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OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM IN  
TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

**TITLE:**

**Analysis of writing skills in students with special needs at  
third year of Baccalaureate at Amarilis Fuentes  
Alcívar High school.**

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**CERTIFICATION**

We certify that this research Project was presented by Marjorie del Rocío Loor Aldás as partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Degree of Master in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

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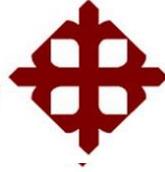
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Marianita who is not physically but all the time I have felt her presence next to me.

To my beloved family, Gustavo my dear father, Alex, Gustavo son, and Joseph whose words encouraged and allowed me to conclude this project and inspired me to reach my goal.

To my dear friends, because they were always by my side.



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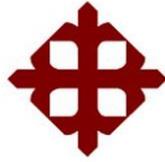
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## ABSTRACT

This research work was developed upon students of inclusion who have writing difficulties in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course at Unidad Educativa “Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar” (AFA, acronym in Spanish) high school. A case study methodology and a mixed-methods approach (MM) were conducted. In collecting the data, the researcher used a quantitative writing evaluation, writing instruction observation, and an interview. The study was focused on the analysis of the academic achievement in writing skills of two inclusion students from the third year of baccalaureate of AFA high school. Thus, the analysis of the data determined that the students with learning disabilities presented a higher frequency of errors in the wrong order, grammar, wrong words, spelling mistakes, and missing words. Results also proved that some teachers used traditional resources, like the textbooks which were slightly helpful and did not provide enough support for writing activities for LD students. The design of a proposal based on assistive technology is presented to foster the writing difficulties observed in the LD students through WhatsApp application.

**Keywords:** English Foreign Language (EFL), assistive technology, writing difficulties, learning disabilities, inclusion, WhatsApp

## INTRODUCTION

The English language has become in the most important way to communicate around the world and it is used as a communication tool for the application of technology and different areas that requires English learning. Thus, the English language as a lingua franca requires to be developed in the four skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For this reason, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education through different policies and regulations began curricular reforms in all the levels and sub-levels of education in the learning of English as a foreign language which is considered in the “Fortalecimiento del Inglés” Program. This program provides English teachers pedagogical resources, guidelines, rubrics, and microcurricular planning for skills with performance criteria. (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2018)

Nowadays, the EFL curriculum in Ecuador is aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standards. Furthermore, the EFL curriculum for “Bachillerato General Unificado” (BGU, acronym in Spanish) “has taken into consideration the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth of the learners, as well as their abilities” (p. 2). Thus, this sublevel (BGU) establishes that the learners will need strong reading and writing skills for their educational and professional activities after high school. (Ministry of Education, 2016). Additionally, the LOEI (Organic Law of Intercultural Education), in Art. 47 states that the students with special needs have guaranteed several rights that establish regulations to access to education. For this reason, educational establishments ought to receive all people with disabilities and they have to provide an appropriate physical and curricular adaptations to their needs. (Ministerio de Educación, 2011, p. 24)

This research work has evidenced that the students with learning disabilities have poor language skills. From the assessment scores it was noticed that the field of writing represents the major challenge in the learning process of the regular and inclusion students from the third year of Baccalaureate of AFA high school. Saddler (2012) confirms that “writing can be absolutely

difficult to teach and to learn. Although writing can be wonderfully creative, it is also a maddening, frustrating, highly complex activity that includes many components and processes.” (p. 3) The purpose of this study was the analysis of the academic achievement in writing skills of two students with learning disabilities from the third year of baccalaureate of AFA high school. Through the analysis of the data, the elements that build up the problem were determined. Finally, it was designed a proposal that follows a remediation plan for helping students with learning disabilities to improve their writing skills.

# Chapter 1

## The Problem

### 1.1. Statement of the problem

This research takes place at Unidad Educativa “Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar” (AFA) located in the south of Guayaquil. “Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar” is a public high school. At this institution six English teachers work during the morning shift, and 1380 students attend classes on the mentioned schedule.

There have been detected two learners that are in the third year of Baccalaureate who present difficulties in their EFL learning, specifically concerning the writing skill. They have a “moderate general learning disability” (GLD) which was confirmed by ‘Unidad de Apoyo a la Inclusión’ (UDAI, acronym in Spanish) and their level of proficiency in English is about CEFR A2. According to Cambridge University (2013), the CEFR A2 level corresponds for students who are basic users of the English language, they can communicate in English within a limited range of contexts. The researcher has detected some indicators that could help to describe the academic situation of these students. Low grades in EFL and poor development of oral written tasks suggested at the end of each lesson from the textbook. It has been noticed that the new content and the skill that is exercised in the classroom is assimilated, but in the next days, it is forgotten, especially, when evaluation time comes.

In the field of writing specifically, there are some problems observed. One of them is the lack of connection of ideas that they need to express. It is evidenced in the poor parallel construction; for example, mistakes in plural nouns, absence of adjectives, wrong tenses, capitalization, and punctuation among others. In composition, students present a lack of semantic usage according to the new vocabulary learned in each unit which makes it difficult to express their ideas.

The two learners received a unique and specific curricular adaptation grade three from the general education curriculum. Consequently, the curriculum was modified in its content, objectives, methodology, assessment and some

activities. Even though each student is unique and inclusive adaptation is specific to each learning situation, this group of students does not develop properly in the four skills of the language.

Fortunately, the students are socially included in the group of classmates. The main idea is that these students could feel identified with the rest of the group so as to keep a positive environment.

## **1.2. Justification**

Ecuadorian Education law includes several articles that warrant the rights of students with special needs. Thus, the article 47 of Organic Law of Intercultural Education states that “Educational establishments are obliged to receive all people with disabilities to create the appropriate physical, curricular and promotion supports, and adaptations to their needs; and to seek the training of teaching staff in the areas of methodology...” (Ministerio de Educación, 2011). Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school is a public institution that must follow the law in that inclusion statements, and this research work will be a reference for other public institutions.

This work is going to be useful for the students with special needs, English area teachers, and parents because it could help to give some light to the difficulties in the EFL learning that could be observed and studied by means of this work. It is also an attempt to collaborate with the pedagogical field by supporting with evidence and new strategies that may be necessary to implement for new inclusion cases.

The students with special needs will get benefited from this study. By describing the particular issues of each inclusion student, the author expects these students will receive better opportunities for real inclusion strategies in order to get good academic results.

This research may help teachers to notice the characteristics of the students with learning disabilities for understanding their condition, for describing their capabilities and for implementing techniques and methods that could facilitate the teaching process in the inclusive classroom. Additionally, with

this work, teachers would have a general idea of how to research on inclusion issues among their own students.

For Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school, it could be an interesting research situation that will develop maturity around the topic of inclusion. Since the law demands institutions to keep track of quality procedures, this research could be an important point to consider for future education projects.

### **1.3. Research Question**

- What are the most common characteristics that define the writing skills of students with special needs in the third year of Baccalaureate at Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar High School (AFA)?

### **1.4. Objectives**

#### **General Objective:**

To establish writing remediation strategies used by EFL teachers in order to develop sentence structure for inclusion students in third year of baccalaureate at Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school.

#### **Specific Objectives:**

- To describe the main structure errors observed in the students with special needs in the third year of Baccalaureate at Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar High School (AFA).
- To identify different issues involved in teaching writing by EFL teachers in the third year of Baccalaureate at AFA.
- To establish the teachers' remediation strategies given to inclusion students about structure errors found in classroom exercises.
- To determine the level of difficulty of the writing exercises from the textbooks used at AFA.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to the LOEI (Organic Law of Intercultural Education), Ecuadorian educational institutions would gather inclusion students together, article 47 guarantees several rights for inclusion students which establishes some regulations for solving issues. Firstly, the Ecuadorian educational law ensures these special educational needs to not become an impediment to access to education. Secondly, the government will guarantee the inclusion and integration of inclusive students in educational institutions eradicating the barriers to their learning. Thirdly, the educational system would promote detection and early attention to special learning problems. Furthermore, they would take measures to promote the recovery of inclusion students and avoid school exclusion. Finally, the educational institutions must receive all people with disabilities and they would create appropriate physical and curricular adaptations to their needs. Another important point is to seek specific methodology and evaluation training for teaching inclusion students. (Ministerio de Educación, 2011, p. 24)

#### **2.1 Definition of Inclusion**

The concept of inclusion has evolved over the past 40 years. In the 20th century, students with learning difficulties in regular classrooms had to attend special schools or classrooms. These schools were first established for children with hearing or vision impairments, and some years later, special schools opened for students with physical impairments. By the 1960s there was a tremendous protest against special schools, then, the solution was to transfer students with special needs back into the regular education system. Terms like *mainstreaming* and *integration* came into popularity in the United States of America, they were used to describe a transfer of students with special needs into regular classrooms. Over time the term *inclusion* replaced integration. (Ashman, 2014, p. 7)

Several authors have provided their definitions of inclusion. Thus, Allen & Schwartz (2001) state that inclusion “is not a set of strategies or a placement issue. Inclusion is about belonging to a community, or a neighborhood (p.7).

Another important definition confirms that inclusion as a value supports the right of all children regardless of their diverse abilities to interact in different sceneries. (Division for Early Childhood, 2000).

Stainback & Stainback (1990) considers several points to define inclusion. The first point is that inclusion is understood when all students belong to appropriate educational programs geared to their capabilities and needs. Another point that is mentioned by this author corresponds to any supporting and assistance that the inclusion students and/ or their teachers may need to be successful in the mainstream. Lastly, an inclusive school is considered the place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by her or his peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met.

Another relevant contribution to define inclusion indicates that it is a process that helps to overwhelm obstacles limiting the attendance, participation, and achievement of learners. (UNESCO, 2017). Inclusion on the other hand, “is now a governing standard in education through the world” (Ashman, 2014, p. 7) Thus, the definition of inclusion implies the complete acceptance of a student regardless of any difference, impairment, or disability in a regular class with adjustments being made to ensure that every student is fully involved in all class activities. Lastly, this author concludes that:

To become inclusion a reality, some requirements should be considered such as: an intellectual and emotional commitment from teachers, teachers’ aides, educational support staff and other professionals, school and system administrators, and lectures, and also an attitude of mind, that is, an acceptance of a responsibility to provide the most relevant, effective, and efficient learning opportunity for all students. (Ashman, 2014, p. 7)

### **Inclusion, standards, educational achievement**

Inclusion in education is the route that guides to the school systems attempting to address issues of inequality by widening access to regular education and active participation. This assumption confirms the importance and the commitment that the educational system has in

discovering new opportunities for students with disabilities for many years. The new trends among governments are how inclusion students could be meaningfully included in the national curricula and how to judge their contribution. Inclusive Schooling emphasizes the concept that all students should receive a conventional education without affecting the efficient education of the rest of the students. Thus, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, and England were the first countries that have designed a “Special Education Needs and Disability Code of Practice” which recognize that needs can be addressed in a variety of mainstream or special settings. Besides, the child’s parents and the learners can decide where they should be educated. (Florian, Black-Hawkins, & Rouse, 2016, pp. 10-11)

## **2.2 Learning Disabilities**

Learning disability (LD) is considered a neurological disorder that may result in difficulty with reading, writing, spelling, reasoning, recalling, organizing information; individuals with LD have average or above-average intelligence. (Smith, et al., 2015, p. 196). Even though other authors identify LD as an umbrella term for an extensive variety of learning problems, a learning disability is not recognized as a problem related to intelligence or insufficient motivation. In many cases, LD interferes with the development and use of language or communicative skills like speaking, reading, writing, and spelling. Additionally, there is a risk that LD could affect an individual’s self-esteem, education, socialization, and daily living activities. (Kemp, Smith, & Segal, 2018).

Lerner & Johns (2014) mentions the recent changes occurred in Special Education remarks that the term mental retardation was replaced to Intellectual Disabilities. “Many special educators and parents have long felt that the term mental retardation is stigmatizing and demeaning” (p. 5)

### **Common Learning Characteristics of Students with Disabilities**

According to Lerner & Johns (2014), children with disabilities show short attention span, poor concentration, difficulties with gross or fine motor coordination, problems in interpreting visual or auditory stimuli, lacks organizational skills that facilitate understanding how to do the task of

learning, problems in language development, problems in learning to decode words or written expression. All these conditions correspond to several characteristics that take part in the behavioral and common learning of the students with learning disabilities, they are:

- Disorders of attention
- Poor motor abilities
- Psychological processing differences
- Poor cognitive strategies for learning
- Oral language difficulties
- Writing difficulties
- Mathematics difficulties
- Poor social skills

### **Genetic contributions to reading and writing disabilities**

According to Thomson, & Raskind (2003) currently, it is possible to study and analyze a sizeable amount of evidence on the genetic contribution to the development of reading and writing disabilities. This evidence is the result of several studies of twins, both identical (monozygotic, MZ) and fraternal (dizygotic, DZ). Nevertheless, the environmental variables have an important role in the development of reading and writing disabilities. The investigation demonstrates that “the concordance rate of reading and writing disabilities among MZ twins is less than complete, suggesting the role of the existence of no genetic variables in the development of reading and writing disabilities.” (Thomson, & Raskind, 2003 as cited in Wong, Graham, Hoskyn, & Berman, 2011, p. 14)

That in addition to genetic variables, no genetic variables should figure in reading and writing difficulties make sense given the complex interactions between genetic background and environmental variables. Hence, it is unlikely that genetic information alone can serve as the definitive diagnostic test for reading and writing disabilities. Nevertheless, genetic information can inform educators of children at high risk for developing reading and writing disabilities so that these children can receive the timely early

intervention. (Thomson, & Raskind, 2003 as cited in Wong, Graham, Hoskyn, & Berman, 2011, pp. 14-15)

Many researchers have sought the best approach to identify the weakness and strengths of the children with LD, many efforts at identification have been attempted to measure their conditions.

If the score on an achievement test is significantly lower than the score obtained on an intelligence quotient (IQ) measure, then it is hypothesized that the learning difficulties are unexpected, because the IQ score is considered a measure of learning potential, and discrepancies occur only when the exclusion has been eliminated. (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2006, p. 27)

### **Communication of Children with learning disabilities**

Wong, Graham, Hoskyn, & Berman (2011) state that children with language-learning disabilities present multiple difficulties understanding the function of language, the communicative skills, social information in social settings, cognitive demands of managing linguistic, and appropriate use of the linguistic tools like phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. However, they could have varying proficiencies in any of these language functions. Reading is used as the most common way to measure their strengths or weakness.

This type of difficulties and variations in their language functions or missing skills may be considered as constraints within the scope of language tools. Besides, it is essential to consider their age and the context in which children develop their knowledge and express their ideas and feelings. (Wong, Graham, Hoskyn, & Berman, 2011)

Regarding this characteristic about the learners' age, Lerner & Johns (2014) mention that frequently young children are more likely to be hyperactive than adolescents:

Deficits are manifested in different ways at different age levels. An underlying language disorder appears as a delayed speech problem in the preschooler, as a reading disorder in the elementary pupil, and as a writing disorder in the high school student. (p. 16)

The elementary and high school level represents a real challenge for many children with learning disabilities when they begin to fail to acquire academic skills. Reading, writing, mathematics and other school subjects cause constraints in the elementary pupil, while adolescents are sensitive and suffer emotional, social and self-concept problems. Nevertheless, in the adult years, it is possible to reduce their learning disabilities. (Lerner & Johns, 2014)

### **Types of Learning Disabilities**

According to Mapou (2008), the classification of learning disabilities can be applied to children and adults due to the same types of disorders are seen in both. Thus, Fletcher et al. (2007) identified six subgroups of learning disabilities; however, the authors remark that reading disabilities can be broken into three important groups that show a narrower vision of learning disabilities. Thus, if these disorders do not produce academic problems they are not considered learning disabilities. These subgroups are:

- Reading disability
- Word recognition (dyslexia)
- Reading Fluency
- Comprehension
- Mathematics disability (computations and/or problem-solving)

### **2.3 Measurement of Intelligence**

Foreman (2009) declares that for many years, educational researchers and psychologists have investigated how to measure intelligence. They seek for items on a scale that most children would be to learn through experience, specifically taught, and then they organized the items into age levels. Concepts like *mental age* (MA) and *intelligence quotient* (IQ) are important to understand the way of stating the relationship between a person's chronological age and their mental age. Thus, an adult with an intellectual disability could have the mental age of 7 years old due to his low score. Nevertheless, there are other popular individual intelligence tests, they have to be administered by trained psychologists. Wechsler Intelligence Scale for

Children (WISC) and the Binet test are used in children with intellectual disability. (Foreman, 2009, pp. 4-5)

According to Lerner & Johns (2014), “When levels of intellectual disabilities were based on IQ scores, they were defined with the terms mild, moderate, severe, or profound. Currently, four levels of intellectual disabilities are based on the level of support that students need.” (p.7). Gargiulo & Bouck (2017) confirm this classification, their investigation concludes that the long-standing and popular model outline among psychologists and educational researchers is the IQ test. “According to this system, deficits in intellectual functioning and related impairments in adaptive behavior result in individuals being classified into one of four levels of intellectual disability- mild, moderate, severe, or profound-with *mild* representing the highest level of performance.” (p.22). Gargiulo & Bouck (2017) present a classification of intellectual disability according to measured intelligence that represents the IQ ranges typically used in these studies.

