedure was carried out, but the writing activity was changed. The table below contains the sentences and questions for steps three and four. In step 8, for the second writing activity, students were asked to write a description of their daily routine, including school or job routines and times, in 25 to 30 words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I <strong>wake up</strong> at 6:00 in the morning.</th>
<th>What time do you wake up?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I <strong>take a shower</strong> at 7:00, then</td>
<td>What do you do at 7:00 in the morning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have some <strong>cereal</strong> for breakfast.</td>
<td>What do you have for breakfast?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I go to school <strong>by taxi</strong>.</td>
<td>How do you go to school?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My first **History class** starts at 9:00 and I finish classes at **noon**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What class do you have at 9:00?</th>
<th>What time do you finish classes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8: Micrologue 3 Sentences and questions**

**Stage 4: Micrologue 4 “Describing a past activity”**

The same procedure was carried out, but the writing activity was changed. The table below contains the sentences and questions for steps three and four. In step 8, the second writing activity, students were asked to write a description of what they did last weekend, including place, activities, and weather, in 25 to 30 words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last weekend was awful! I went to <strong>New York</strong> because my <strong>parents</strong> live there.</th>
<th>What did you do last weekend?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who live in New York?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to go to a <strong>concert</strong></td>
<td>What did you go to New York?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And I want to <strong>eat</strong> at a couple of good restaurants.</td>
<td>Where did you want to eat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But the weather was really bad. It <strong>rained</strong>, so we stayed in my parent’s <strong>apartment</strong>.</td>
<td>How was the weather like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where did you stay?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 9: Micrologue 4 Sentences and questions**

Finally, the procedure was ended in the fourth week. The main objective of using the micrologue technique was to help students practice their writing following the guidance of the writing model this technique offers. During the classes, there were observations made by the teacher and three observations made by colleagues. In the last section of the micrologue, students answered a questionnaire, and all the instruments were analyzed.

**3.4 Data collection techniques**

The following data collection techniques were used to evaluate whether or not the micrologue technique had guided students in their writing process in the classroom. The whole implementation was assessed with a formative evaluation, which occurred throughout the period of it providing feedback with a guidance to shape the action, and a summative evaluation with the students’ questionnaire,
field notes, external observations at the end of the whole action plan and students’ work. The instruments were peer observations, field notes, a questionnaire and samples of students’ work. What follows is the description of each of these instruments.

3.4.1 Field notes
Instrument field notes, where the teacher is the principal observer, are a useful and helpful tool for AR. Koshy (2005) claims they are used for keeping a record of what happens, of why and where your ideas evolved and of the research process itself. Hopkins (2008) also suggests that the use of field notes is a place where the observations, reflections and reactions are recorded to understand a classroom problem. He recommends writing immediately after the observation has taken place, for example, immediately after a lesson or even jotting something down during the lesson. Both authors observe the reflective nature of using field notes and how they contribute to the professional development of the teacher-researcher, even if the field notes may not be very long. However, as Hopkins (2008) indicates, there are some disadvantages of using field notes:

- Need to fall back on aids such as question analysis sheets, tapes and transcripts for specific information.
- Conversation impossible to record by field notes.
- Notebook works with small groups but not with a full class.
- Initially time-consuming.
- Can be highly subjective.

(p.105)

Regardless of all the disadvantages, the field notes can focus on a particular aspect of one’s teaching or classroom behavior and constitute an ongoing record. It can be thus a good instrument for AR.

During the initial research, the teacher-researcher took notes on students’ work as well as the implementation of the Action Plan; the teacher-researcher took notes
on some specific situations throughout the written activity to observe how the learners were performing in the activity (see Appendix 4). The main aim of the field notes was to take notes to confirm what the students’ perceptions and concerns were during the activity, as well as to confirm whether or not the extra writing examples had guided students in their writing activities.

3.4.2 Peer observation

Peer observation, a research instrument in which a colleague is the principal observer, is a useful and helpful tool for AR. Burns (2010) asserts that peer observations offer insight regarding the improvement of teaching. They can be done by a colleague, supervisor, and others. She claims that peer observations are necessary for offering insights regarding the improvement of teaching. In this study, three peer observations were carried out (see Appendix 5).

3.4.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been a useful instrument for collecting a range of information about people’s opinions, often asking respondents to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement given, which can then be followed up as necessary (Koshy, 2005; Hannan and Anderson, 2007). Furthermore, there are some advantages that Koshy (2005) suggests when using a questionnaire, it:

1. enables to collect background and baseline information quite easily.
2. helps to gather reasonable amount of data in a short time.
3. provides information which can be followed up,
4. provides a format making it easy to represent information,
5. is suitable for collecting initial information on attitudes and perceptions.