**Classification of Intellectual Disability according to Measures Intelligence**

CLASSIFICATION LEVEL	MEASURED IQ	SD BELOW MEAN
Mild intellectual disability	55-70	2 to 3
Moderate intellectual disability	44-55	3 to 4
Severe intellectual disability	25-40	4 to 5
Profound intellectual disability	Under 25	More than 5

NOTE: IQ scores are approximate; SD standard deviation

Table 1 Classification of Intellectual Disability according to Measures Intelligence 1 Source, Gargiulo & Bouck, 2017, p. 22.

**Teaching method as a source of difficulty**

According to Westwood (2008), not all teaching methods are appropriate or equally effective for children with disabilities. It is essential that inclusive teachers seek the best way to engage all learners in useful learning activities supporting them with effective feedback in order to achieve the learning goals. The term teaching method figures up the way in which the

teacher introduces new topics to the learners. Teaching methods are considered as tending towards either 'teacher-directedness' or 'student-centeredness'. It is important that teachers consider the most appropriate methods for each subject area in the school curriculum. Considering the subject, the age, students need, resources, and the ability level of the learners.

Nevertheless, teaching approaches for children with intellectual disabilities is another important consideration that inclusive teacher has to review in their curriculum planning. Westwood 2008 mentions that "teaching and learning situation for children with disability are *really-based-learning* by doing'. To acquire new knowledge and skills, these children need to experience things actively at first hand" (p. 28). Number skill can be developed through real situations involving computer games, instructional materials, shopping, measuring, grouping, and so on. In the case of reading, teachers can use a variety of resources like instruction cards, recipes, brochures, comics, games, and flashcards.

The same author continues by explained that direct teaching is also important for children with intellectual disability. With direct instruction, enjoyable and entertaining activities, and an active style of teaching employed in their lessons, it is possible to get successful responses from the learners. Other basic principles to consider when working with children with intellectual disability include the following:

- Do not sell the children short by expecting too little from them.
- Provide frequent guidance and prompts to enable a child to manage the steps in a new learning task.
- Gradually reduce the amount of guidance so that the child becomes more independent.
- Frequently assess the learning that has taken against the child's objectives in the curriculum. (IEP). (Westwood, 2008, pp. 28-29)

#### **2.4 Specific Learning Disabilities**

Approximately two or three children in every 100 suffer specific learning disability (SpLD). This is a term applied by psychologists to describe

learning difficulties cannot be traced back to any lack of intelligence, problems with vision or hearing, or insufficient teaching. The specialists indicate us that SpLD can impair the ability to learn to read (dyslexia), to spell (dysorthographia), to write (dysgraphia), to perform mathematical calculations (dyscalculia), or to recall words, symbols, and names quickly from memory (dysnomia). The most recognized learning disability is dyslexia. (Westwood, 2008, p. 17)

### **A. Dyslexia**

According to Brunswick (2012), the term dyslexia denotes an impairment in the ability to read and spell, it is not only caused by low intelligence or lack of educational opportunity. Another definition of dyslexia is given by Westwood (2008) who indicates that it is a specific learning disability that causes difficulties in reading fluency, language-based processing, reading comprehension, recalling words from memory, analyzing spoken words into separate sounds, making adequate use of the meaning of a sentence, writing, learning phonics, spelling, inefficient learning strategies, and weakness in understanding what has been read.

The most popular type of dyslexia known is acquired dyslexia and developmental dyslexia. Acquired dyslexia is a reading impairment resulting from brain injury. A sub-classification of acquired dyslexia comprises deep dyslexia, surface dyslexia, and phonological dyslexia. Developmental dyslexia, on the other hand, is understood as an impairment in the development of skilled reading and spelling. These difficulties appeared accompanied by other disorders caused by problems with perceiving and manipulating the sounds of language and written association of letters or graphemes, which are characterized by problems in converting written letters into their corresponding sounds. The most common characteristics of these disorders might include:

- impaired motor skills, balance, and coordination (dyspraxia/developmental coordination disorder - DCD);
- poor hand-eye coordination, slow and messy handwriting, difficulty copying written text, and poor fine motor control of the hands

(dysgraphia, although these symptoms might also reflect the fine motor difficulties of dyspraxia);

- poor concentration, inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity  
(attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder - ADHD);
- difficulty with counting, performing mental arithmetic, understanding and applying mathematical concepts (dyscalculia) (Brunswick, 2012)

## **B. Dysgraphia**

According to Bryce (2014), “English is one of the world’s most complex languages to learn how to read and write. The complexity of a language’s orthography is directly linked to how difficult it is to read that language.” (p. 8). This author mentions that English is a language with a deep orthographic structure, considering the complexity of the spelling and grammar rules that includes punctuation, hyphenation, word breaks, and capitalization. In contrast with languages like Spanish and Finnish which are spelled how they sound, making them easier to learn to write or read. English has spelling patterns at several different levels like letter-sound correspondences, syllables, and morphemes. Adding that almost every letter in English has different sounds. Besides, the writer suggests that current research states that dysgraphia is caused by difficulties with orthographic coding in working with memory.

Dysgraphia is considered a learning disability that affects writing ability, fine motor skills, and information processing skills that can manifest in people of different ages. The most common classification is dyslexic dysgraphia, motor dysgraphia, and spatial dysgraphia. Dyslexic dysgraphia is characterized by unplanned or spontaneous writing tasks which include illegible handwriting and poor spelling. In contrast, motor dysgraphia involves difficulties with the muscle capabilities of children like fine motor skills, muscle tone, motor clumsiness, and so on. Lastly, the learners that do not understand spacing and struggle to keep writing on lines and spacing between words experience spatial dysgraphia. (Brant, 2014)

Reynolds & Fletcher-Janzen (2007) mention that dysgraphia and other learning disorders seldom appeared with other coordination and learning

problems like dyslexia, dyscalculia, and developmental coordination disorders. Thus, the individual's writing problem must interfere with learning. Several characteristics of dysgraphia might include (Reynolds & Fletcher-Janzen, 2007):

- Generally illegible writing despite appropriate attention and time were given to the task
- Mix of print and cursive and upper and lower case and changes in shapes, size, and slant
- Failure to attend to writing details, unfinished words and letters, and omitted words
- Irregular spacing between words and letters
- Standard lines and margins not adhered to
- Unusual grip on writing tool and unusual wrist/body/paper position
- Excessive erasures
- Self-talking while writing or close observation of the writing hand
- Slow or labored writing and copying even if neat and legible

Bryce (2014) provides other characteristics of dysgraphia that consider the type of dysgraphia and the age of the learners. The students might present some or all of the following characteristics:

#### **Ages 4-6**

- Cramped or unusual pencil grip
- Problems with learning the alphabet, including the inability to learn the letters in their name
- A dislike of writing and/or drawing
- Avoidance or poor performance of fine motor skills, like drawing or holding a pencil, painting or cutting with scissors
- Frustration with drawing or writing
- Inability to compose their own words (copying may be okay)

#### **Ages 7-12**

- Talking to oneself when writing
- Watching their hand when writing
- Cramped or unusual pencil grip
- Strange paper position or body/wrist position
- Unfinished words or omitted words
- Poor spelling
- Illegible handwriting
- Poor spacing between words

- Mixing of upper case and lower case letters
- Getting tired easily of writing
- Slow, labored writing or copying (even if the writing is legible)

### **Teens and Adults**

- Watching their hand when writing
  - Talking to oneself when writing
  - Cramped or unusual pencil grip
  - Strange paper position or body/wrist position
  - Mixing print and cursive writing
  - Poor organization of writing ideas
  - Difficulty with main ideas and supporting sentences
  - Avoiding writing
  - Noticeable gap between speech and written work
  - Taking a long time to complete written word assignments
  - Problems with spelling and grammar
  - Slow, labored writing or copying (even if the writing is legible)
- (Bryce, 2014, p. 7)

### **Brain Mechanism and Correlates of Dysgraphia**

Amstrong & Morrow (2010) talk in their studies about how brain mechanisms and brain-imaging have revealed that writing development is essential to improve the skills of spelling, composition, and handwriting. “Their approach to studying language is based on the assumption that language is composed of four functional systems in the brain, i.e., language by ear (aural), language by mouth (oral), language by eye (reading), and language by hand (writing)” (p. 245). Thus, they have confirmed that the language by eye and language by hand systems share processes but differ in the development of each language skills. Until today’s date, our understanding of brain regions involved in writing is based on lesion studies of learners with acquired lexical agraphia. Lexical agraphia is understood as greater difficulty in spelling irregular words, while phonological agraphia is a greater difficulty in spelling unfamiliar words.

### **Diagnosis of dysgraphia**

The occupational therapist is the qualified clinician who can diagnose dysgraphia through a test that includes writing sentences and paragraphs and copying age-appropriate writing. Furthermore, the occupational

therapist look at how the examinees write, their posture, position, pencil grip, fatigue, cramping, tremor of the writing hand, hand-eye coordination, movement's wrists, tapping fingers, and their fine motor. (Bryce, 2014)

## **2.5 Writing**

Saddler (2012) states that writing is the most difficult skill for learning and teaching. Even though writing allows expressing ideas, thoughts, reflections, and feelings in a wonderful way, it can also be a frustrating challenge for the regular learners; much more difficult it would be for students with a learning disability. According to Spencer (2015) "Writing is, indeed, a big deal for many kids, especially for those with learning challenges and disabilities. Writing involves a slew of foundational skills (spelling, vocabulary, fine motors skills, and sequencing, to name a few)" (p. 6)

Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) coincide with Spencer's assumption, they indicate that the multiple skills involved with writing vary, extending from the production of legible handwriting to the production of elaborated discourses. Learners have difficulty with handwriting, spelling, expressing, organizing ideas, taking notes, and paraphrasing. They do not have enough time to remember letter formation or spelling to write in a clear and organized way. Children with writing difficulties acquire *counterproductive* coping strategies, like writing only words they know how to spell avoiding difficult expressions or complex ideas. The authors are convinced about the importance that the educators become effective teachers who enhance their sensitivity to the diverse students' needs, and understand the components of written language and manage the assessing difficulties, selecting appropriate intervention, and monitoring the students' progress. (Mather, Wendling, & Roberts, 2009)

### **On the nature of writing**

Grabe & Kaplan (2014) declares that recent developments in writing theory and instruction include investigations on writing in English as the first language (L1) and writing in a second language (L2). Concerning to L2, the cognitive, social, educational, and cultural context affect writing

approaches. Several issues need to be considered as part of the writing theory and practice from an applied linguistic perspective, L2 instruction may:

- Place writing demands on EFL students, and for some of them, English may not be perceived as a very important subject
- Place distinct writing demands on English for Special Purposes (ESP) students, or on English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) students – demands which may be very different from those on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students planning to enter English medium universities.
- Include writing demands on adult literacy and immigrant survival English students – both groups experiencing very different demands from those which occur in academic contexts
- Include academic writing demands in which a sophisticated level of writing is not a critical concern. (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014, p. 3)

These authors declare that these varieties represent the ability to control the written language. Learners write for different reasons and diverse tasks like letters, diaries, messages, shopping lists, budgets, and so on. “These sorts depending on the context, task, audience, may be classified functionally in many ways including writing, to communicate, to call to action, to remember, to satisfy requirements, or to create, either in terms of recombining existing information” (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014, p. 3)

### **Components of written language**

Saddler (2012) exposes the difficulty to represent and transmit the students’ thoughts effectively, writers have the option to develop this skill to proceed through several stages to define what they want to say. “The process of writing places many demands on every writer, as planning, drafting, and revising all require considerable cognitive effort. However, of all these writing components and processes, creating sentences may be the most complex” (p. 6).

Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) indicate that some learners have diverse difficulties developing writing skills, especially children who have language impairments, learning disabilities or English second language (ESL) students. This group of students gets minimal development in writing across the grades and each academic year, they get farther behind their peers. The diverse developmental levels of writing skills that appear in a classroom represent a big challenge for teachers who do not know how to deal with this constraint. Generally, students who present problems with spelling, formulating their ideas into comprehensible messages requires a basic understanding of the components of writing like handwriting, spelling, usage, vocabulary, and text structure.

### Components of Writing Skills

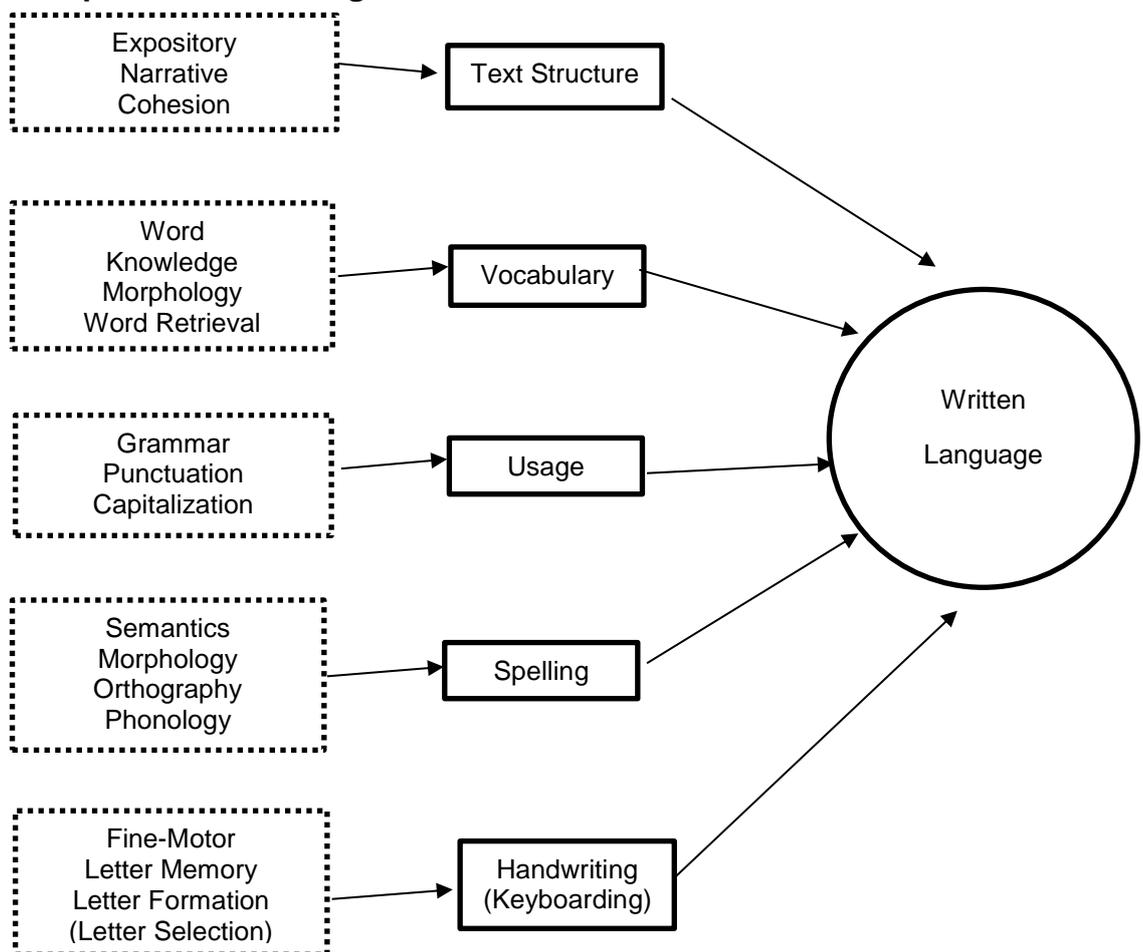


Figure 1 Components of writing skills Source, Mather, Wendling, & Roberts, 2009, p. 8

### Handwriting

Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) declare in their study that handwriting is a fine-motor skill that allows learners to express their thoughts and

represent their own style and graphomotor development. Furthermore, the difficulty in developing legible handwriting is associated with the coordination of the motor movements, the position of writing hand, fluency, and speed used to write and form letters. In other words, legible handwriting represents the clarity and accuracy of the letters form, while fluency refers to the ease and quickness of formation, both are required to get effective handwriting.

These authors confirm that legible handwriting includes six interrelated characteristics, these are:

- Letter formation, or the composition of the stroke
- Size and proportion, or the size between uppercase and lowercase letters
- Spacing, or the amount of spacing between letters and words
- Slant, or the consistency in direction of the writing
- Alignment, or uniformity of size and consistency on the writing line
- Line quality, or the steadiness and thickness of the line (Barbe, Wasylyk, Hackney & Braun, 1984 as cited in Mather, Wendling, & Roberts, 2009, p. 10)

Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) suggest the way to evaluate the previous characteristics could be by analyzing students' written work through a composition, dictation of statements, and copying texts or paragraphs. "Students who have the most severe problems with handwriting may be diagnosed as having dysgraphia, or what is referred to as a disturbance in visual-motor integration" (p. 10). To sum, the authors declare that writers with poor handwriting as a result of problems with spelling, punctuation, and ideation present serious problems to compose some tasks of writing. Luckily, learners can take advantage of technology using electronic devices and laptop computers to write their tasks.

## **Spelling**

Fulford (2017) states that spelling is the ability to decipher and make sense to English language, it is the key to being able to develop effectively the communicative skills like reading quickly and completely understand what

is written. Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) recognize that spelling is much more difficult than reading due to the learners have to recall, reproduce, and recognize the whole word or phrase correctly in order to get an accurate spelling. They identify morphology, semantics, orthography, and phonology as the components of spelling. Thus, each component represent a complex language system, the study of the sounds and letters, exception words, phonemes, specific letter and combination, morphemes, basic word structure, form of plurals, show possession, or change verbs to different tenses, affixes, suffixes, prefixes, word choice, homophones, and so on cause frustration when students with learning disabilities are not as proficient as their peers.

Fulford (2017) suggests that the best way to teach English spelling is to reinforce the spelling rules by as many practices as necessary and to make sure that students break words down into syllables and create a word list adjusted to the age and skills of the learners.

### **Usage**

Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) point that the best way to communicate in writing efficiently, learners have to master rules of capitalization, punctuation, and syntax. On the other hand, they require a knowledge of language structure. However, struggling writers present serious problems applying capitalization and punctuation rules.

Some common usage problems involve pronouns use, subject-verb agreement, and consistency of verb tense. Students who struggle with writing tend to write short sentences that lack complexity and variety. Also, they tend to write run-on sentences and sentences with too many clauses that are joined using words like and, but, or, then. They may have trouble identifying where the main sentence ends and clause begins. (p. 20)

### **Vocabulary**

Quigley (2018) states that normally, students get good progress with reading up until about five years, however, when they face reading that includes more challenging texts, they begin to experiment difficulty to

understand a complex text, narrative stories in history, science and so on. “They have the lived experience of many words proving unfamiliar as they travail the challenges of the school day. Struggling daily with reading difficult texts and not understanding words is the harsh reality for many children in the classrooms.” (p. 11)

Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) mention that selecting words is another critical aspect of effective writing for students with learning disabilities and language impairments, their written and oral production is affected because they present a limited vocabulary. “However, a discrepancy often exists between their oral and written vocabularies, with their oral vocabulary being far superior to the vocabulary words that they use when writing” (p. 21).

According to Quigley (2018), there are two types of vocabulary, *receptive vocabulary* and *expressive vocabulary*. *Receptive vocabulary* comprises the words that learners hear and read while *expressive vocabulary* refers to the words that they say and write. Then reading vocabulary is typically more complex than the expressive vocabulary. Nevertheless, Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) mention that students who have problems their vocabulary might present difficulty with word retrieval ability, knowledge of morphology, or breadth and depth of word knowledge. The first difficulty involves the capacity to remember the words stored in memory. The second difficulty makes reference towards grammar rules to apply while the learner composes or write. Lastly, breadth and depth of word knowledge include word knowledge and semantic. “Children with limited word knowledge often have difficulty expressing themselves because they have trouble selecting the right words to use” (p. 23). A limited vocabulary could persist into adulthood. Frequently, the words that sound the same but have different spellings comprise a big challenge for students with learning disabilities and regular learners. The best way to improve these constraints could be to provide some strategies like selecting vocabulary, generalizing words meaning across contexts, and forming associations among words that allow learners increase their breadth and depth of word knowledge. (Mather, Wendling, & Roberts, 2009)

In contrast, Quigley (2018) provides the following tips to develop the vocabulary in the classrooms:

- Teach academic vocabulary explicitly and clearly, with coherent planning throughout the curriculum.
- Foster structured reading opportunities in a model that supports students with vocabulary deficits.
- Promote and scaffold high-quality academic talk in the classroom.
- Promote and scaffold high quality in academic writing in the classroom.
- Teach students independent word-learning strategies. (Quigley, 2018, p. 21)

### **Text Structure**

Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) declare that the writer's ability to organize and structure texts and how they master the knowledge of narrative and expository writing are the main requirement to produce effective writing texts. Cohesion and coherence comprise the connection, logical sequencing ideas, and text organization. "Cohesion involves the specific ways sentences are integrated and linked together and the transition within and between sentences. Coherence refers to the overall form and organization of the ideas in a text" (p. 23). Narrative, on the other hand, is the ability to express the thoughts, ideas, dreams, and feelings of the students in a creative story. Nevertheless, learners need to follow a set of rules associated with narrative structures, in other words, *story schema*. Story schema involves mental representation and basic story grammar. Setting or place, description of the main characters, beginning, reaction, outcome, and ending are the basic elements in a story grammar. (Mather, Wendling, & Roberts, 2009)

### **Memory**

Spencer (2015) states that memory is an essential ability to develop writing skills. However, this ability represents an area of deficit for many students with special needs. For this reason, it is important that teachers apply strategies to improve the level of memory for this group of students. This

author declares that exists three principal categories to organize memory: short-term memory, working memory, and long-term memory.

According to Spencer (2015), short-term memory is the type of memory used for completing a task, finished the activity the information disappears. “Short-term memory is generally believed to affect tasks such as following direction, answering questions, or copying from the blackboard” (p. 8).

Spencer (2015), mentions that working memory is where the learners store and maneuver information as they are using it. They make connections between letters, order letters, recall the rules of mechanics, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphs formation, and apply grammatical and syntactic elements. Lastly, long-term memory refers the writer trying to remember facts, specific vocabulary words, meanings that describe details related to the subject about which someone is writing.

### **Second language student needs and writing instruction**

Grabe & Kaplan (2014) consider that is essential to take into account the extensive diversity among L2 students. One of these distinctions is focused toward English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Thus, EFL courses are designed for students who need to learn to write English and live in countries where English is not the official language. ESL courses, on the other hand, are designed for native students, in other words, people who have English as their official language. “The various L2 groups will differ markedly in terms of the need for writing abilities. Students in EFL contexts will need English writing skills ranging from simple paragraph writing and summary skills to the ability to write essays.” (p. 25). In contrast, students in ESL contexts will need English writing skills the range of writing needs vary “for the most part, be more academically oriented. Survival literacy and low-level occupational needs for writing are typically handled not by writing specialists but basic adult teachers, and they may not stress writing as composing” (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014, p. 25)

## **Prevention and Intervention in writing**

According to Graham, Harris, & Larsen (2001), many children with writing difficulties receive inadequate or incomplete writing instruction. They have few opportunities to accurate their writing skills. This issue is caused because it is assumed that writing can be mastered applying improvised methods of learning to like capitalizing or providing mini-lessons. Graham, Harris, & Larsen (2001) propose that the solution could be (a) emphasize both prevention and intervention; (b) respond to the specific needs of each student; (c) keep an appropriate balance between meaning, process, and form; and (d) employ both formal and informal methods. In this context, it is pertinent to have a coherent, coordinated vision to incorporate six principles that facilitate the writing problems of students with learning disabilities:

1. Provide effective writing instruction
2. Tailor writing instruction to meet the individual needs of children who experience difficulty in learning to write
3. Intervene early, providing a coherent and sustained effort to improve the writing skills of children who experience difficulties
4. Expect that each child will learn to write
5. Identify and address academic and nonacademic roadblocks to writing and school success
6. Employ technological tools that improve writing performance. (Graham, Harris, & Larsen, 2001, p. 76)

## **Features of effective writing instruction**

Graham, Harris, & Larsen (2001) consider that effective writing instruction (EWI) is a crucial tactic in preventing writing difficulties, it must start since initial education and continues throughout their academic preparation. "Effective writing instruction can also help to ameliorate the severity of writing difficulties experienced by other children whose primary problems are not instructional, such as children with LD" (p. 76). The authors conclude, that these six principles could help avoid and alleviate the writing difficulties of LD students however, it is necessary the participation of the educational community. (p. 82)

## **2.6 Take advantage of technological tools for writing**

Technology is nowadays the most important way to get information to communicate and solve different problems. For Graham, Harris, & Larsen (2001) audiovisuals and technological or electronic devices represent an essential tool for minimizing the writing difficulties of children with language learning disabilities. It can make the process of writing easier for them.

### **Pedagogical affordances**

This section presents the most recent studies concerning the writing teaching and pedagogical affordances immersed in this study. One of the most important theories of learning that have influenced language learning is Constructivism. The theory that is grounded by Piaget, Dewey, Bruner, and Vygotsky.

Constructivism focuses on the assumption that “knowledge is constructed by learners as they attempt to make sense of their experiences.” (Richardson, 2005, p. 1). This theory is confirmed by Richards & Rodgers (2014), who considered that the constructivist learning theory holds that knowledge is socially constructed, rather than received or discovered. They corroborate that constructivist learners “create meaning,” “learn by doing” and collaboratively in mixed groups on common projects” (p. 141). Thus, one of the approaches that have proved to be useful is Communicative Language Teaching. It has been the base to the implementation of several other approaches like Cooperative Language Learning, Task-based Language Teaching, Content-based Instruction, and CLIL. (p. 329)

## **2.7 Evidence-Based Practice and Writing Instruction**

For many years, researchers have investigated how to find the effectiveness of practices for teaching and improving students’ writing. Graham, Harris, & Chambers (2016) claim that the results of the Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) in the field of teaching writing could improve the writing skills. EBP “involves using evidence to make decisions about assessment, instruction, evaluation, and management.” It is essential that teachers know about how to teach writing and firstly, they need to familiarize with their evidence-based

practices in writing. Every single writing activity needs to be analyzed in order to identify the most appropriate remediation strategy.

### **Writing Instructional Practices of Effective Teachers**

Graham, Harris, & Chambers (2016) provides ten themes patterns of practice got in their research. Later, they examined the writing practices employed by exceptional literacy teachers. (Graham, Harris, & Chambers, 2016, p. Table 14.4 Writing Instructional Practices of Effective Teachers)

These ten themes or recurring patterns of practice were applied in the qualitative studies of exceptional literacy teachers in the research carried out by Graham, Harris, & Chambers (2016) who examined the writing practices employed it.

1. Provide time dedicated to writing and writing instruction, with writing occurring across the curriculum.
2. Involve students in various forms of writing over time.
3. Treat writing as a process, where students plan, draft, revise, edit, and share their work.
4. Keep students engaged and on-task by involving them in thoughtful activities.
5. Teach to the whole class, in small groups, and with individual students; this includes teaching students how to plan, draft, and revise as well as teaching more basic writing skills.
6. Model, explain, and provide guided assistance when teaching.
7. Provide just enough support so that students can make progress or carry out writing tasks and processes, but encourage students to act in a self-regulated fashion, doing as much as they can on their own.
8. Be enthusiastic about writing and create a positive environment in which students are constantly encouraged to try hard, believe that the skills and strategies they are learning will permit them to write well, and attribute success to effort and the tactics they are learning.
9. Set high expectations for their students, encouraging them to surpass their previous efforts or accomplishments.
10. Adapt writing assignments and instructions to better meet the needs of individual students.

## 2.8 Understanding the Writing Process

Graham, et al. (2012) state that the components of the writing process include planning, drafting, sharing, evaluating, revising, and editing. They mention as an additional component, publishing, which could be included to share a final product.

These authors describe each phase of the writing process considering that writing is not a linear process. Thus, they indicate that **planning** often involves developing goals, prior knowledge, gathering information from reading, discussion with others, generating ideas, and organizing ideas for writing based on the purpose of the text. **Drafting**, on the other hand, focuses on selecting words and phrases. Skills such as spelling, handwriting, capitalization, and punctuation need to be revised. In this phase, students **sharing**, discussing and **evaluating** their ideas or drafts with their peers or with teachers in order to get feedback and improve their writing. While **editing** involves making changes that allow their writing readable. The final phase is **publishing** that occurs at the end of the written process.

### Strategies for the writing process

Graham, et al. (2012) suggest that students need to acquire specific strategies for each component of the writing process. They provide ten examples of writing strategies and the target group that can be used to support students according to their level.

One important suggestion is that students need to learn how to use and select the appropriate strategy for each phase of the writing process. This can be modified according to their goal or necessity. “Students should evaluate their success in applying the strategy to the new situation and should consider how they can make the strategy work better” (p. 19)

The following chart shows the ten writing strategies and the target group suggested by the authors:

Strategies for the writing process			
Component of the Writing Process	Writing Strategy	How students can use the strategy	Grade/Range
Planning	POW	Pick ideas, Organize their notes, Write and say more	1-6
	Ordering ideas / outlining	Brainstorm / generate ideas for their paper.	1-2
Drafting	Imitation	Select a sentence, paragraph, or text excerpt and imitate the author's form	3-6
	Sentence generation	Try out sentences orally before writing them on paper. Try multiple sentences and choose the best one. Practice writing good topic sentences.	1-6
Sharing	Peer sharing	In pairs, listen and read along as the author read aloud. Share feedback with their writing partner	3-6
	Author's Chair	Sit in a special chair in front of peers and read their writing	2-6
Evaluating	Self-evaluating	Reread and ask these questions: Are the ideas clear? Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end? Does the writing connect with the reader?	K-6
	Self-monitoring	Self-assess and ask these questions, either out loud or internally: Did I meet the goals I developed for my writing?	2-6
Revising and editing	Peer evising	Place a question mark (?) by anything they do not understand in their writing partner's paper. Place a caret, proofreading symbol (^) anywhere it would be useful to have the author include more information	3-6
	COPS (editing)	Ask the COPS editing questions: Did I Capitalize the first word in sentences and proper names? How is the Overall appearance of my paper? Did I use commas and end-of-sentence Punctuation? Did I Spell each word correctly?	2-6

Table 2 Strategies for the writing process. Adapted from the work of Graham, et al. (2012)

The previous chart was designed for native learners of the English language. However, it was found useful writing strategies which can be used for EFL students in order to improve the writing skills.

## 2.9 Assessment and the Traits of Good Writing

Assessment and accountability are some of the most important phases of the learning-teaching process. According to Sundem (2006), assessment is not grading; the assessment's goal is to try to identify the students' areas of strength and weakness for use in assessment-driven or differentiated instruction.

If, for example, a student demonstrates a significant deficiency in one aspect of writing, the teachers may not need to assign this deficiency a specific number. Rather, they would be content in assessing this student's area of instructional need, which you will then target with directed lessons. In most classrooms, grading remains a tried and true method for communicating overall performance, but you will need to be more specific for the purposes of instruction. (p. 68)

Thus, according to the author the Traits of Good Writing is basically a rubric for assessing writing. Brookhart (2013) defines a rubric as “a coherent set of criteria for students’ work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria.” Stevens & Levi (2013) conclude that a “rubric is a scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment.” A good rubric needs to be composed of four basic segments. These are the assignment, levels of achievement, knowledge involved in the assignment, and descriptions of what constitutes each level of performance or specific feedback.

## **2.10 Assignment-Specific Rubrics**

Sundem (2006) exposes that there are many strategies for designing individualized rubrics, however, the most important thing is that the rubric to match the purpose of our assignment as specifically as possible. Students need to have a clear picture of how they will be assessed. For longer assignments, it is essential to send the rubric home with students to be signed by parents. Another important point is that the rubric to keep track of the grade and areas which individual students need additional work like short descriptions or written comments.

Stevens & Levi (2013) suggest teachers useful multimedia resources to design rubrics. These resources allow teachers to revise rubrics created by other teachers and experts that contain similar assignments which they can reuse them. The web pages that provide this facility are [styluspub.com](http://styluspub.com), [edtechteacher.org](http://edtechteacher.org), and [rubistar.4teachers.org](http://rubistar.4teachers.org).

Reich & Daccord (2015) explain that these resources provide varied templates to apply rubrics for writing, teachers can get help from the tutorial to edit and create their own rubrics.

## **What teachers should know about writing instruction?**

DeVries (2017) in his work *Literacy Assessment and Intervention for classroom teachers*, suggests that writing instruction has to begin in pre-school. The author claims that teachers have to focus on getting children on how to make the letters. Later, teachers can write and invite students to write what they like. Students need to practice writing every day. Thus, primary and secondary school students can develop advanced writing skills. Sweeny (2017) as cited in DeVries (2017, p. 286) compiled the following list of advanced writing skills:

1. Critical thinking skills to solve problems and express them in written communication.
2. Lead and influence the audience by collaborating across networks.
3. Adapt to many different types of writing tasks and be agile in all types of writing.
4. Communicate effectively by being concise and using language that “hooks” the reader.
5. Access and analyze information from a wide number of sources and then synthesize the information.
6. Use their curiosity and imagination to engage the intended audience.

One interesting strategy is that teachers need to build on the type of writing. For instance, to invite students to enter writing contests. “Contests get students to write for a distant audience so students learn to be very specific in word choice and explicit with information and opinions” (p. 287).

## **Trait-Based Assessment**

Sundem (2006) states that firstly, teachers need to be clear how, what, why, and when to evaluate writing and select an assessment system to identify the purpose of the instruction. Then the author defines trait-based assessment as a system that provides information that can best assist instruction because each component in a writing is evaluated separately. Consequently, this assessment strategy comprises specific rubrics for assessing writing.

In this method, teachers separate writing into its components of Voice, Organization, Sentence Fluency, Ideas, Word Choice, Convention, and sometimes Presentation, scoring each trait from 1 to 5. The trait-based assessment allows an objective measure of writing while helping teachers to pinpoint the areas where each student could improve. In addition, by scoring each trait independently of the others, teachers may also give students positive feedback on their areas of strength. (Sundem, 2006, p. 68)

### **2.11 Inclusion Strategies for writing**

According to Karten (2017), LD students show different characteristics, whereby, it is essential to drive individualized interventions. This includes informal phonics inventories as well as formal evaluations which determine skills through rapid naming of letters and sounds, identification of real and nonsense words, activities around vocabulary, phonemic segmentation, spelling, verbal fluency, rhyming, and passage interpretation.

Early literacy skills include-but are not limited to knowing the sounds and names of letters, sequencing letters and numbers, and speaking in simple sentences. Levels of performance are screened with the oral reading test, checklists, parents interviews, nonverbal reasoning assessments, and written assessments. Based on the Orton-Gillingham approach which propagates multisensory approaches for reading, spelling, and writing difficulties. Increased auditory, visual, and kinesthetic-tactile approaches are employed to strengthen reading fluency and comprehension skills to better encode, decode, write, read, decipher and understand written language. For example, students use their fingers to indicate or tap out the individual sounds of letters in words, which adds a tactile component. Other tactile approaches include forming and writing letters with clay, with shaving cream, on sandpaper, and in salt trays. Increased visuals allow students to concretize letter sounds. (Karten, 2017, pp. Chapter 1, Inclusion Strategies)

In general, the author concludes that students with writing difficulties present lower levels of reading comprehension. Thus, the intervention strategies selected for this difficulty need to improve both skills. He stated that the most useful inclusion strategies for students with reading and writing disabilities are identified characteristics of students that connect them to each learner's strengths and screen them. Teachers should individualize using differentiated strategies to strengthen skills with sound-symbol

association, fluency, spelling, comprehension, written expression, auditory and visual processing; structure; communicate; and, implement multiple representations.