(p. 89)

Within a questionnaire, the questions can be closed ended and open ended questions. Koshy (2005) claims there are some considerations that researchers need to take into account when they write the questionnaire are the following:
- Keep the questionnaire simple. By designing appropriate questions, you can often gather a decent amount of data by using a small number of questions.
- Consider how you may analyze the responses to the questions at the time to design.
- Start with questions about the factual information required.
- Use simple language which the respondents will understand.
- Use questions which have discrete responses such as “How much do you enjoy PE lessons? With options such as a lot, not at all or sometimes, are easier to interpret and represent as charts and tables for easy reference.
- Open-ended questions are useful, but give some thought to how you would analyse them.
- Avoid leading questions. For example, a question such as “Which part of the lesson did you enjoy the most?” assumes that the student enjoyed some parts of a lesson, which may not necessarily be the case.
- Emphasise the anonymity of the responses as children and adults are often sensitive to who else may be told about how they have responded.
- Do a pilot run before you give out questionnaires and make adjustments as necessary. Acknowledge, in your final report, your pilot effort and any changes that were made to the final version of the questionnaire.
- Take account of the reading ability of students when administering a questionnaire.

(p. 88)

An initial questionnaire (Appendix 6) was used in the initial research to find out if there was a writing problem, after the implementation of the Action Plan, a questionnaire in Spanish was used again (due to the low English proficiency of the students); this time with the main objective of providing the learners with the opportunity to express themselves in their mother tongue about the English classes. It took approximately fifteen minutes. The participants were asked to answer an open-ended questionnaire which contained six questions (see appendix 7). This questionnaire included three multiple choice questions and three open-ended questions. Each question was related to the students’ writing ability, and participants had the option to give extra information (or not) for each question. The main objective of this research instrument was to discover if the micrologue technique was useful for student’s writing.
3.4.4 Samples of student’s work
Burns (2010) suggests another useful instrument for data collection is the collection of student work in which they can show, over a set period of time, improvement. The samples of student work were another important instrument used in this action project not only to find out the problem, but also to verify the improvement in students’ writing. The samples of students’ work were taken from the beginning to the end of the four-week implementation (see appendix 3).

3.5 Data Analysis
In this current study, triangulation was used to confirm, first, whether or not there was a problem of writing in the class setting, as well as to evaluate the action plan implemented in the classroom in an English basic course. Mason (in Koshy, 2005) identifies triangulations as a means to verify the information gathered. The process of triangulation simply implies that the researcher obtains several viewpoints or perspectives. It is based on the method of surveying land which breaks the region down into triangles, each of which is measured. Additionally, Burns (2010) states that triangulation is useful because “using more than one source of information gives you different lenses for viewing the situation, and allows for more objectivity” (p.131). She advocates for using triangulation as a way to strengthen the data collection. As a result of using the different sources of data, triangulation provides advantages that involve not only teachers, but also students, colleagues, and parents by giving a variety of insights from different sources.

In this study, reflection upon and interpretation of the data gathered via each instrument was vital for the teacher-researcher, the information obtained from the field notes made by the teacher-researcher, three peer observations from colleagues, a questionnaire answered by students and analyzing sample students’ work. Thus, the researcher compared, contrasted and cross-checked whether what the teacher-researcher was finding through one source was backed up by other evidence.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

After implementing the action plan described in chapter three, the teacher-researcher evaluated whether or not the implementation had been successful by using a questionnaire, peer observation, field notes and samples of student’s work during the implementation sessions. The findings are presented as follows; using triangulation of the information from the methods mentioned above, all the examples cited from the students were translated from Spanish to English. For ease of understanding, some abbreviations were used in the extracts to refer the techniques. Field notes (FN), peer observer (PO), students’ questionnaire (SQ), and samples of students’ work (SW)

4.1 Enhancing the writing process

The main problem that this study aimed at solving was to improve students’ writing on a Basic English course in a local public school. Based on the analysis of the data, students seem to have improved their writing by using the micrologue technique from the Rassias Method. The comments below show how this conclusion was drawn. One of the questions in the questionnaire asked, “How did this activity help you in your English learning to practice writing? Why?” Consequently, SQ1 and SQ2 commented “This activity gave me confidence in my writing, I felt guided in writing”, and “it was also an entertaining activity from this method”. Furthermore, SQ3 remarked the following:

The repetition of the micrologue helps students to correct and practice not only their writing, but also their oral production...

SQ3

The participants’ answers in the questionnaire, showed above, indicated that most of them found the writing activity entertaining and they felt guided to write. They also expressed that that it was not only helpful for writing, but also in their oral production. In addition to these comments from the students about how the micrologue technique helped them to improve their writing, three peer observers also had positive comments about its effect on the students’ writing process, they also expressed that
this activity enhanced the writing process as PO1 and PO3 commented “Students were able to write some descriptions using the vocabulary and structures previously seen”, "A great experience of the students, they seemed to understand the majority of the sentences”. Besides, PO3 expressed the following:

Teacher showed a poster with the text. It helped students a lot, since they looked at it as reference.

PO3

These were compared to the teacher-researcher’s field notes, where it was also found that the technique was useful to some extent, as students were doing the activity attentively, and following the example provided in the previous writing activity, as can be seen in the following comments:

Students were doing the second writing activity with confidence and very attentive. They used the vocabulary that was used in the previous activity in their writings.

FNAUG15

Even though the writing is sometimes considered a boring activity, students were very interested in doing the whole activity.

FNAUG22

After observing the data from the extracts above, there is a similar perception that students had improved their writing by using the micrologue. This finding is the first one derived by specifically linking the micrologue technique with the skill of writing as a process. Regarding this, Tompkins (2004) and Hedge (2005) suggest that monitoring the production of student work from the beginning of the writing process is necessary, as “…writing is about guiding students to produce whole pieces of communication, to link and develop information, ideas…” (p.4). Bearing in mind the importance of writing, by means of this extract and samples of students’ work, peer observer, and teacher-generated comments above, the micrologue technique can be used as a tool for guiding students in their writing to produce whole pieces of communication in an interactive form. The following examples of student’ samples show the improvement in their writing process, and the majority
had similar improvements. The first sample was with no guidance and the next four samples were during the micrologue implementation.

**First Sample before implementation**

1. My name is Juan. I’m from Mexico.
2. I’m occupation is student, I’m living Xalapa
3. My brother is Roberto, He’s a student
   He from Mexico
4. My sister Her occupation is a student, she have one children

The first sample of this student’s work revealed how he wrote the first activity from the book without any guidance. The student was writing sentences using numbers; he did not use articles. He also missed out verbs.

**Samples during the implementation**

She is my friend. Her name is Rubí. She has seventeen years old. She is student. She is Mexican. Her from is Mexico. She is single. She is generous, socialbe, loyal and very Smart. (micrologue one)

After the first micrologue, this student demonstrated to have written a small paragraph, drawing connections with the use of periods, as well as using tenses. However, he still missed out articles and had problems in spelling.

After the second micrologue, the student demonstrated that in each micrologue he was improving his writing process. In the second micrologue, this student did not just use periods, but also commas. He used more vocabulary. He had still spelling mistakes, but it was probably due to the new vocabulary that had been taught only recently.

I’m Juan. I go to school by bus, I’m student Administration, I go home by bus with my neighbor, I live aroun the corner. Xalapa city I’m twenty years old
In the third and four micrologues, the learner improved his writing process by drawing connections between the vocabulary and tenses, as well as the use of more complex vocabulary. He was supported by the model examples, and he revealed in his writing activities that he had overcome some basic problems in writing. He was connecting sentences, and he was producing more words, using collocations “by taxi, by bus, have breakfast, go to, and on Sunday”. He was able to use more complex vocabulary and include it in his writing. As SW3 wrote “Last weekend was happy! I went to Perote with my parents live there. I wanted to go to a dance with my friends and eat in my home with parents and friends. I went to go picnic on sunday.” He also wrote the following:

I wake up at 6:00 in the morning. I take shower at 7:00, then I have a some celeral for breakfast o coffee. I go to school By bus my first Inglish class start at 10:00 and finish class at 11:00. O go to home by bus.  

SW3

In sum, this sample of a student’s work during the whole procedure shows how he was able to accomplish writing activities. He was aware of the use of capitalization, connecting sentences to write a small paragraph, and the use of collocation. Nevertheless, this student was still having spelling mistakes and difficulty with the verb tenses perhaps due to the increased complexity of each of the activities during the implementation.

4.2 Motivation and attitudes towards writing
Apart from taking into consideration the importance of guiding students as they improve their writing, motivation is also important. Through the teacher’s observations and the students’ insights, students seemed to be motivated and have positive attitudes towards writing when they used the micrologue. The following comments from the questionnaire, the peer observers and the field notes exemplify in what ways the students’ motivation to write seems to have been increased. The students’ comments were SQ4 “Yes, it improves my writing and it is more entertaining”, SQ6 “Yes, I liked because it was an interactive and entertaining
activity”, SQ10 “Yes, it is dynamic, practical and easy. It develops our writing ability. It guides us to recognize and write words in English, besides it is funny”. This was also commented by SQ19.

Yes, it is a good strategy to the writing skill, because it has small phrases and easy to practice.  

SQ19

The peer observers’ comments about motivation and attitudes to writing were noticed by PO2 “Students seemed interested, attentive; they were engaged in the activity” and by PO1.

Students seemed to be enthusiastic when working and they were participating a lot, participated actively, and they were committed to do the activity  

PO1

There is also evidence in the teacher-researcher’s field notes that students were making progress in their writing process in terms of their motivation:

Students were happy, and eager to participate; they were doing their writing and wanted to have their writing checked to know if they did well.  

FNAUG15

In respect to the importance of guiding students in learning a language, Rassias (2012), Burgess (2005), and Tan (2006) also believe that guiding students using an interactive procedure such as the micrologue increases their motivation to improve their learning. In this study, it can be seen that using this interactive technique has advantages because it caught students’ attention and facilitated writing in the classroom.

4.3 Use of images

Images proved to be a great support in the micrologue technique to guide the students’ writing process. Learners expressed that the use of images enhanced their attention and their writing, especially to use the vocabulary acquired. As SQ2 expressed “I felt interested because it engaged me by using of images and it makes easier to keep the information” and SQ3 also mentioned “I felt happy
because it helped me to learn more vocabulary and improve or review my writing in English…”, as well as SQ7, for example, noted:

I felt interested and happy because it made us practice the writing and add words to our vocabulary

SQ7

Clearly, students felt that they were more guided with the images. Similarly, the peer observers noticed that the images reinforced students in their writing process, not only in terms of vocabulary, but also in terms of the structures to be learned.