### **Student Grouping and Peer Conferencing**

Saddler (2012) explains that another excellent strategy for improving writing disabilities is Student Grouping and Peer Conferencing. Student grouping is characterized by Sentence Combining (SC) exercises, which can be implemented class-wide or in small groups. Unfortunately, when completing SC exercises, students especially who have disabilities in written expressions may only listen to the sound of their own voices when they combine their sentences. But often their sentences can be improved by other voices through writing conferences or group work.

On the other hand, Saddler (2012) considers that Peer Conferencing offers many advantages over large-group instruction. This strategy is defined “as an interactive dialogue between writers, the external feedback gained through this type of interactive dialogue provides several important benefits to writers, especially those with disabilities”. (Wong, 2000 as cited in Saddler, 2012, p. 62). The author concludes that Peer Conferencing may also increase the overall writing ability, the response opportunity, and the opportunity to incorporate new influence into their composing. Furthermore, any anxiety about the convention of writing like spelling or punctuation could be lessened through conferencing with a peer. This is because peers could have similar experiences and challenges with his or her own writing.

Borgese, Heyler, & Romano (2011) compare peer conferencing with the phrase “two heads are better than one”, which aim is that students reflect about their written work if this is connected with the audience and the purpose in mind. They introduced the acronym SMART which can be implemented in all or some combination of strategies that are comprised in it.

## SMART strategy

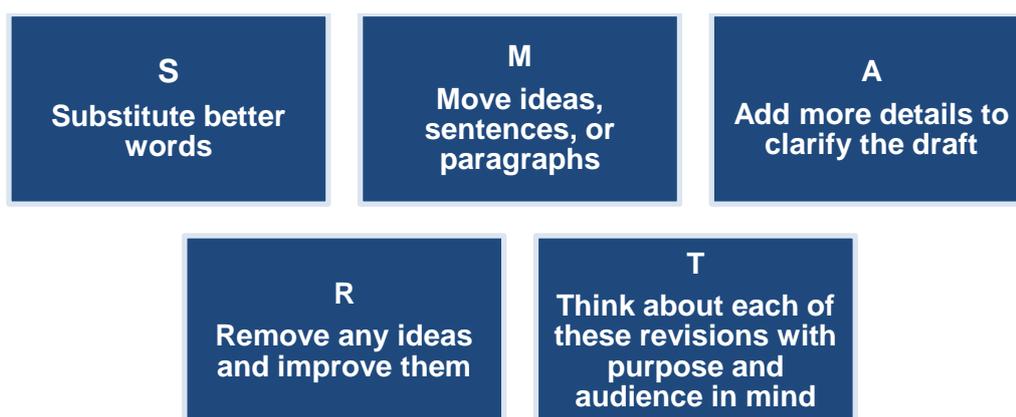


Figure 2 SMART strategies. Adapted from the work of (Borgese, Romano, & Heyler, 2011, p. 75)

Borgese, Heyler, & Romano (2011) explain that in the procedure of this strategy students have to revise their drafts focus on substituting words, moving ideas, adding new details, and removing unnecessary information. Once the students complete their first written work previous teacher input, they have to share their revised text with a fellow student before turning it in, the revision must be based on the SMART strategy.

### 2.12 Assistive technology for writing

Dell (2014) states that assistive technology is an umbrella term that includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices for people with disabilities and also includes the process used in selecting, and used them. Examples of several devices are standing frames, text telephones, accessible keyboards, large print, Braille, and speech recognition software.

#### Assistive technology for writing tasks

According to Boyle & Scanlon (2017), assistive technology has experimented great advances in the writing field. A good example of this assumption is evidenced by the word processor used in the last decade. Nowadays, there are several applications like *Speech-to-text (SST) programs, brainstorming programs, idea organizers, word predictors, spelling checkers* that use phonetic rules, and homonym checkers. These programs allow students to correct mistakes through spelling and grammar checkers. Despite these advantages, LD students need to be instructed in

writing skills and to know specific directions on how to use computers to get the most out of their writing.

These authors mention other useful software programs like *Kidspiration*, *Inspiration*, *Coggle*, and *Draft: Builder* which help students in the initial stage of writing to map out their idea and organize them before writing. Students can arrange ideas as they think of them interrelated maps or outlines that help with organizing prior to the drafting stage.

### **Software for translating text to speech and more functions of software programs**

Boyle & Scanlon (2017) explain that software for translating text to speech and voice-recognition software that translates speech to written text is available for inclusion students. These programs have the function to transcribe the user's spoken words into text, however, they do not allow students to improve their written skills in terms of organization or mechanics. On the other hand, most voice-recognition programs require some training interpreting words correctly from the owner's voice. They have writing problems but once trained, LD students can use them fairly accurately.

Dragon Naturally Speaking and Siri are prominent speech-recognition programs that enable students to use their voice to write on the computer. While WordQ another software program that predicts words for students to use.

It suggests the spelling of words based upon the word that the student is currently typing, and also makes a prediction about which word might come next in a sentence. Another innovation for improving the writing skills of students with disabilities is the use of word-prediction software. Word-prediction software offers the user a list of word choices that appears after the first letter of the word is typed. (Boyle & Scanlon, 2017, p. 400)

To conclude, these authors found that the word-prediction software improved written spelling accuracy of students with mild disabilities. WordQ, Co-Writer, and WriteAssist were the word-prediction software used in their study. The LD students also increased the total number of words produced and the rate at which they composed.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This section describes the research methodology that has been used to study the writing problem of the students with special needs in the third year of Baccalaureate at Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school.

#### **3.1 Design**

The strategy of inquiry selected is a descriptive analysis in a case study of students with learning disabilities. A case study is considered one of several ways of doing research “whether it is social science related or even socially related because it aims to understand human beings in a social context by interpreting their action as a single group community or a single event.” (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007, p. 309) Thus, the description is considered one of the principal objectives of educational research. As Johnson & Christensen (2008) mention:

It might simply involve observing a phenomenon and recording what one sees. For example, a seasoned teacher might observe the behavior of a student-teacher and take notes. At other times, description might rely on the use of the quantitative measuring instruments such as standardized tests. For example, a researcher might want to measure the intangible construct called “intelligence quotient”, or IQ. To do this, the researcher must rely on some type of test that has been constructed specifically for this purpose. At other times, the description might involve reporting attitudes and opinions about certain issues. (p. 24)

Schmidt & Brown (2014) claim that the most useful method used by the investigators is descriptive designs which provide a picture of a situation as it is naturally happening without variations or affecting any of the variables. Descriptive designs allow researchers to know, analyze, and record all the features of the phenomena. “In educational research, the most common descriptive methodology is the survey, as when researchers summarize the characteristics (abilities, preferences, behaviors, and so on) of individuals

or groups or physical environments, (such as schools)” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 1993, p. 15).

The research conducted for this study has a mixed-method approach (MM). The MM design was chosen to get rich data about the participants’ writing development. It is important to clarify the definition of mixed methods (MM) in order to understand the incidences of the investigation subject. Thus, several definitions from various researchers will be reviewed. The first theory belongs to Creswell & Creswell (2018) who define MM research as an approach “to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical framework” (p. 4) Another definition of MM indicates that it is “a type of research design in which qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in types of questions, research methods, data collection, and analysis procedures, and/or inferences” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 7). The mix method strategies could be: sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory, sequential transformative, concurrent triangulation design, concurrent embedded design, and concurrent transformative. (Creswell, 2014)

Additionally, observational and non-observational techniques were used for collecting data. According to Burns (1999), observation allows researchers to document and analyze systematically upon classroom interactions, procedures, and events that ensure that the information collected provides the indicators for answering research questions and supporting the interpretations that are reached. Observational techniques used in this study are notes or field notes compiled in an observation form, and photographs. Whereas, non-observational techniques used in this research are in the form of writing quiz, and interviews.

McLeod (2015), indicates that the observation method could be in different forms. They are participant and non-participant observation. If the observer perceives by making oneself more or less a member of the group experience is called participant observation. However, participant observation is considered when the observer determines by observing

without any attempt on his part to experience through participation what others feel.

### **3.2 Participants**

The study is focused on the analysis of the academic achievement in writing skills of inclusion students in the third year of baccalaureate at AFA high school. A writing evaluation consisting of two sections: the first, questions and answers; and, the second, a rewriting activity was administered to all the students of the third year of baccalaureate; however, for this research work, only the results for the two inclusion students are going to be considered. This decision was taken in order to keep up the inclusion environment and not letting them feel different.

Other participants are the English Coordinator of AFA high school and the Psychologist specialized in Inclusive Educational who will be interviewed by the researcher. Besides, two English teachers who will be observed in December, one of them teaches English for Specific Purposes and the other one teaches General English in order to apply the Writing Instruction Observation.

### **3.3 Data Collection Procedures and Instruments**

An evaluation in assignment format is going to be administered. The quiz items correspond to the second quimestre of the scholastic year 2018-2019. This study is going to be applied in different writing situations: sentence structure, difficulties in the handwriting, spelling, grammar, organization, and articulating ideas.

#### **Writing Evaluation**

To collect data, the participants received the same treatment but only two cases of educational special needs would be analyzed. In the first stage, they were administered a writing evaluation that involved ten personal questions. Students were asked to answer this quiz in the classroom for 40 minutes.

The first evaluation requires that students write a full sentence answer for each personal question. The students were asked to reorder the words

provided in the box and answer their personal information. These written assignments were collected and analyzed to check possible sentence structure errors that were counted and classified.

As a part of the strategy designed to correct the written works and classify the errors, this study will use the following correction symbols suggested by Harmer (2004)

### 3.4 Table of correction symbols

Symbol	Meaning	Example error
S	A spelling error	The answer is <u>obvius</u>
WO	A mistake in word order	I <u>like very much</u> it.
G	A grammar mistake	I am going to buy some furnitures <u>.</u>
T	Wrong verb tense	I <u>have seen him</u> yesterday.
C	Concord mistakes (e.g. subject and verb agreement)	People <u>is</u> angry.
λ	Something has been left out.	He told that he was sorry. λ
W W	Wrong word	I am interested <u>on</u> jazz music.
{ }	Something is not necessary	He was not {too} strong enough.
?M	The meaning is unclear	That is a <u>very excited photograph</u> .
P	A punctuation mistake	Do you like London <u>.</u>

Table 3 Table of correction symbols, adapted from (Harmer, 2004)

Hyland & Hyland (2006) state that several second language (L2) and second language acquisition (SLA) writing scholars such as Higgs & Clifford, Lalande, Bates, Hendrickson, Cook, Krashen, Selinker and Truscott have debated about how useful is the usage of error feedback or error analysis as error treatment.

For this reason, the following steps of error analysis were applied in this study:

- Each task was analyzed word by word and sentence by sentence.
- Writing symbols based on Harmer (2004) were applied to classify errors.
- The number of classified errors were counted in order to obtain a statistical report and graphs.

- An instrument to gather the numeric data was designed to quantify the writing errors to get an objective vision about students' assignments.

On the other hand, there are other instruments used to collect data like two Writing Instruction Observations taken from the work Kotula, Aguilar, & Tivnan (2014) one for English for Specific Purposes; and, another for General English class. The main aim of this instrument is to identify the teachers' methodology for students with special needs; the effectivity of the teaching practices; the organization of the class; and, teachers' strategy for motivating students. This observation has got a Likert scale for measuring results, and which 3 is fully applied, 2 is somewhat applied, and 1 is not applied.

### **Writing Instruction Observation**

The researcher adapted the Writing Instruction Observation designed by Kotula, Aguilar, & Tivnan (2014) for this study since this instrument was focused specifically on writing instruction. The information collected allows answering the research questions and fulfilling the purpose of this study regarding the identification of issues involved in teaching writing strategies by EFL teachers in the third year of Baccalaureate at AFA. The observation form is divided into three sections, these include checklist items for each section. The first section seeks to know about how the teachers introduce the lessons and measure how they set the stages for the rest of the lesson. The second section provides twelve items addressed to measure how teachers organize the writing skills, instruction, and practice during the stage of the process of the writing lesson. Furthermore, this section included the involvement of the students as a whole class, small groups, and individual participation in the writing activities; and, the usage of the feedback as a part of a strategy for students with special needs. While the last section was focused on the development of students' writing outcomes.

### **Interview**

The last instrument used for collecting data was the interview. The interview comprises open-ended and open questionnaires expected to be answered by the participants in order to collect data.

According to Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (1993), interviewing is a major technique used by researchers in order to find out how the participants think or feel about something. The chosen participants for interviewing were the English Coordinator of AFA high school and the Psychologist specialized in Inclusive Education who looks over teachers' inclusive strategies. The School Psychologist pays close attention to the IEP (Individualized Educational Plan), she reports the new cases of students with special needs and monitors their performance. The participants are free to answer the questions. The researcher decided to take into account the expertise of those school professionals. Additionally, they could contribute to this research with their teaching experiences and their answers could help to establish remediation strategies given to inclusion students. Their answers could determine the level of the difficulty of the writing exercises from the textbooks used at AFA. The first four selected questions for this format of interview were taken from the work of O'Gorman & Drudy (2011). The following twelve questions were adapted from the work of Ogano (2012).

The interview with the psychologist was held in Spanish which is her native language, however, the interview with the English coordinator was held in English because this is her second language. All interviews have taken place in the teachers' room. The participants were informed about the purpose of this study and their answers were going to be typed and transcribed to English language. On the other hand, their personal details were going to be treated anonymously.

## Chapter 4

### Data Result and Analysis

#### 4.1 Analysis of the Writing Evaluation - first Instrument

Item Types of errors	(S) Spelling		(WO) Wrong Order		(G) Grammar		(T) Tense		(C) Concord		(λ) Sth. is missing		(WW) Wrong Word		{ } Sth. is not necessary		(? M) Meaning is not clear		(Cap) Capitalization	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B		
Student																				
Items																				
1												1							1	1
2	1		1	2								1		1						
3			1	1	2	1														
4	2			2					1			1	2	2						
5	1		1	2		2			1			1	1						1	
6	1		2	1	1	1														
7	1	1	1	1	2	1					2	1								
8	1	1	3	1	2					1		1		2					1	
9	1		1	2	2	2					1		1							
10	2		1	2	2	2					1	1	3	3						
Total	10	2	1	14	11	9			2	1	4	7	6	9					3	1

Table 4 Results of the first writing evaluation. Elaborated by the author. Source: Writing evaluation. Instrument N°1.

The second assignment consisted of a re-writing activity, where it was given a text about the Titanic film and the aim was to find 10 grammar mistakes and correct them.

## Instrument for the second writing evaluation

Types of errors	(S) Spelling		(WO) Wrong Order		(G) Grammar		(T) Tense		(C) Concord		(λ) Sth. is missing		(WW) Wrong Word		({ }) Sth. is not necessary		(? M) Meaning is not clear		(Cap) Capitalization	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Students																				
Items																				
1											1	1								
2											1	1								
3						1							1							
4											1			1						
5												1	1							
6									1					1						
7					1					1										
8						2							1							
9							1							1						
10								1												
Total					1	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3						

Table 5 Results of the second instrument. Elaborated by the author. Source: Writing evaluation. Instrument N°2.

## 4.2 Results of instrument 1 and 2

Total of writing errors	S Spelling	WO Wrong Order	G Grammar	T Tense	C Concord mistakes	λ Sth. is missing	WW Wrong Word	{ } Sth. is not necessary	? M Meaning is not clear	Cap Capitalization
Writing evaluation 1	12	25	20		3	11	15		-	4
Writing evaluation 2	-	-	4	2	2	6	6	-	-	
Total	12	25	24	2	5	17	21		-	4

Table 6 Results of instrument 1 and 2. Elaborated by the author. Source: Writing evaluation. Instrument N°1 and 2.