Students reacted positively with the images and they did not ask any translation into Spanish, the images helped them to infer the meaning.

PO1

Student used pictures as a help to answer teacher’s questions in the first activity.

PO2

The teacher-researcher also noticed that students were using the vocabulary from the images in their writing activities:

When students were writing in the second activity, they were observing the images and they included at least five words that were presented in the first activity

FNAGUS22

Students reacted positively with the images and they did not ask any translation into Spanish, the images helped them to infer the meaning.

FNAGUS22

Comparing peer observations and teacher-researcher’s notes, there were similar findings regarding the positive effect that the micrologue technique had for vocabulary acquisition; they all agreed that with the aid of images students were able to understand the vocabulary more clearly and then able to use it in their writing activities. The following samples of students’ work reveal that students were using the vocabulary of the images in their second writing activity.
She is my friend Maria Jose. Her nickname is Marijo. Her last name is Saragoza. She is 20 years old. She is a student. She is from in Mexico. She is Mexican. And she is single.

I'm a student of law. My name is Emilio Dimas. I go to school by taxi. I go home by car with my friends. He lives around the corner from my home.

My name is Juan. I wake up at 6:00 in the morning. I take shower at 7:00 then I have some cereal for breakfast or coffee. I go to school by bus. My first English class starts at 10:00 and finishes class at 11:00. I go to home by bus.

4.4 Pronunciation

Although pronunciation was not the focus of this action research study, and is not part of the writing process, it was a language aspect that was addressed to a certain extent during the implementation where all the participants mention some improvement. For example, some of the students seemed to pronounce with confidence when they were reciting the sentences, and they even expressed this sense of improvement in the questionnaires. SQ5 mentioned "I liked it a lot, because it helps me to improve my writing and also in my listening, to understand better the English" and SQ8 said "This activity helped me to listen as well as to improve my pronunciation. And I order better my ideas". Another clear example was noted by SQ19.

With this activity I knew a little more of vocabulary and improve or review my writing in English as well as my pronunciation when I participated in the recite.

One of the peer observers made a comment to this respect and also the teacher-observer also noticed this apparent improvement:

The repetition of the micrologue helps ss to speak aloud and correct, practice their pronunciation…
The repetition of the micrologue helps students to correct and practice their pronunciation; I think this technique helps students to improve their oral production, especially with difficult words.

Students improved their pronunciation especially of the vocabulary words and the verbs in present and past which were addressed in the micrologue as they were part of the syllabus content.

4.5 Improvement in the students’ writing skill
The samples of students’ work that were produced before and after the implementation were analyzed and compared. In students’ first writing activity, before the implementation, the teacher-researcher noticed that students had spelling mistakes in vocabulary, mistakes regarding the use of the articles “a” or “an” before an noun, and in verbs, for example, they did not use the correct tense, and they did not add the “s” or “es” in the third person. Another aspect to be pointed out in the students’ writing is that they did not use capital letters correctly. These types of mistakes can be seen more representatively in the following samples.

Miguel is my neighbor.
He’s from Coatepec. He’s a lost student.
Irma is my chef. He’s tall. He’s my wife.
My wife is bery tall.
He’s from Poza Rica

Nancy Lee is my friend. He’s from cosomaloapan
He’s a student
Victor is my boyfriend. He’s from xalapa.
He’s a student lawyer

She has 55 years old and her birthday is 29th March. She is very beautiful and very intelligent. She has five grandsons.

After the implementation, the students made fewer mistakes in all of the aspects mentioned above, as can be seen in the following samples from the second activity.
in micrologue 4, the last one. SW1 Last weekend, was sunny! I went to Cardel because my family live there. I wanted go with my friend Marijo for speak but I went with my parents to visiting my grandmother, SW3 Last weekend was happy! I went to Perote with my parents live there, I wanted to go to a dance with my friends and eat in my home with my parents and friends. I went to go picnic on Sunday.

My name is Eliseo, last week I went to go to a cinema with my girlfriend. I went to go the school. Start class at 9:00 o’clock in the morning and finished at 7:45 in the night. Last week I went to go to a museum with my friend was beautiful. SW5

As can be seen, there were improvements, for example, students were able to write a complete paragraph, they were using more complex vocabulary, as well as tenses. Another interesting aspect to be pointed out in the students’ samples is that they were more aware of using capital letters after a period (SW3, SW5). Moreover, in the last activity, students were producing more sentences than they were asked to write, and the mistakes they made were because they were trying to produce more advanced structures, for example, students wanted to use the verb with “ing” (SW1).

After analyzing the types of mistakes that students made at the end of the implementation, the teacher-researcher could observe that they had overcome the basic ones and were now willing to produce more, even if they were not sure if it was correct.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS

The main objective of this action research was to help students improve their writing during a Basic English course in a local public school. By means of the micrologue technique from the Rassias Method, students accomplished this goal and also had the opportunity to participate in interactive learning. Moreover, they were encouraged and guided to practice writing with the two main activities of this technique.