### 4.3 Tables of common errors in writing evaluation, students with learning disability from AFA High school.

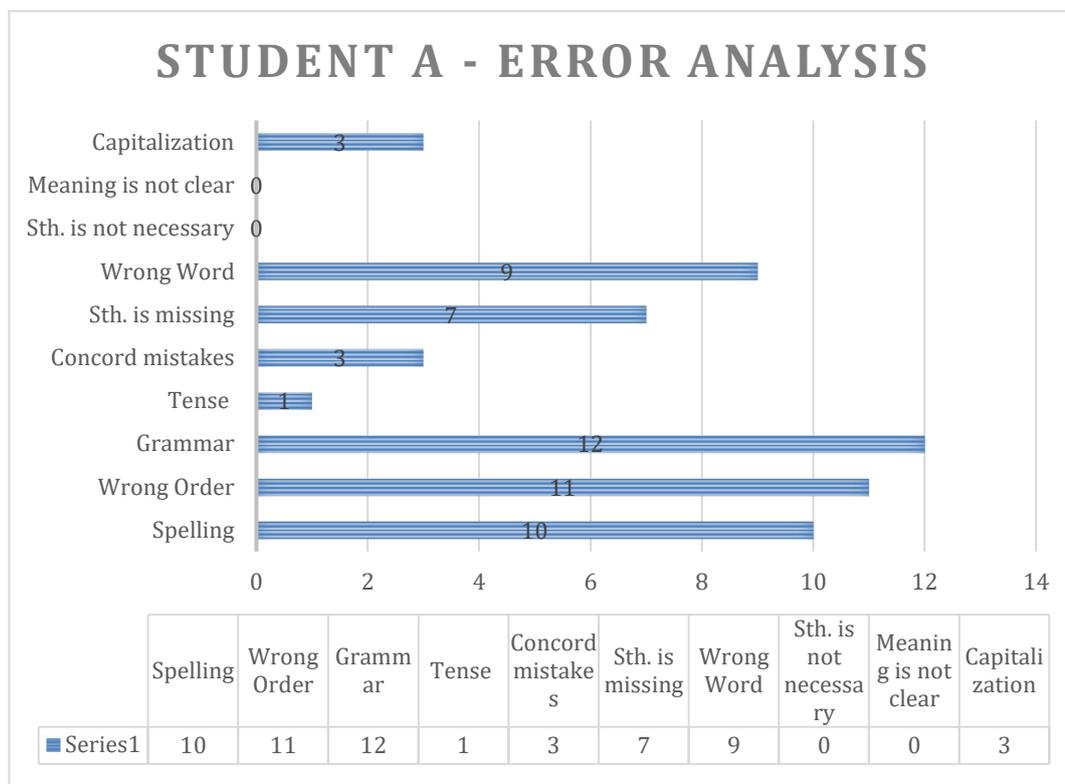


Figure 3 Student A – Error analysis. Elaborated by the author. Source: Writing evaluation. Instrument N°1 and 2.

This chart illustrates the frequency of errors found in the student “A” error analysis. 56 errors in two writing evaluations were found and classified under the criteria of spelling, wrong order, grammar, tense, concord mistakes, something has been out, wrong words, something is not necessary, the meaning is not clear, punctuation and capitalization.

From the samples of writing evaluation reviewed, it was found that the majority of errors were located in the grammar field. These errors included: sentence structure, wrong order of words used in an inappropriate context, and several mistakes in spelling. The second most common errors occurred in the confusing use of words in an inappropriate context and the omission of the preposition and pronouns in the sentences. In contrast, the student “A” presents minor errors in the capitalization of proper names and initial sentences and weakness in verb tenses.

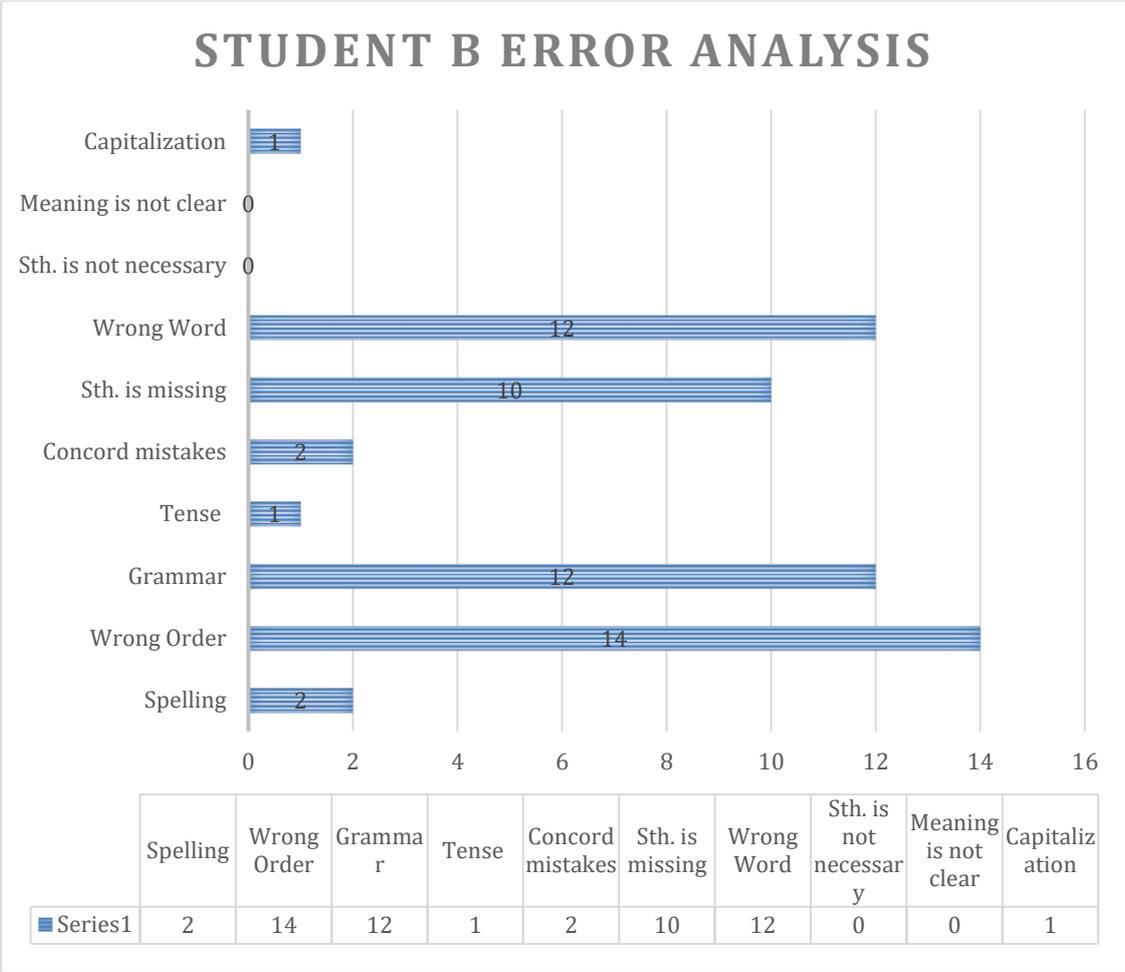


Figure 4 Student B – Error analysis. Elaborated by the author. Source: Writing evaluation. Instrument N°1 and 2.

The student “B” error analysis chart evidences 54 errors in the two chosen writing evaluations. They were classified under the previously mentioned criteria. The majority of errors belonged to the grammar field. These errors included: wrong order of words, words used in an inappropriate context, pluralization, they confused the use of the third singular person in the simple present tense. The second most common errors occurred in the omission of the preposition and personal pronouns. However, the student “B” demonstrates more accuracy and avoids spelling and concord mistakes. Minor errors in capitalization of proper names and initial sentences; and, in the usage the tense of the verbs.

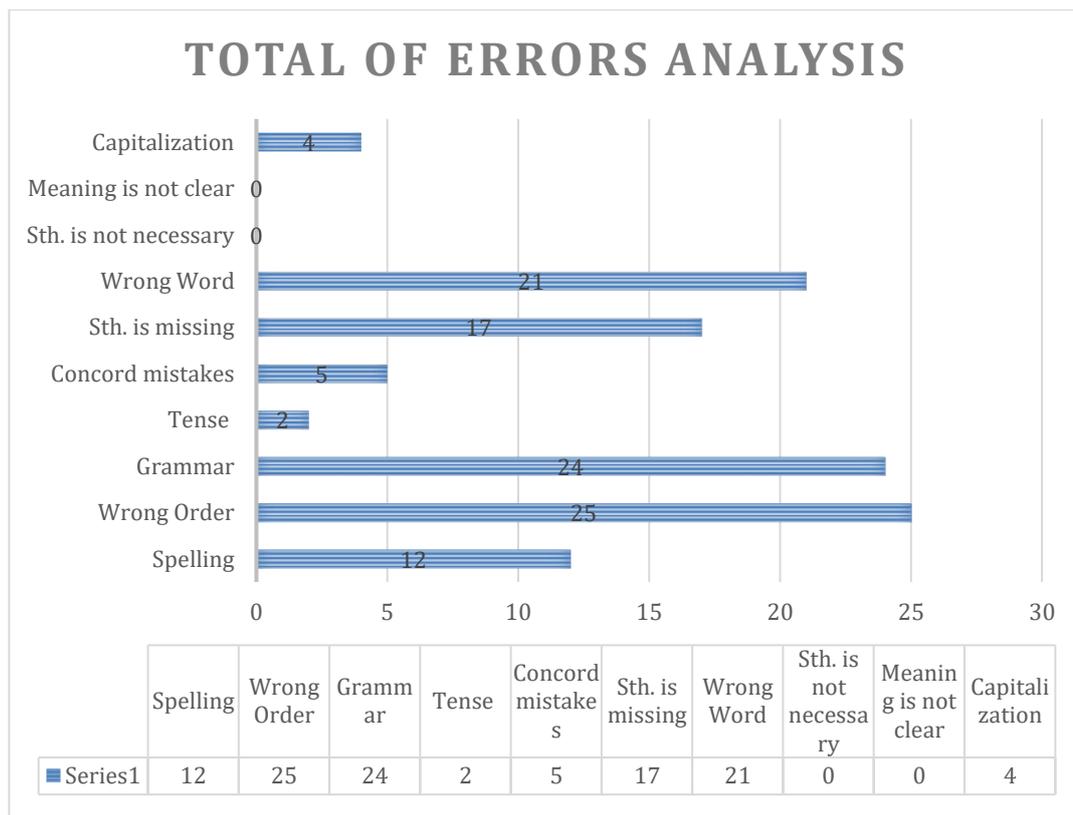


Figure 5 Total of errors analysis. Elaborated by the author. Source: Writing evaluation. Instrument N°1 and 2.

To sum up, this chart evidences the higher frequency of errors found in the writing assessment mostly in wrong order, grammar, wrong words, missing words in the sentences produced by student A and B, and spelling mistakes. Thus, this analysis reveals the necessity to establish remediation strategies that could allow students with learning disabilities to improve their writing skills.

#### 4.4 Analysis of the Writing Instruction Observation

The researcher applied the Writing Instruction Observation because this could show how they plan their writing lessons in the inclusive classroom, how they perform the activities, and the level of the interaction developed in the classroom, as well as the students' needs. The grading scale was considered in this way: 3 fully applied, 2 somewhat applied, and, 1 not applied.

Two teachers were observed in December, one of them teaches English for Specific Purposes (Teacher N° 1); and, another teaches General English

(Teacher N° 2). The Writing Instruction Observation sessions started from December 14<sup>th</sup> until December 20<sup>th</sup>, each class lasts 45 minutes.

### Teacher N° 1

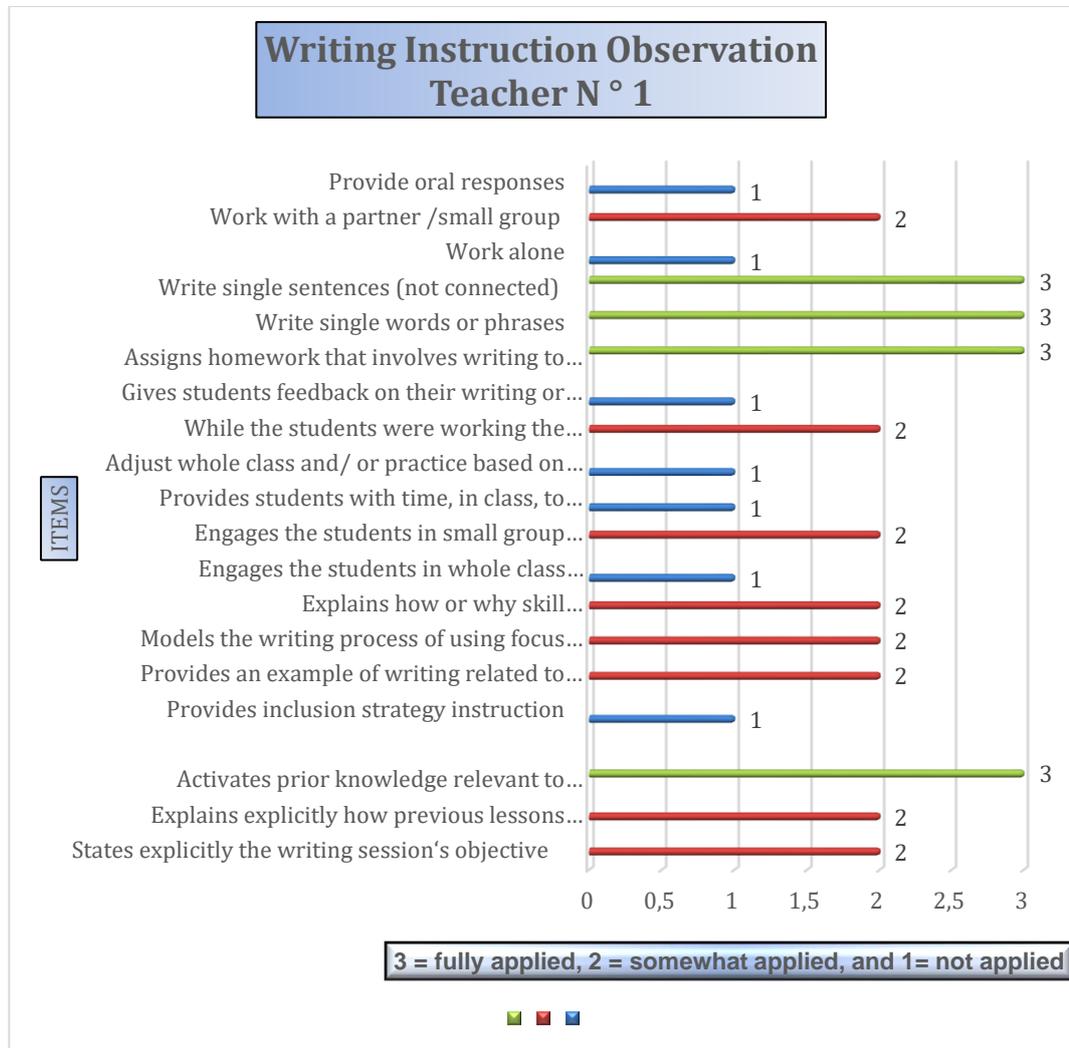


Figure 6 Writing Instruction Observation Teacher N°1. Elaborated by the author. Source: Writing Instruction Observation Teacher N°1

The first Writing Instruction Observation took place on December 14<sup>th</sup>. The schedule was 07H45 – 08H30 the focus was on **How to write a memo**. This instrument revealed that teacher n°1 rated most items as “somewhat applied” (about 45% of all of the parameters included in the observation form), this observation also rated about 35% as “not applied” and 20% as “fully applied.”

It was appreciated that the teacher n°1 *somewhat applied* the use of some icebreakers as warming previous to the explanation of the writing session's objective. The same appreciation rated the way as she linked the previous lesson to the current lesson in order to activate the students' prior knowledge. On the other hand, the researcher observed that teacher n°1 put great emphasis on this step. She asked students several questions about the last session and used the same information in questions for eliciting responses. Their students participated and collaborated with correct answers in the activity presented by her. This parameter was rated as *fully applied*. These three features were comprised in the first stage of the Writing Instruction Observation.

The second stage was focused on the instruction and practice of skills and strategies which demonstrated that the teacher n°1 reached the category *somewhat applied* in their teaching practice. However, the inclusion strategy instruction was rated with the category *not applied*.

During the observation, teacher n°1 also provided examples, modeled the writing process; and, explained how the skills, strategies, and processes would help students as writers which were rated with the category *somewhat applied* respectively. The chosen approach selected by her in order to engage students with the topic was to apply the strategy to small groups' discussion. This practice was identified as an important element of effective writing instruction which allowed involving different levels of students' writing knowledge and interacted with students with learning disabilities or writing problems. It was rated as *somewhat applied*. While the assignment of homework that involved writing practices related to the topic was rated as *fully applied*.

Conversely, the use of discussion in whole class, appropriate distribution of time for practicing writing activities, adjustment for practicing writing activities based on observations of perceived students' needs or students with special educational needs, were rated as *not applied* by the observer; as well as providing students' feedback on their writing or oral responses as part of the strategy or writing instruction or practice.

The last stage was observing the students' writing outcomes, which results showed that a considerable group of students wrote single words, phrases, and sentences partially not connected with the context and the topic. For this reason, it was rated as *fully applied*. On the other hand, it was rated as *not applied* those parameters that mention that the students work alone and provide oral responses during the writing activities.

Nevertheless, it was observed that the students tended to work in pairs or small groups as a strategy to support them. This item was rated as *somewhat applied* because a minor group of students in the classroom preferred to work alone.

In general, one of the most significant findings rated as fully applied was in the way that teacher n°1 introduced the lesson and activated the prior knowledge of the students in the writing session. This phase facilitated the whole class to understand the purpose of the lesson and afterward writing short messages in a memo chart. Obviously, this was complemented when the teacher provided and modeled some writing examples. The task was finished with the supporting of pair work and small group discussion. However, it was noticed that several parameters of this Writing Instruction Observation data gathering tool were not fully applied at the time of the application of this instrument by the teacher n°1. They were: applications of inclusion strategies and instructions; engaging the students in whole class discussion; use of appropriate time; adjustment for practicing writing activities for students with special educational needs; and providing students' feedback during or at the end of the session.

On the other hand, a considerable group of regular students presented difficulties in writing a complete message in the memo chart. They just wrote single words, phrases, and sentences partially not connected with the topic of the lesson.

## Teacher N° 2



Figure 7 Writing Instruction Observation Teacher N°2. Elaborated by the author. Source: Writing Instruction Observation Teacher N ° 2

The second writing instruction observation took place on December 20<sup>th</sup>. The schedule was 07H00 – 07H45, the focus was on Present Perfect. This instrument revealed that teacher n°2 rated most items as “somewhat

applied” (about 45% of all of the parameters included in the observation form), this observation also rated about 40% as “not applied” and 15% as “fully applied.”

It was appreciated that teacher n°2 provided an explicit statement of the writing session’s objective. She did her best effort for engaging students to participate in class; thus, this parameter was rated as *fully applied*. However, it did not evidence any warming activity that allowed to observe how she linked the previous lesson to the current lesson. It was rated as *not applied*. On the other hand, teacher n°2 asked students some questions about their experiences on last weekend activities in order to activate the students’ prior knowledge. This parameter was rated as *somewhat applied*. These features were comprised in the first phase of the writing instruction observation.

The second phase was centered in the instruction and practice of skills and strategies which revealed that the inclusion strategy instruction was rated with the category *not applied* due to the teacher n°2 did not apply any approach or strategy related to this methodology.

Furthermore, teacher n°2 also practiced some examples of writing related to the topic, modeled a writing text about past events or past experiences in order to facilitate the explanation of the grammar rules about present perfect where the students had to produce a short paragraph about a past last weekend experience. These activities were included in the lesson in the textbook. After that, she engaged the group in a whole class discussion as a first step of the activity and ended with small group discussion. At the end of the session, she assigned homework to complement their practice. These activities were rated as *somewhat applied*.

On the other hand, she did not explain to students how the skills, strategies, and processes would help them in the process of writing; neither the use of an appropriate distribution of time for practicing writing activities; it was not applied an adjustment for practicing writing activities based on observations of perceived students’ needs or students with special educational needs; nor monitor or providing extra support during the writing activity; and, not

giving students feedback on their writing or oral responses. These parameters were rated as *not applied* by the observer.

The students' writing outcomes were the indicators selected in the last phase, which results showed that a relevant group of students wrote single words, phrases, and sentences partially not connected with the context and presented difficulties with spelling and the correct use of the tense of the verbs. The rest of the students worked the activity with a lower range of mistakes. Thus, the observer decided to rate as *fully applied*.

Another appreciation obtained in this writing instruction observation was that a minor group of the students preferred to work alone, they were the group of students that presented few mistakes in the writing activities developed into the classroom. However, the rest of the group tended to work in pairs or small groups but their results were the lowest. These items were rated as *somewhat applied*. The last parameter was rated as *not applied* because the students did not provide any oral response during the session.

As general aspects, one of the most significant findings rated as fully applied was the effective way that the teacher n°2 provided an explicit statement of the lesson. However, she did not link the previous lesson to the current lesson. This detail reduced remarkably the level of response to activating the students' prior knowledge. This phase is considered by the researcher as extremely essential to facilitate the whole class to understand the purpose of the lesson and afterward writing a short text about their last weekend experience using the present perfect tense.

Although, the teacher provided and modeled some writing examples and engaged the students in a whole class discussion; and, then in pair work or small group discussion. It was noticed that the final results were not satisfactory. On the other hand, several parameters of this writing instruction observation were not fully applied by teacher n°2. They were: applications of inclusion strategies and instructions; use of appropriate time; adjustment for practicing writing activities for students with special educational needs; and providing students' feedback during or at the end of the session.

#### 4.5 Interview Analysis

The researcher applied an interview to get a broader view of the constraints that affect the professional development of the teachers who work with students with writing difficulties at AFA. Their learning experiences and their answers could help to determine the level of the difficulty of the writing activities from the textbooks and establish the teachers' remediation strategies given to inclusion students.

Ferraro (2014) recommends that a proper introduction is a good way to begin a successful workplace interview. Thus, the participants of this study were informed that all the information to be gathered would be taken in strict confidentiality and their names will remain anonymous in the analysis and results of this study. The participants' names will be replaced as Participant 1 and Participant 2.

**Participant 1** is a woman who works as a psychologist specialized in Inclusive Education who look over teachers' inclusive strategies, she pays close attention to the IEP (Individualized Educational Plan), and she reports the new cases of students with special needs and monitors the students' performance of AFA.

**Participant 2** is an English teacher in the first and second year of baccalaureate at AFA. She has 21 years of experience in English teaching. Besides, she is in charge of the English area coordination. She participated in 2014 in the Go-Teacher program sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Secretaría de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (SENESCYT).

The interview with **Participant 1** was held in Spanish which is her native language; however, the interview with **Participant 2** was held in English. They were interviewed in December. The interviews took place in the teachers' room, each session lasted 50 minutes. Then the researcher engaged the participants with questions focused on the phenomenon of inquiry that allowed revealing teachers' experiences in teaching writing.

The main guiding question for this study was: What are the most common characteristics that define the writing skills of students with special needs

in the third year of Baccalaureate at Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar High School (AFA)? In order to organize the information expressed by the participants the responses were grouped to correspond to each question. Consequently, the following themes emerged as follows:

- A. Special Educational Needs (SEN) at AFA
- B. Level of the difficulty of the writing exercises from the textbooks used at AFA
- C. Teachers' remediation strategies given to inclusion students about structure errors found in classroom exercises at AFA

#### **A. Interview: Special Educational Needs (SEN) at AFA**

**Q1: Does the school have a written policy on Special Educational Needs (SEN)?** The participants coincided in their answers and stated that the AFA high school has a written policy on SEN which is provided by the Ecuadorian Education law throughout the Constitution of 2008 and the article 47 of Organic Law of Intercultural Education which states that "Educational institutions are obliged to receive all people with disabilities to create the appropriate physical, curricular and promotion supports, and adaptations to their needs; and to seek the training of teaching staff in the areas of methodology..." as cited in Ministerio de Educación, 2011, (p. 24)

#### **Q2: Type of Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

The informants provided general information related to statistics of the existence of types of learning disabilities that have been detected at AFA. The next graphic represents the results.

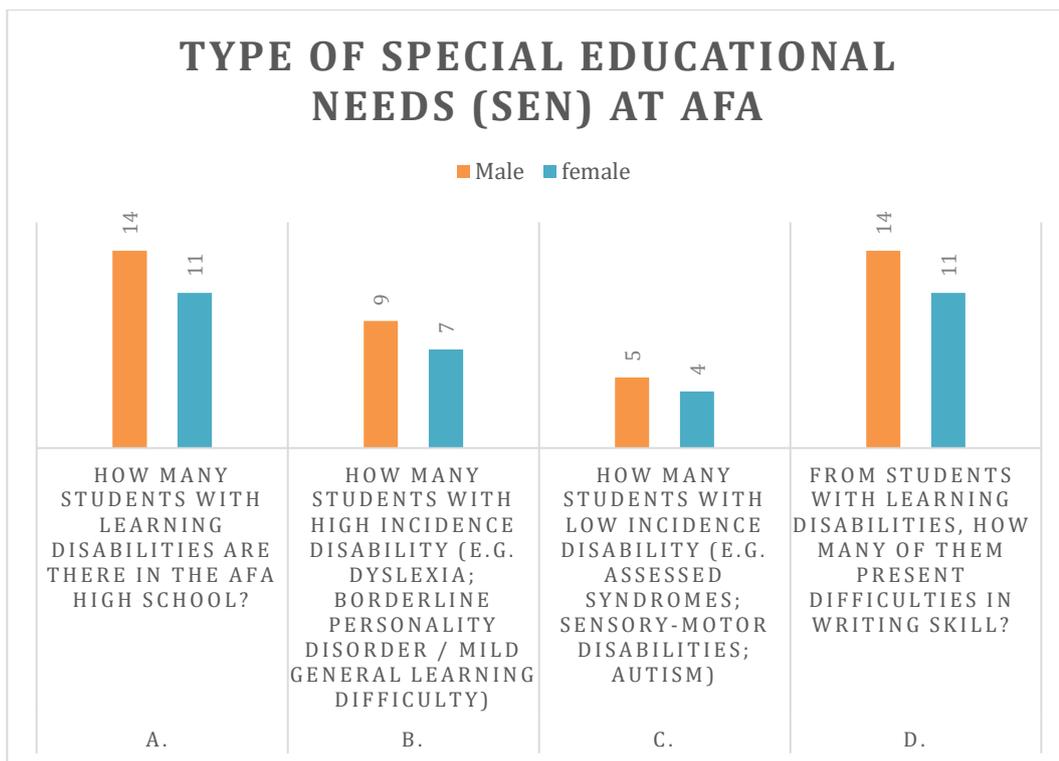


Figure 8 Type of Special Educational Needs (SEN) at AFA. Elaborated by the author. Source: Interview of Participant 1 and 2.

The graphic revealed that the highest level of learning disabilities in the AFA high school pointed out students with high incidence disability like Dyslexia, Borderline Personality Disorder, and Mild General Learning Difficulty in comparison to students with low incidence disability. However, it is noticeable that the whole group of SEN students presented difficulties in writing skill. These results keep relation with the data obtained in the other data collection instruments that reflect the same constraint.

**Q3: Are there procedures for determining how long LD (Learning Disability)/SEN (Special Educational Needs) should receive support?**

**Participant 1 and 2** reported that there were no procedures for determining how long LD/SEN support at AFA.

**Q4: Does your school currently design IEPs (Individual Education Plans) for students with SEN?** The informants declared that at AFA high school there is an IEPs for students with SEN.

**B. Level of the difficulty of the writing exercises from the textbooks used at AFA**

Textbooks are considered as an essential part of the process of English Language Teaching. For this reason, it is essential to evaluate the writing task included on it and that could support the LD students development in writing skill.

**Q5 How do you describe the English textbook used in this institution?**

**Participant 1** answered with the option *Somewhat helpful* and **Participant 2** selected *Slightly helpful*. These results evidenced the low impact of this resource in the development of the writing skill of LD students.

**Q6: From your experience, how do the writing activities in the textbook need to be modified?** In this question, the responses from both participants imply that the textbook does not provide enough writing activities that could help students. The textbooks need to focus on the students' needs.

(Participant 1) Writing activities should be done according to the LD problem and the level of each disability. By providing topics based on the students' needs and their background knowledge according to their real context.

(Participant 2) For some students, writing is so difficult. Some activities designed in the textbook are good for students. However, she likes to apply other activities in order to motivate the students to write.

**Q7: What advantages do you see in using the textbook as the focus for teaching writing?**

**Participant 1** reported that "some textbooks bring tips for improving students' writing. It is helpful for regular students. However, she does not believe that they have advantages for LD students."

**Participant 2** stated that the textbook is easy to understand and stimulates creativity in regular students. The textbook has pictures according to the studied level. But, there are not many advantages using textbooks for writing. It includes some tasks and activities with guided examples of writing activities. In general, the two teachers agree that in writing skills the textbook is not so helpful for students with LD and regular students.

**Q8: What limitation do you see in using the textbook as the focus for teaching writing?** The answers provided by participants stated that the

lack of writing activities and tasks do not motivate students to develop their writing skills. Some tasks were not clear. Besides, the level of the textbook is not appropriate for regular students and LD students.

**C. Teachers' remediation strategies given to inclusion students about structure errors found in classroom exercises at AFA**

**Q9: What is your advice for the teaching staff about helping students with learning disabilities engage in writing activities?** Answers varied according to their responsibilities.

**Participant 1** who is a psychologist, gave some important advice for teachers who deal with LD students to engage them in writing activities.

She mentions that it is very important to foster the teaching competencies of the teachers to build educational classroom projects that allow diversity and adjustment of the students with writing difficulties. Also, to manage strategies that they could apply in their pedagogical practice according to the SEN students' necessity, like:

- Provide the same information in multiple ways.
- Reduce the barriers in their instruction by not just traditional approaches but also providing multimedia ways and use their strengths to learn and develop their writing skills.

**Participant 2** explained that her advice could be to use materials like flashcards, posters, and pictures. Furthermore, other advice could be to practice in class examples for different activities like contests, short stories, and so on. The main goal is to make their writing meaningful and encourage sentence structures. It is important to notice that the teacher does not mention any differentiated material for LD students, she just remember what a typical teacher uses in class.

**Q10: What is your advice for the teaching staff on helping LD students with writing problems to work out the same activities as the others in the class?** Both Participants 1 and 2 pointed out that it is essential for the role of the teachers in the teaching-learning process. They have to design an IEP for each LD student with low difficult activities with less complex

words. The most important thing is that they should be designed according to the level of the students.

Embrace the role of a proactive teacher and work on their communication skills. Another useful option is to work in groups or implement activities using collaborative learning. These strategies really contribute to facilitating the performance of the activities of students with writing difficulties.

Both participants suggest that working in groups is the best strategy to interact in class during writing activities.

**Q11: What kind of strategies have you seen in teaching LD students with writing problems to improve their academic achievement?**

**Participant 1** suggested the following strategies that could be useful for English teachers:

- Ask students to write ideas in order.
- Give words related to the writing topic in order to make sentences.
- Use technology to motivate students' learning.

Both **Participants 1 and 2** coincided in this question:

**Q12: What kind of materials does your staff use when teaching these students in the classroom?** Their answers evidenced that in general, teachers used traditional resources like the board, marker, textbook, pictures, and some differentiated tasks and quizzes for LD students.

**Q13: What kind of support do teachers need for helping these inclusive students in the classroom?** In this question, the responses from **participants 1 and 2** imply that teachers need to have more training. To manage more strategies in order to apply inside the differentiated classroom in their teaching procedures. **The second participant** added that teachers could help students on their own initiative, however, they need to work with the DECE department and their staff in order to know more about the types of inclusive students, strategies, activities, materials, and assessment.

On the other hand, in the following question, the informants provided data related to the existence of extra resources that allow the AFA teachers to monitor the improvement of learning disabilities students that have been detected at there.

**Q14: Is it provided to the students any checklist to help in the error correction of words? Both participants** gave the same negative answer. This evidenced that the AFA teachers did not provide to the students any checklist to help in the error correction of words that facilitate to have a self-feedback or help to the teacher to control the development of the writing skill of the LD students.

**Q15: What kind of feedback do you advise teachers could provide after the writing activities?** It was unveiled two findings that varied according to the responsibilities of the participants as is evidenced in the next graphic.

As it is noticeable in the results, **Participant 1** advised teachers that the kind of feedback recommended applying LD students after the writing activities is *peer feedback*. However, **Participant 2** provided students with *written feedback*.

**Q16: The last question of the interview was Do you think that there is anything else that can improve the writing skill of the LD students? Participant 1** provided some advice for English teachers which could improve the writing skill of the LD students:

- Focus on strengths, not just weaknesses
- Recognize the learning disorder
- Clarify the objectives
- Stay positive and do not give up easily
- Work with concrete material to facilitate the learning
- Provide positive feedback
- Provide extra-time to develop exercises, quizzes, and so on

**Participant 2** stated that working with LD students could be really hard but it is not impossible. Sometimes teachers need to train themselves in order to know different strategies to apply to these students.

#### **4.6 Findings about the usefulness of textbooks (interview)**

As general aspects, one of the most significant findings detected in the answers of these interviews was the result obtained in the topic: *Special Educational Needs (SEN) at AFA* which results indicated that 14 male and 11 female students have Special Educational Needs. Furthermore, all this group presented difficulties in writing skills.

The topic *Level of the difficulty of the writing exercises from the textbooks used at AFA* revealed that the English textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education were slightly helpful and did not provide enough support for writing activities. Additionally, the participants indicated the importance of modifying writing activities according to the level of the students' needs. Thus, the textbook did not provide any advantage for teaching writing. These resources did not present writing tasks according to the level of LD students.

The last topic analyzed in this interview was *Teachers' remediation strategies given to inclusion students about structure errors found in classroom exercises at AFA*. The most important findings were evidenced in the participants' advice for the teaching staff about helping students with learning disabilities engage in writing activities. They involved the whole process; this is before, during, and after the writing learning-teaching process.

In general, it could be gathered from the interviews the following statements:

- Foster the competences of the teacher to build educational classroom projects that allow fitting to the diversity of the students with writing difficulties.
- Adapt strategies that they could apply in their pedagogical practice according to the SEN students' necessity.

- Reduce the barriers in their instructions, by not just traditional approaches but also providing multimedia ways and use their strengths to learn and develop their writing skills.
- Use materials like flashcards, posters, and pictures in class in order to engage the LD students in writing activities.
- Practice in class examples for different activities like contests, short stories, and so on; the main goal is to make their writing meaningful and encourage sentence structures.
- To work with the same activities as the others in the class and the writing activities according to the level of the students.
- The differentiated writing activities could be complemented with cooperative learning and working in small groups or pairs.
- Teachers have to design the IEP
- AFA's teachers need to have more training about strategies for inclusive education to apply inside the differentiated classroom in their teaching procedures and support from the DECE department.
- They need to use some tools that facilitate to have a self-feedback or help the teacher to control the development of the writing skill of the LD students.
- There is not any checklist to help in the error correction of words.
- The AFA's teachers only apply written feedback and not use other alternatives that could be more useful for LD students like peer feedback and self-feedback (self-correction).
- It is essential that teachers could recognize the learning disability, focus on strengths, not just weaknesses; and, provide positive feedback; and, extra-time to develop exercises, quizzes, and so on.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **5.1 Poor performance in EFL writing skills**

The findings of this research work demonstrate that inclusion students at AFA high school show poor performance in the EFL writing skill. A higher frequency of errors was found in the writing quizzes mostly in wrong order, grammar, wrong words, spelling mistakes, missing words, and confusion in the use of the third singular person in the simple present tense in the sentences produced by student A and B. Such finding is linked to the work of Spencer (2015) who states that the writing skill for students with learning disabilities represents a very big challenge. The foundational skills of writing like spelling, vocabulary, fine motors skill, or sequencing, need to be functioning efficiently for a students' writing success. This writing process demands abilities to imagine, plan, sequence, recall, spell, and operate a pencil simultaneously as they get their thoughts on paper. It represents an enormous effort for LD students when they need to involve cognitive and physical resources which need to function at a time. Other researchers, who have a similar theory are Mather, Wendling, & Roberts (2009) assure that many students present severe difficulties developing writing skill, present problems with spelling, handwriting, vocabulary, text structure, and formulating clear ideas or messages.