The findings suggest an improvement in confidence while students were writing. They did well and showed positive emotions during the writing process, as shown in the peer observations, teacher’s notes, and students’ insights. This willingness to work interactively with the writing process revealed the improvement in writing using the micrologue. This assumption is based on the students’ motivation and attitude as they were writing: students maintained a positive attitude, participated well, and were committed to the task all along the implementation. Furthermore, there was a notable increase in proficiency. More correct structures, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation were perceived in their sample work. Students had the opportunity to learn more vocabulary, and the procedure helped to facilitate the vocabulary used in their writing.

The authors mentioned in chapter two and three, highlighted the importance of teaching writing in an EFL class (Ahmed 2010; Cavakaytar, 2010; Seifoori, 2012). Writing is an ability which is learned through practice; in other words, as Nasir and Naqvi (2013) state, it is an ability that can be improved by learning through repetition. After using the micrologue technique with the aim of helping students improve their writing, it seemed to have impacted students’ writing. The more students practice, the more students acquire vocabulary and structures for writing.

Apart from the practice and vocabulary acquired, the writing process was reinforced also by a second writing activity that follows the previous model and uses symbols to help students complete the writing task. In the four micrologues,
learners did not appear to experience as many problems in their performance, although they showed deficiencies in capitalization and the correct use of tenses in their guided activities. Most of the time, they finished the activity and wanted to have their writing checked right away, after which they made corrections with the use of the error correction codes. Although their writing showed some mistakes, their writing was controlled and guided. In the last activity, the teacher noted that most of the participants had tense difficulties with the simple past. The teacher-researcher reflected on this issue and came out with possible reasons:

1) Students need more practice with the verbs in past.

2) Students have not studied the verbs.

3) The teacher should have administered a quiz in advance to review students’ knowledge of verbs in the simple past.

5.1 Limitations

There were two major problematic issues when carrying out the current study. First, there was a problem with number of words asked in the second writing activity. The students had to write between twenty-five to thirty-five words, but they were writing more words than this. This meant that I was limiting the students’ performance, as one of the observers noted as well. One peer observer commented on the issue regarding on number of words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer observers</th>
<th>Field notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the assignment sheet, students were asked to write around twenty-five to thirty words. I think it is too short. Students should write more.</td>
<td>I realized that students were writing more than thirty words, they were writing from twenty-seven words to forty-seven words in the writing activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students had a bit of a problem following the pace of the sentences. If time allows, maybe it can be slowed down a tiny bit.</td>
<td>I could observe that I was dictating too fast, and sometimes students asked for a fourth repetition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Limitation regarding number of words
The second issue was the speed at which the teacher dictated the text of the micrologue. It was observed that it was too fast for students, as they wanted the teacher to repeat the dictations more times than the ones that were planned. There were suggestions from the peer observers for the teacher-researcher to speak more slowly. What is more important to point out, however, is that despite the speed of the dictation, students managed to write the text: some of learners were asked each other for help, while others waited for the repetition to write the missing words.

5.2 Conclusions and Implications

It appears that students improved their writing using the micrologue technique from the Rassias® Method since they were practicing interactive writing. As a result, the philosophy of this methodology demonstrates that to learn a language, a teacher should involve students in a multiple-intelligence task as Rassias (2013) suggests, rather than assigning them to complete boring writing activities. Furthermore, students were enjoying the writing and they were motivated. Meanwhile, they not only learned new vocabulary, but also they seemed to have learned basic structures in their writing process.

One of the objectives of using the micrologue technique was to improve students’ writing, which can be said to have been achieved. Additionally, it helped students feel more confident and motivated when they were writing in English on a basic English course. However, the pace of the dictation and the number of words students could produce was limited. Therefore, some changes will be made in the action plan for future use of micrologues.

The findings also suggest that students’ writing improved at each student’s own pace, which was also an additional achievement with this implementation. This writing activity therefore, should be used periodically over a longer period of time in the classroom due to the effectiveness and positive impact it had on students’ learning. This view then echoes Kobayashi and Rinnert (2001) who highlight that “the students with experience of writing paragraphs were found to be better writers
than those without such experiences” (p. 74). This is important as when “students lack writing skills, they experience frustration and alienation, which compounds their existing problems” (Mohammad, 2010:11) and might lead to the failure in the advanced English courses. In addition, as Şenel and Tütüniş (2011) affirm there is not enough writing practice in English courses; if students do not practice writing activities in their English courses, it could cause them to have anxiety during their exams which in turn, would have a negative effect on their writing skills. In sum, it is easy to dismiss the problem of foreign language anxiety as a result of poor language learning ability rather than acknowledging the need to provide practice in an EFL class to enhance students’ writing.

5.3 Changes next time around
Future action research in this same area of study could have more impact if adjustments are made regarding the length of the words, and if the research is carried out over a longer period of time. Furthermore, other variations could be implemented, for example, instead of the use of error correction code; peer correction could be taken into consideration. Also, a more detailed analysis of the impact of both code correction code and peer-correction could be included.