#### **5.2 Teaching writing in Inclusive Classrooms**

The writing instruction observation allowed the researcher to identify how teachers plan their writing lessons in the inclusive classroom, how they perform the activities and the level of the interaction developed in the classroom which are essential components that demonstrate the effectiveness of the teaching writing. One of the most significant findings was the way in which the teacher n<sup>o</sup>1 introduced the lesson and activated the prior knowledge of the students in the writing session. This phase facilitated the whole class to understand the purpose of the lesson. Graham. & Perin (2007) corroborate in their research that an effective method for teaching writing comprises several recommendations like:

- Describe the writing strategy and the purpose of learning it.
- Make it clear when students should use the strategy.
- Show students how to use the strategy.
- Provide students with practice applying the strategy, giving assistance as needed.
- Continue instruction until students can use the strategy independently.
- Encourage students to apply the strategy in appropriate situations once the instruction has ended.
- Ask students to evaluate how the strategy improved their writing.

The tenth recommendation provided by Roger & Graham (2008), “Provide adolescent with good models for each type of writing that is the focus of instruction. These examples should be analyzed, and students should be encouraged to imitate the critical elements embodied in the models”. This assumption coincides with the finding of this study which mentions that when teachers provided and modeled some writing examples, they facilitated the comprehension of the grammar rules and allowed developing the tasks successfully.

A concern arises from the fact that teachers from AFA did not apply several indicators in the writing instruction observation like applications of inclusion strategies and instructions, engaging the students in whole class discussion, like: the use of appropriate time, adjustment for practicing writing activities for students with special educational needs, and providing students’ feedback during or at the end of the session. This feature did not allow students to develop appropriately writing activities. Indeed, Graham, Harris, & Larsen (2001) indicate that students with writing difficulties receive inappropriate writing instruction or they have few opportunities to improve their writing skill.

A further issue of concern in this study is that a considerable group of regular students presented difficulties in writing a complete message in the memo chart. They wrote single words, phrases, and sentences not connected with the topic of the lesson. As Graham, Harris, & Larsen (2001) stated, without exemplary writing instructions students could not develop their writing skills.

Exemplary writing instructions is a decisive intervention in preventing writing difficulties, it must start from preschool education and should continue throughout their school life.

The interview established that the participants knew the constraints presented at AFA. One important constraint involves the English textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education of which they say that these were slightly helpful and did not provide enough support for writing activities for LD students. This finding is in line with the study of Hammad (2014). He indicates that international textbooks present cultural discordance between textbook and school realities; new English curricula focused on listening at the expense of other language skills, specifically writing; and, problems with the time devoted to practicing the textbook activities.

Teachers used traditional resources like the board, marker, textbook, pictures, and some differentiated tasks and quizzes for LD students. This characteristic was expressed in the work from Collins & Halverson (2018). They stated that “yet schools are stuck using 19<sup>th</sup> century technology, such as books, blackboards, chalk, paper, and pencils. Computers are not at the core of schools.” While, Surprisingly, teachers claim that students need more engagement using technology in homework.

There are not any checklist to help in the error correction of words and monitor possible improvements. Vasu, Nimehchisalem, Fung, & Rashid (2018) in their work claim that the checklist is a relevant tool to assist in teaching-learning writing. “It is apt as it covers each stage of writing and all the items are very specific that students will be able to work.” Additionally, the checklist helps students to develop a deeper understanding and helps to monitor the students' process.

Another constraint mentioned was that the English as foreign language IEPs were not designed appropriately for LD students. According to Hoover, & Patton (2017), an IEP is a document that delineates a student's instructional goals, objectives, accommodations, general class participation, and necessary related services, to meet needs to be connected to the disability identified. For this reason, it is understood that if an IEP is not designed for

supporting the students' s need, it is complex to overcome the difficulties detected. An IEP must help educators, parents, and SEN students to know how the students learn in a better way.

Regarding what Participant 1 said about providing assistive technology using their strengths to learn and develop their writing skills, Graham, Harris, & Larsen (2001) highlight that technological devices can be used to support developing writers in general and struggling writers in particular. Lancioni, Sigafoos, O'Reilly, & Singh (2012) confirm this assumption. They stated that assistive technology encompasses multiple resources that could produce important behavioral and social benefits for students with disabilities and special education

On the other hand, Lancioni, Sigafoos, O'Reilly, & Singh (2012) suggest that assistive technology devices could be applied within educational school programs. For instance, modified keyboard, electronic pointing instruments used in replacement of the mouse or keyboard, keyboard emulators that students can manipulate the keyboard keys with a minimal movement of any part of the body, and text-to-speech synthesizer which allows students to enter written text information and translate it into speech.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 6.1 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to analyze the academic achievement in writing skills of inclusion students in the third year of baccalaureate of AFA high school. This analysis included the revision of writing strategies, the usefulness of the textbook, and different issues involved in teaching writing by EFL teachers. Two inclusion students have received the same EFL content all the scholastic year to keep up the inclusion environment and not letting them feel different. Their IEPs have been modified in the level of difficulty for the activities, strategies, and assessments. However, in this research work, they received the same writing evaluation that corresponded to the second quimestre scholastic year 2018-2019. It was noticed that inclusion students presented difficulties in their EFL learning, specifically concerning to the writing skill as a result of a moderate confirmed General Learning Disability (GLD).

Regarding determining the issues involved in teaching writing by EFL teachers, the researcher observed two English teachers and interviewed the school psychologist and another EFL teacher. The information obtained provided the following conclusions which were drawn based on the results of the previous data analysis.

- The findings indicate that inclusion students have difficulty in EFL writing skill. They presented a high frequency of errors in: wrong order, grammar, wrong words, spelling mistakes, missing words, and confusion in the use of the third singular person in the simple present tense.
- Additionally, a considerable group of the regular students of the third year of baccalaureate of AFA high school showed similar difficulty in several writing activities like completing short messages.
- Teachers planned their writing lessons in the IEPs and when they introduced the lesson and activated the prior knowledge of the students

in the writing session. It was noticeable that this action facilitated the understanding of the lesson purpose.

- Results indicate that when teachers provided and modeled some writing examples, they enabled the comprehension of the grammar rules and allowed developing the tasks successfully.
- During the class teachers did not include the following parameters: application of inclusion strategies and instructions, engaging the students in whole class discussion, use of appropriate time, adjustment for practicing writing activities for students with special educational needs, use of checklists to record and control error correction of words, appropriate EFL design in IEP format, and providing students' feedback. Consequently, students do not develop appropriately the writing activities, nor the skills.
- English textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education were slightly helpful and did not provide enough support for writing activities for LD students. Teachers used traditional resources like the board, marker, textbook, pictures. In the best of the cases, they used some differentiated tasks and quizzes for LD students.
- Finally, the results indicate that the teachers recognized the importance of using assistive technology as part of the teaching resources. The effective integration of assistive technology into the classroom would produce excellent academic results for inclusion students.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

- It is recommended that this study must be socialized among the EFL teachers at AFA high school to bring up awareness of these constraints about inclusion students.
- Teachers must find the appropriate strategies that could help LD students to overcome the writing errors detected in the evaluation. They have to adapt their teaching practice for an inclusion classroom.

- It is necessary that teachers be encouraged to review their IEPs in order to include writing inclusion strategies and instructions that engage the students in whole class discussion. Besides, teachers need to check the use of appropriate time and the adaptation of writing activities for students with special education needs.
- It is important that EFL teachers design a checklist to record the error correction of words for controlling the students' progress and make the corresponding adjustments.
- It is necessary that teachers adjust a series of writing activities from other textbooks that could facilitate the understanding of the writing process from inclusion students with material that corresponds to the adequate knowledge level of the learners, even though the official textbook is a primary resource since it is given by the Ministry of Education.
- Finally, it could be of benefit for inclusion students that teachers incorporate digital resources in their writing teaching process and at the same time, teachers need to be trained in assistive technology to enhance their EFL classroom activities for mastering writing skills.

## Chapter 7

### Proposal

The previous conclusions from the research findings show that a technological tool could help to achieve the inclusion goals plus the writing skills enhancement. For this reason, the following proposal is presented:

**Title: Mobile Instant Messaging tool for improving the skills of students with special needs of the third year of Baccalaureate at Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school.**

#### 7.1 Introduction

Unidad Educativa “Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar” (AFA) is located in the south of Guayaquil. At this institution six English teachers work during the morning shift, and 1380 students attend classes on the mentioned schedule. In the third year of Baccalaureate, two students who have been detected with difficulties in their EFL learning, specifically concerning the writing skill, for instance, lack of connection of ideas that they need to express, mistakes in plural nouns, absence of adjectives, wrong tenses, capitalization, and punctuation among others. They received a unique and specific curricular adaptation grade three from the general education curriculum which modified content, objectives, methodology, assessment and some activities. However, inclusion students do not develop properly in the four skills of the language.

Citing the words of the School Psychologist: “to reduce in their instruction by not just traditional approaches but also providing multimedia ways and use their strengths to learn and develop their writing skills”. It is proposed a technological strategy: “Mobile Instant Messaging tool for improving the skills of students with special needs”. It was then conceived and designed to foster the writing difficulties in the sentence structure of inclusion students in the third year of baccalaureate of Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school.

Over the last decade, most English language teachers have focused on the use of technology in the classroom. They explore different multimedia approaches that allow students to develop their writing skills. After the data analysis, it was concluded that these students could better be assisted with

technology for education. Following this line, WhatsApp would be the most useful and appropriate application for inclusion students, since it is a well-known application for smartphones, commonly used by teenagers. Besides, this is free software and it does not need a special area or laboratory to use it.

WhatsApp is a free, popular, simple, and versatile messaging app which through an innovative platform allows teachers to use multiple multimedia messaging resources. (Gon & Rawekar, 2017). This could contribute to foster the writing skills of LD students from AFA high school in a friendly way. This application works across multiple platforms like Android cellphones, tablets, and iPhones. A high percentage of students have their own device and access to WhatsApp and it has wide acceptance among teenagers. Students can use this mobile system for academic and other purposes (Kumara, 2017). Students from AFA high school are not an exception, they count with this digital tool for many issues. Inclusion students from AFA also showed good management of this app in different situations. This condition evidences that the application would represent a significant potential to help LD students in their learning process.

Finally, it is advisable to be aware of the possible technical drawbacks that this technology could bring to the WhatsApp group as an educational tool formed by the teacher. These could be the battery life, memory capacity, problems of mobile internet quota, and faulty smartphones. According to Cetinkaya (2017), these technical drawbacks would affect seriously the effectiveness of the final product from students. They could impede the students from using the mobile application successfully.

## **7.2 Justification**

Detailed analysis of the information gathered concerning the development of sentence structure of inclusion students in the third year of Baccalaureate in AFA high school allowed concluding that the major constraints detected were written errors located in the grammar field, especially in sentence structure and the lack of application of appropriate strategies for writing. Thus, the following proposal considers essential to incorporate the

recommendation on using assistive technology into the classroom. Particularly, the benefits of WhatsApp in the English language and its effectiveness could be applied in interactive written activities which allow teachers to design according to the different level of difficulties of inclusion students. These are the paramount reasons to implement this useful technological tool in this research.

This proposal aspires to respond to the pedagogical project of the Ministry of Education which establishes in the English Language Learning Standards (ELLS) in section C of the third domain the importance of the use of technological resources effectively in English and content instruction. Furthermore, sub-section 3.c.4 of this document explains that the application of technological resources “(e.g., internet, software, computers, and related devices) to enhance language and content-area instruction for students.” (Ministerio de Educación, 2012, p. 5)

The analysis of results obtained in this research revealed that students with special needs in the third year of Baccalaureate at AFA presented errors located in the grammar field like sentence structure, wrong order of words used in an inappropriate context, pluralization, omission of the preposition and pronouns in the sentences, they confuse the use of the third singular person. This information was confirmed in the results of the writing evaluation. While the writing instruction observation demonstrates that teachers do not fully apply inclusion strategies and instructions; use of appropriate time; adjustment for writing practice for students with special educational needs; and providing students’ feedback during or at the end of the session. Thus, students’ writing outcomes showed that a relevant group of students wrote single words, phrases, and sentences partially, not connected with the context and presented difficulties with spelling and the correct use of verb tense.

Additionally, the teacher and the psychologist expressed the necessity of applying assistive technology in order to have self-feedback or help from the teacher to control the development of the writing skill for LD students.

For all these reasons, the implementation of WhatsApp in the classroom could be a significant learning strategy that could help teachers to provide interactive writing activities that LD students enjoy while they develop their writing skills and foster their mind patterns for sentence structure. It can be incorporated as part of a transformative redesign process in the IEPs.

Regarding the educational use of the digital resource, Bouhnik & Deshen (2014) describe WhatsApp as a Smartphone application for instant messaging. It can be used in groups. WhatsApp groups are used for communicating with students, nurturing the social atmosphere, creating dialogue and encouraging sharing among students. Awada (2016) state that WhatsApp communication improves the interaction between teachers and high school learners. "WhatsApp may be utilized as further means for setting home assignment. Furthermore, using WhatsApp application in teaching writing, listening, and speaking might be significant through exchanging files between learners and teachers." (p. 18). These researchers in their studies have evidenced excellent result with their students with the application of this resource. Fattah (2015) indicates in his research that the implementation of WhatsApp program provides several benefits like enhancing students' active participation in the EFL classroom, the opportunity for practicing the language for free, the personal and comprehensive relationship between students and teachers, and allowing students to relate their opinions to those others. Furthermore, this digital tool helps students to work smarter and more effectively.

This study proposes the implementation of Mobile Instant Messaging tool for improving the skills of students with special needs of the third year of Baccalaureate at Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school, incorporating this useful digital tool would support and reinforce the writing skills of inclusion students, as well as, assure their previous knowledge, construct new knowledge, and overcome their writing difficulties in sentence structure by encouraging individualization and autonomy within the learning process.

### **7.3 Objectives**

### **7.3.1 General objective**

To develop EFL writing skills on inclusion students in the third year of baccalaureate of Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school using of an Instant messaging app.

### **7.3.2 Specific objectives:**

- To plan writing activities and messages for inclusion students, adapted to WhatsApp application.
- Design writing differentiated activities to enhance sentence structure, vocabulary (meaning), capitalization, and punctuation on inclusion students in the third year of baccalaureate of Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school through the use of WhatsApp.
- To select writing activities that could allow inclusion students to understand better the process of writing.
- To design rubrics for presentation of writing tasks.
- To establish the moment for evaluating the proposal outcomes.

### **7.4 Phases of the Proposal**

The phases of this study proposal are a projection to carry out the work on each period of the two academic terms. Every quimestre has three terms, each term will have six writing differentiated activities. The graphic demonstrates how it would be developed each phase which comprised the initiation of the proposal, planning, implementation, and closure with an evaluation activity graded through a writing rubric.

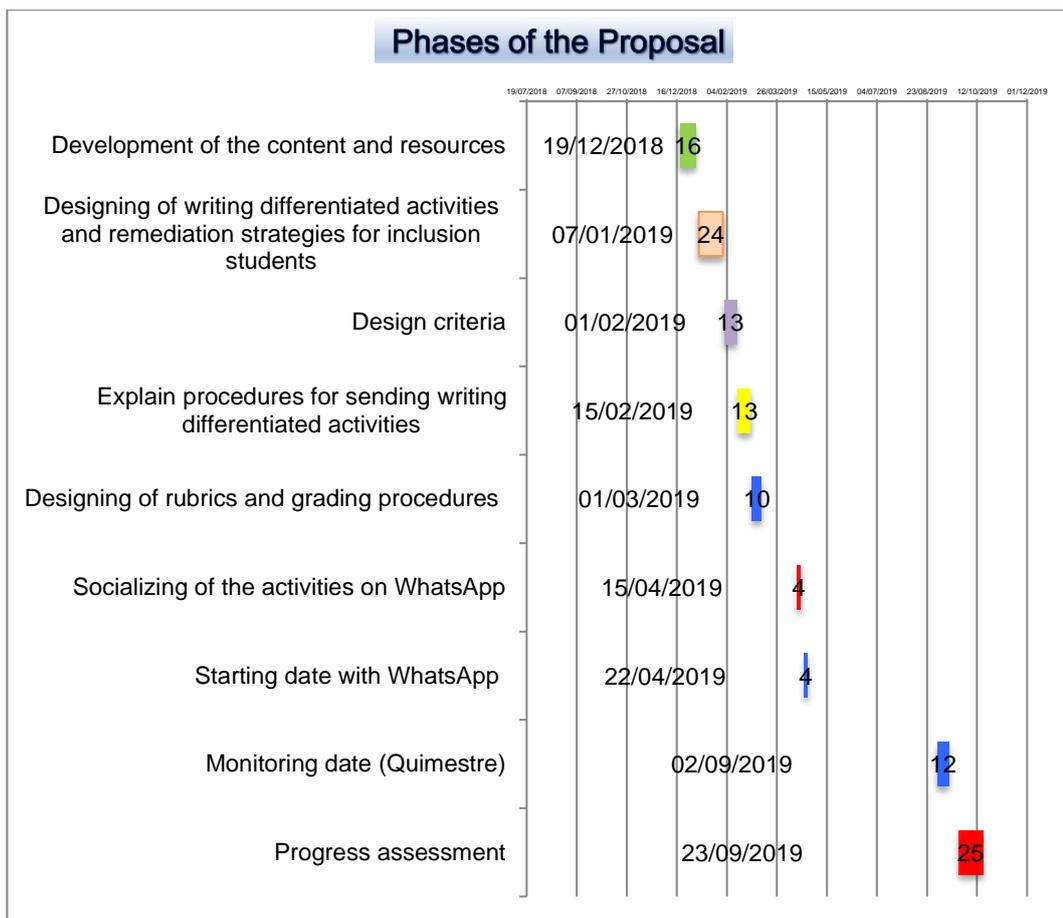


Figure 9 Phases of the Proposal “Mobile Instant Messaging” for Quimestre 1. Elaborated by the author.