5.4 Ways forward
Finally, further research should study higher levels of foreign language writing in order to evaluate the continuity of students’ writing process with this technique. One possible suggestion would be to design six micrologues instead of using four in a longer period of time. Another suggestion would be using a peer correction instead of the use of code correction technique to give students’ writing feedback.
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Tan, H. A. (2006). A Study of EFL Learners' Writing Errors and Instructional Strategies. Center For General Education, Kun Shan University. p. 1-10. Retrieved from http://ir.lib.ksu.edu.tw/bitstream/987654321/3052/1/96%E8%AB%96%E6%96%87%E7%8D%8E%E5%8A%A9-%E8%AD%9A%E6%83%A0%E7%B6%BF%E8%80%81%E5%B8%AB(Writing%20Errors).pdf.


Tan, H. (2008) A study of EFL learners’ Writing Errors and Instructional Strategies. Center for General Education, Kun Shan University. Retrieved from http://ir.lib.ksu.edu.tw/bitstream/987654321/3052/1/96%E8%AB%96%E6%96%87%E7%8D%8E%E5%8A%A9-%E8%AD%9A%E6%83%A0%E7%B6%BF%E8%80%81%E5%B8%AB(Writing%20Errors).pdf

### Appendix 1: Action Plan

**Action plan for the use of Rassias Method: micrologues to improve writing on a Basic English course**

**Four stages: Four micrologues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>“Micrologues”</th>
<th>Break down activities</th>
<th>Evaluation of the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Activity 1: A writing activity taken from the book “Giving personal information” (30 minutes around) | 1. My name is Marisela.  
2. I am from Mexico.  
3. I am Mexican.  
4. I am thirty three years old.  
5. I am married.  
6. I am an English teacher.  
   a. What's your name?  
   b. Where are you from?  
   c. What’s your nationality?  
   d. How old are you?  
   e. What’s your marital status?  
   f. What do you do? | 1. Tr. asks two volunteers (one writes the paragraph and the other just listens to the Tr.)  
2. Tr. dictates six sentences to the whole group, all the Ss write the paragraph  
3. Tr. asks the student six questions to guide the St to remember the information  
4. Tr. and Ss correct the paragraph  
5. St says the whole paragraph with the aid of the images  
6. Finally, Ss write by themselves a second exercise of writing given by the teacher | MICROLOGUE 1  
A whole group correction / and a correction code by the teacher |
| Activity 2: Write a description of a friend. Include name, age, profession, nationality, country and marital status. Use from 25 to 30 words. | | |
| Activity 1: A writing activity taken from the book “Describing locations”(30 minutes around) | 1. I am a doctor.  
2. My name is Jasper White.  
3. I go to work by train  
4. and I go home by car with my colleague.  
5. He is my neighbor.  
6. He lives down the street from my home.  
   a. What do you do?  
   b. What's your name?  
   c. How do you go to work?  
   d. How do you go home?  
   e. Who do you go home with?  
   f. Where does your colleague live? | 1. Tr. asks two volunteers (one writes the paragraph and the other just listens to the Tr.)  
2. Tr. dictates six sentences to the whole group, all the Ss write the paragraph  
3. Tr. asks the student six questions to guide the St to remember the information  
4. Tr. and Ss correct the paragraph  
5. St says the whole paragraph with the aid of the images  
6. Finally, Ss write by themselves a second exercise of writing given by the teacher | MICROLOGUE 2  
A whole group correction / and a correction code by the teacher |
| Activity 2: Write sentences about you. Include profession, transportation and location of home or work. Use from 25 to 30 words. | | |
### Action plan for the use of Rassias © Method: micrologues to improve writing on a Basic English course

**Four stages: Four micrologues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>“Micrologues”</th>
<th>Break down activities</th>
<th>Evaluation of the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Activity 1: A writing activity taken from the book “Describing daily routines" (30 minutes around) | 1. I wake up at 6:00 in the morning. 2. I take a shower at 7:00, then 3. I have some cereal for breakfast. 4. I go to school by taxi. 5. My first History class starts at 9:00 and 6. I finish classes at noon. | 1. Tr. asks two volunteers (one writes the paragraph and the other just listens to the Tr.) 2. Tr. dictates six sentences to the whole group, all the Ss write the paragraph 3. Tr. asks the student six questions to guide the St to remember the information | MICROLOGUE 3  
A whole group correction / and a correction code by the teacher |
|          | a. What time do you wake up? b. What do you do at 7:00 in the morning? c. What do you have for breakfast? d. How do you go to school? e. What class do you have at 9:00? f. What time do you finish classes? | 4. Tr. and Ss correct the paragraph 5. St says the whole paragraph with the aid of the images 6. Finally, Ss write by themselves a second exercise of writing given by the teacher |                                                                                       |
| Activity 2: Write a description of your daily routine. Include school or job routines and time Use from 25 to 30 words. | 1. Tr. asks two volunteers (one writes the paragraph and the other just listens to the Tr.) 2. Tr. dictates six sentences to the whole group, all the Ss write the paragraph 3. Tr. asks the student six questions to guide the St to remember the information | 4. Tr. and Ss correct the paragraph 5. St says the whole paragraph with the aid of the images 6. Finally, Ss write by themselves a second exercise of writing given by the teacher |                                                                                       |
|          | a. What did you do last weekend? b. Who lives in New York? c. Why did you go to New York? d. Where did you want to eat? e. How was the weather like? f. Where did you stay? | 4. Tr. and Ss correct the paragraph 5. St says the whole paragraph with the aid of the images 6. Finally, Ss write by themselves a second exercise of writing given by the teacher |                                                                                       |
| Activity 1: A writing activity taken from the book “Describing past activities” (30 minutes around) | 1. Last weekend was awful! I went to New York because my parents live there. 3. I wanted to go to a concert 4. and eat at a couple of good restaurants. 5. But the weather was really bad. It rained, so we stayed in my parents’ apartment. | 1. Tr. asks two volunteers (one writes the paragraph and the other just listens to the Tr.) 2. Tr. dictates six sentences to the whole group, all the Ss write the paragraph 3. Tr. asks the student six questions to guide the St to remember the information | MICROLOGUE 4  
A whole group correction / and a correction code by the teacher |
|          | a. What did you do last weekend? b. Who lives in New York? c. Why did you go to New York? d. Where did you want to eat? e. How was the weather like? f. Where did you stay? | 4. Tr. and Ss correct the paragraph 5. St says the whole paragraph with the aid of the images 6. Finally, Ss write by themselves a second exercise of writing given by the teacher |                                                                                       |
| Activity 2: Write a description of what you did last weekend. Include place, activities, and the weather. Use from 25 to 30 words. | 1. Tr. asks two volunteers (one writes the paragraph and the other just listens to the Tr.) 2. Tr. dictates six sentences to the whole group, all the Ss write the paragraph 3. Tr. asks the student six questions to guide the St to remember the information | 4. Tr. and Ss correct the paragraph 5. St says the whole paragraph with the aid of the images 6. Finally, Ss write by themselves a second exercise of writing given by the teacher |                                                                                       |
Appendix 2: Images for Micrologues

Micrologue 1

NAME

MEXICO

MEXICAN

THIRTY THREE

TEACHER

MARRIED
Micrologue 2

1. Doctor

2. Name: Jasper

3. By train

4. By car

5. Neighbor

6. Down the street
Micrologue 3

1. WAKE UP
2. TAKE A SHOWER
3. CEREAL
4. BY TAXI
5. HISTORY CLASS
6. AT NOON
Micrologue 4

1. NEW YORK
2. PARENTS
3. CONCERT
4. EAT
5. RAINED
6. APARTMENT
Appendix 3: Writing activities (Micrologues 1 to 4)

MICROLOGUE 1: GIVING PERSONAL INFORMATION
ACTIVITY ONE: Write the description that the teacher says.
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
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ACTIVITY TWO: Write a description of a friend. Include name, age, profession, nationality, country and marital status. Use from 25 to 30 words.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WW: wrong Word</th>
<th>S: spelling</th>
<th>P: punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T: tense</td>
<td>A: article</td>
<td>WO: word order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: capitalization</td>
<td>^: something missing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MICROLOGUE 2: DESCRIBING LOCATIONS

ACTIVITY ONE: Write the description that the teacher says.

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

ACTIVITY TWO: Write sentences about you. Include profession, transportation and location of home or work. Use from 25 to 30 words.

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
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<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: capitalization</td>
<td>^: something missing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MICROLOGUE 3: DESCRIBING DAILY ROUTINES

ACTIVITY ONE: Write the description that the teacher says.

________________________________________________________________________________

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ACTIVITY TWO: Write a description of your daily routine. Include school or job routines and time. Use from 25 to 30 words.

________________________________________________________________________________

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MICROLOGUE 4: DESCRIBING PAST ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY ONE: Write the description that the teacher says.
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

ACTIVITY TWO: Write a description of what you did last weekend. Include place, activities, and the weather. Use from 25 to 30 words.
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

| WW: wrong Word | S: spelling | P: punctuation |
| T: tense       | A: article  | WO: word order |
| C: capitalization | ^: something missing | |

Appendix 4: Samples of field notes

Field note 1 without the technique micrologue

Teacher field notes:
Date: 18-05-20
Time: 10:11:50

I asked the ss to write down an activity from the book. I wrote a few sentences about yesterday. Use the ideas from activity 5 and answer the questions below. The majority of the students didn’t understand the instruction and asked me what they were going to do. Some students were explaining to their classmates.

One student handed the activity to me. He did it in 30 min.

Another student used a cell phone to look for some vocabulary that he didn’t do and used the sentence that it gave to him.

They were assigned because they thought that they needed to answer the questions on the activity.

The last student who gave me the activity took 20 min. After checking the writing activity:

There were 18 students, the others didn’t attend to the class.

Review:
Field note 2 micrologue one and two

Teachr field notes #2 Aug 15, 2014

Micrologue 1

After reading the activity of sentence correct, the students were so involved and kept asking questions about it. During the activity, they were taking notes of sentence correction and checking each other's sentences to make sure they were correct.

After finishing the activity, the teacher took in more information about capitalization and spacing of vocabulary and asked the students to write their own sentences. They wrote the vocabulary that was used in the previous activity in their sentences.

Finally, students were given sheets of sentences and asked to correct them. I could notice that they were having trouble related to the rules of capitalization and spacing. They were eager to participate and wanted to have their writing checked. They did well.

Teachr field notes #2 Aug 17, 2014

Micrologue 2

In the first activity, students were taught to participate as a teacher. During this activity, students were writing on the board. They were participating by acting as a teacher and giving instructions. The students were then assigned a partner activity. They had to remember the words that the teacher was teaching, so they could apply them to the models and correct each other's sentences.

In the second writing activity, students were given writing prompts. They were asked to choose an image and then write a story about what happened. They were then asked to write about their own stories. They were presented with the image and asked to write about the story. They were then asked to write about their idea for the next activity. The image helped them to write their stories.
Appendix 5: Samples of peer-observation

Peer-observation 1

Action Plan:
The social researcher followed the student's work to improve writing and a basic English course.
Suggestions and videos:

1. The student should write his summary. He should avoid using the main keywords but may emphasize their meaning in the context.
2. The student should develop a point that is not directly related to the research but can be improved.
3. The student should review the feedback and incorporate it into the final draft.
4. The student should submit the revised draft for review.
5. The student should consider the feedback and make necessary changes.

Once the feedback is given, the student should work on it and submit it for review.

A great example of the student's effort to the task.
A lesson of mastery of a technique. Congratulations!

YOU ROCK MARISELA!

By Hugo Sebastian Figueroa / September 5, 2014 3:44
Peer-observation 2

- SS seemed to be enthusiastic when working.
- SS participated a lot.
- SS are able to produce the language (to answer questions) when it is demanded.
- The teacher-in-charge is very organized and motivates SS to participate by asking questions and involving everybody in the activities.
- SS were able to (mostly) complete descriptions during the vocabulary and structures previously seen.
- I think this activity worked in the classroom as participated activity. I think that group work helps SS to speak aloud because they are not afraid of making mistakes.
- The repetition of the monologue helps SS to speak aloud and correct their pronunciation. This helped help SS to improve their oral production.
Peer-observation 3

ACTION PLAN
The use of themes @ Methods - Examples of how to develop questions and notes:

Suggestions and notes:

A

[Handwritten text and diagrams]
Appendix 6: Initial Questionnaire

Appendix 1: Questionnaire 1

The use of Rassias® method: micrologues to improve writing on a basic English course

El objetivo de este cuestionario es para ayudarte a conocer sobre la habilidad de escritura, si requiere de más práctica en el salón de clases. Además, me ayudará a realizar actividades sobre esta habilidad para tu aprendizaje. La información será completamente confidencial para uso exclusivo del profesor de inglés.

1. En el salón de clases, las actividades de escritura que te pide el libro las realizas (escoge uno o más según sea tu caso)
   - __ fácilmente
   - __ con dificultad
   - __ requieres de un ejemplo extra
   - __ no requieres de un ejemplo extra

2. Durante las actividades de escritura que el libro de texto te pide. Se te facilita o dificulta escribir un pequeño párrafo en inglés.
   - __ sí se me facilita
   - __ no se me facilita
   ¿Por qué?

3. Tu libro de texto “student’s book Traveler elementary American edition” tiene suficientes ejemplos específicos de las actividades de cómo realizar las actividades de escritura.
   - __ sí
   - __ no
   ¿Por qué?

4. Te gustaría que te dieran ejemplos de escritura relacionados con la actividad escrita que te pida el libro por parte del profesor antes de realizarlo.
   - __ sí
   - __ no
   ¿Por qué?

5. Si el profesor te diera un ejemplo de cómo realizar la actividad escrita, ¿cómo te gustaría que fuera? Escoge las opciones que sean necesarias.
   - __ Interactiva
   - __ dinámica
   - __ divertida
   - __ convencional
   - __ otro ______________________
   Escoge una o varias y explica ¿Por qué?

6. Te gustaría que el profesor te diera retroalimentación de tus ejercicios escritos.
   - __ sí
   - __ no
   ¿Por qué?

___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix 7: Questionnaire

The use of Rassias® method: micrologues to improve writing on a basic English course

1. ¿Té gusto la actividad de escritura que se realizó durante el curso de inglés? Específica porqué te gustó o no.

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

2. ¿Cómo te sentiste realizando la actividad de escritura? Escoge entre una o varias opciones.
   ___ Interesado  ___ No me interesó
   ___ Contento    ___ Aburrido
   Otro __________________________

3. ¿Qué opinas sobre el poner en práctica esta actividad de escritura dentro del salón de clases? Escoge entre una o varias opciones.
   ___ Es útil     ___ No es útil
   ___ Es práctico ___ No es práctico
   ___ Es atractivo ___ No es atractivo
   Otro __________________________

4. ¿Cómo te ayudó esta actividad en tu aprendizaje del idioma inglés para ejercitar la escritura?
   ___ Me ayuda a ordenar mis ideas  ___ Me ayudo a entender las instrucciones
   ___ Me dio seguridad al escribir  ___ Me sentí guiado al escribir
   ___ No me ayudo en nada        ___ Otro __________________________

5. Piensas que esta actividad cambio tú perspectiva sobre una nueva forma de practicar y aprender a escribir mejor en inglés. Explica

____________________________________________________________________________________
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¡Gracias por tu participación!