### Development of the content and resources

During this first phase, there must be a review of the findings on the application of the previous instrument of written evaluation and prioritize the written difficulties detected. Afterwards, there must be a systematic plan to develop those elements which have the most errors among students of inclusion. These elements have been prioritized according to the final results of the writing quiz carried out with the two students of inclusion.

Items found from research to be mastered in writing for inclusion students	
1. Wrong order	scramble sentences
2. Grammar	sentence structure
3. Wrong word	word meaning
4. Something is missing	Collocations, prepositional phrases
5. Spelling	Compound words, double letters, prefixes, and suffixes.

Table 7 Items found from research to be mastered in writing for inclusion students. Elaborated by the author.

## Designing writing differentiated activities and remediation strategies for inclusion students

The differentiated writing activities will be administered by the teacher following the elements that show difficulty. This plan proposes a series of writing activities that provide support and feedback to the content received into the classroom using the textbook. The activities will be graded as part of the total academic grade of each term. Writing differentiated activities involve the items found from research to be mastered in writing for inclusion students and the topics that 3<sup>rd</sup> Baccalaureate LD students have not understood. These writing activities will be included with support of images, icons, colors, text, and graphics that may provide inclusion students better understanding on the corresponding task.

The following table shows the suggested format plan to develop the writing differentiated activities for the enhancement of the writing skills of the LD students from AFA. This plan is based on the three academic periods of first quimestre, and corresponds to the textbook “B1.2”, which is divided in 6 units.

1 <sup>st</sup> Quimestre			2 <sup>nd</sup> Quimestre		
1 <sup>st</sup> term	2 <sup>nd</sup> term	3 <sup>rd</sup> term	1 <sup>st</sup> term	2 <sup>nd</sup> term	3 <sup>rd</sup> term
Textbook, unit 1	Textbook, unit 2	Textbook, unit 3	Textbook, unit 4	Textbook, unit 5	Textbook, unit 6
5 tasks 1 assessment					

Table 8 Format plan. Elaborated by the author

### Design Criteria

To facilitate the communication and the speed of messaging, this proposal will work with a series of symbols that allow inclusion students to familiarize with the development of each activity and the understanding of them. Codes, icons, and texts will be applied in order to help learners to recognize what they have to do in each activity through instant messages.

## Codes

Codes		
+	affirmative form	+ <u>She is a singer.</u>
-	negative form	- <u>She is not a scientist.</u>
—	completion	— She _____ not a lawyer

Table 9 Codes used on the instant messages the inclusion learners. Elaborated by the author

## Icons

This proposal suggests the use of icons when the icons are shown on the instant messages the inclusion learners have to follow the instructions that they represent.

	Write
	Listen
	Look
	Read
	Follow the link
	use these words in the activity

Table 10 Icons used on the instant messages the inclusion learners. Elaborated by the author

## Samples of writing differentiated activities

These screenshots from WhatsApp show the codes, texts, pictures, and icons required for designing of writing differentiated activities which facilitate the comprehension and the development of them when LD students will have to do the tasks. The activities have been designed by the author who has taken into account the official curricular program for the target group.

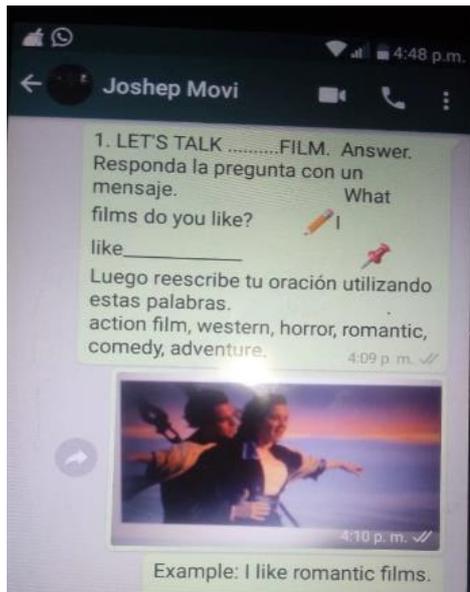


Figure 10 Sample for Write icon

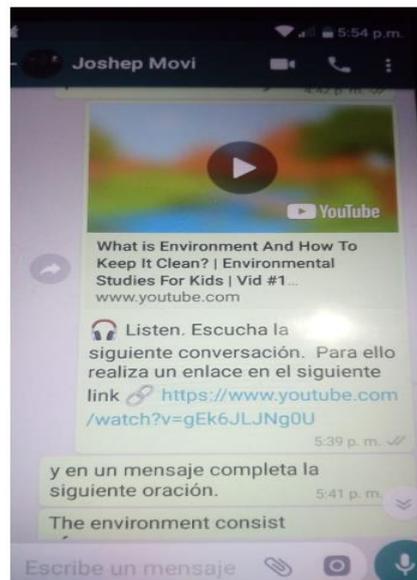


Figure 11 Sample for Listen icon

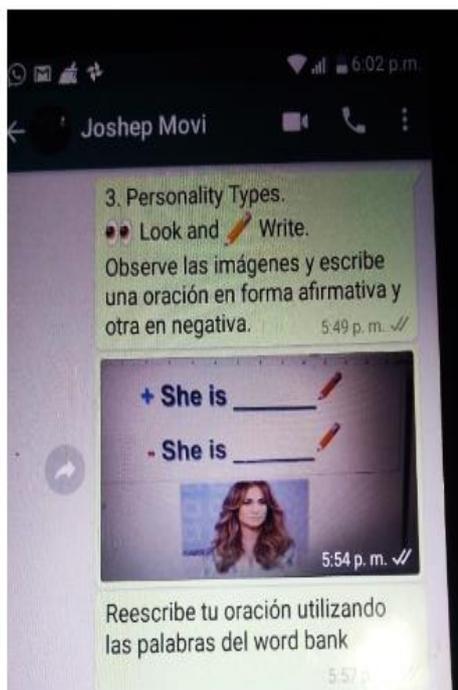


Figure 12 Sample for Look icon

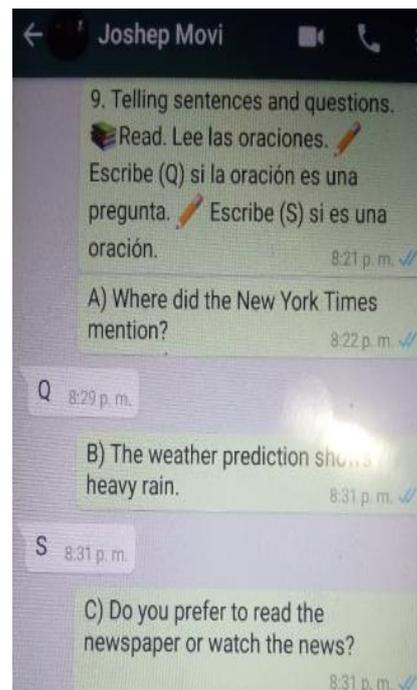


Figure 13 Sample for Read icon

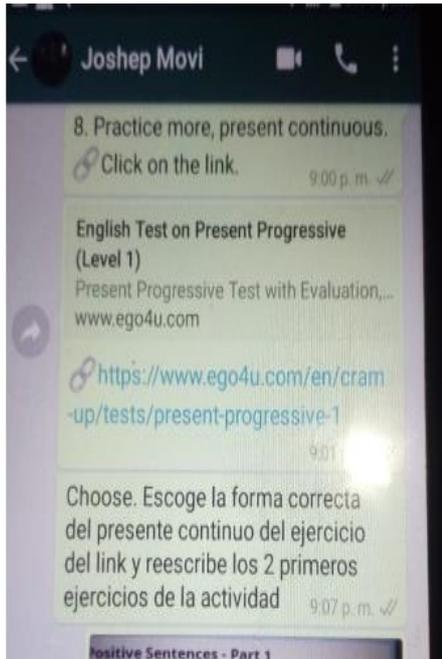


Figure 14 Sample for Link icon



Figure 15 Sample for Word bank icon

## Text

The explanation of each activity must be written in Spanish in order to facilitate the understanding of the instructions, taking into account that these are inclusion students who do not manage English language very well. The commands to be used are: write, look, listen, match, complete, choose, and the other. The rest of the instructions will be written in Spanish.

## Explain procedures for sending writing differentiated activities

There are differentiated activities and messages. They will be sent concurrently as supporting of difficult topics or constraints that need to be reviewed and improved. Information messages also will be sent to clarify orders, tasks, and due time to send the answers.

## Design of rubrics and grading procedures

Writing differentiated activities will be graded according to rubrics designed for this purpose. They will be assessed regarding different aspects like wrong order, grammar, wrong word, something is missing (collocations, prepositional phrases), and spelling, at the end of each term. The methodology and system for grading are included in the IEPs and micro-curricular planning by skills and performance criteria. The grading system is

over 10 marks following the requirements from the rubric. The minimum for passing is 7 over 10.

The element criteria that would assess writing in ESL of inclusion students comprises two decisive factors taken from the Ministry of Education (2015) and the work from Dunsmuir, et al. (2015).

### 7.5 Writing components and marking criteria

Writing Components	Marking criteria
Content	Wrong order, extent, relevance, subject knowledge
Vocabulary range	Word meaning, placement of the words, accuracy,
Grammatical accuracy	Sentence structure, appropriate use of grammar tense, gerunds, infinitives, and connectors
Organization/ Cohesion	Collocations, prepositional phrases, coherence, fluency, clarity, logical sequencing
Spelling / Mechanics	Compound words, double letters, prefixes, suffixes, capitalization, and punctuation

Table 11 Writing components and marking criteria. Adapted from the work of Ministry of Education (2015)

Dunsmuir, et al. (2015), explain that Writing Assessment Measures (WAM) provides the reliability and validity to evaluate the skills which British students with special educational needs or Specific Learning Disabilities are expected to achieve in written expression, as part of the National Curriculum guidelines in England and Wales. This instrument has items on handwriting, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, organization, planning, and ideas. The authors proved the elements are consistent and they appear to be measuring the same concept.

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2015) provides the Rubrics and Grading document. This concept has considered the criteria of international measure for the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference

(CEFR) performance descriptors and CEFR Standards. The format includes elements like content, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range, organization and cohesion, and appropriateness of register and format. Thus, the chosen writing components of this proposal and the marking criteria would be described in the following tables that include both theories.

This rubric would be used to measure writing differentiated activities that will be produced by inclusion students.

<b>How to grade the writing differentiated activities</b>		
<b>CEFR Standard</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
Can write texts using basic sentences on a range of familiar subjects within her field of interest in linking a series of diverse elements into a linear sequence.	Excellent (10)	Accurately writes coherent sentences or short texts including their opinions and facts.
	Good (6-9)	Writes simple sentences including their opinions with minor language problems in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and spelling.
	Needs practice (0-5)	Fails to write coherent sentences or short texts

Table 12 How to grade the writing differentiated activities. Adapted from the work of Ministry of Education (2015)

## 7.6 Rubrics

<b>Rubrics</b>			
<b>Grading scale</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>
Content	The topic and the task are not developed. Does not support their ideas.	The topic and the task are not completely developed. Misses relevant ideas that support their ideas.	The topic and the task are well-developed. This support their ideas.
Vocabulary range	Limited range of vocabulary. Permanent use of inappropriate	Shows control and average range of vocabulary.	Shows sufficient range and accurate control of vocabulary.

	words impedes communication.		
Grammatical accuracy	Inappropriate use of structures tenses and verbs to express their ideas. Many mistakes are present, which makes the message confusing.	Appropriate use of structures tenses and verbs to express their ideas. A few mistakes may be present, but this does not impede conveying a clear message.	Structures tenses and verbs to express their ideas. The message is very clear.
Organization/ Cohesion	There is no logical connection between ideas.	Writes a text following the suggested indications.	Excellent completion of the suggested indications to write the text required.
Spelling/ Mechanics	Makes several errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation which makes the message confusing.	Spell the majority of high frequency common words correctly.	Evidence of correct spelling of complex words containing prefixes/suffixes or irregular words.

Table 13 Grading scale. Adapted from the works of Ministry of Education (2015) and Dunsmuir, et al. (2015)

### **Socializing of the activities on WhatsApp**

Socializing the activities on WhatsApp done between the teachers and the students of inclusion is an important stage that allows students to know the process of receiving and sending the writing differentiated activities. Their doubts about how to use instant messaging as a digital tool for doing writing tasks need to be clarified through previous training or simulation. Another aspect that will assist in the inclusion students' socialization is about setting limits of the use of this application which has just an educational purpose.

### **Starting date with WhatsApp**

After socializing, inclusion students will have received the activities on WhatsApp, since there is little time they just receive three hours a week, the digital exercises must start early with the Mobile Instant Messaging tool for

improving the skills of students with special needs. This event is planned for the fourth week of April.

### **Monitoring date (Quimestre)**

The time for assessment and monitoring are permanent during the stages of the proposal application. The two first weeks of September will be the time assigned for monitoring the results of the application as a way to send and receive writing activities. This period of time corresponds to the final cycle of the first quimestre, this is the opportunity to evaluate the proposal and make the necessary adjustments which may help or improve the efficiency of the proposal. Thus, the next quimestre the teacher could adapt the reinforcement for the writing differentiated activities.

### **Progress assessment**

There will be progress assessments for each stage of the proposal in the use of WhatsApp which must be aligned with the curriculum plan of AFA high school and tasks programmed in the academic schedule. These include assignments, quizzes, quimestral test, and others. This is a way of monitoring the correct use of the application and its usefulness to improve the students writing skills.

## **7.7 Sample plan**

<b>Writing elements according to the level of difficulty adapted from the textbook:</b>			
<b>“B1.2”, Ministry of Education (2016)</b>			
<b>Period: 1<sup>st</sup> Term - Quimestre 1</b>			
<i>Writing Objective:</i> to build awareness on the correct use of subject, verb, and complement order.			
Units (textbook)	Level of difficulty	Activity	Assessment

<p>1. Let's Talk Movies</p>	<p><b>Basic:</b> <b>Subject</b> <b>Verb</b> <b>Compleme ent</b> (SVC) (3 to 4 words) Affirmative form</p>	<p><b>1.1 Movie genres -Sentence Structure</b></p> <p>Students have to answer the question through an instant message.</p> <p>Use the icons:</p> <p> word bank given, e.g.</p> <p> I like <u>romantic movies</u>.</p> <p><b>1.2 Wrong order</b></p> <p>Students have to put in order the words and form sentences (SVC). Then students have to answer through an instant message. e.g.</p> <p>I / action / like / movies →</p> <p> I like action movies.</p> <p><b>1.3 Nouns and adjectives - Wrong word</b></p> <p>Students have to look at the  picture and then match the nouns with the corresponding adjectives. Then they write the answer using a message. e.g.</p> <p> 1.C energy → energetic</p> <p><b>1.4 Nouns and adjectives - Something is missing</b></p> <p>Students have to complete the sentences using the adjectives from the word bank given and rewrite them through an instant message. e.g.</p>	<p>Students write correctly messages with sentences using (SVC)</p> <p>Students reorder the words and write sentences using (SVC)</p> <p>Students write in correct order the nouns and adjectives.</p> <p>Students write sentences using the correct adjectives.</p>
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		<p> These <u>historical</u> movies show how difficult was life in 1900.</p> <p><b>1.5 Suffix - Spelling</b></p> <p>Students have to add the correct suffix to the root words and form new words. They have to use the suffix from the word bank and rewrite them through an instant message with their definitions. e.g.</p> <p> costly expensive: <u>costly</u></p> <p><b>1.6 Unit assessment</b></p> <p><b>Unit review</b></p> <p>Activities of completion to form basic sentences using the vocabulary from unit 1.</p> <p>Students have to look at  the pictures and write  a sentence (SVC) using vocabulary from the  word bank. e.g. I like energetic movies.</p>	<p>Students write words using the correct suffix.</p> <p>Students write sentences using (SVC) and the correct location of the adjective before the noun.</p>
<b>Period: 2<sup>nd</sup> Term - Quimestre 1</b>			
<i>Writing Objective:</i> to write sentences using the correct form of the negative verb to be.			
Units (textbook)	Level of difficulty	Activity	Assessment
2. Professions!	<b>Basic:</b> <b>SVC</b> Negative form	<b>2.1 Personality- Sentence Structure</b>	Students write affirmative and negative sentences using (SVC).
		<p>Students have to look at the  picture and write  sentences in affirmative and negative form using the vocabulary about professions to describe the picture. e.g.</p>	

		<p>She is a singer.  She is <b>not</b> a doctor.</p> <p>Then they have to rewrite  new sentences following the example using the vocabulary from the word bank given and answer through an instant message. </p> <p><b>2.2 Professions - Wrong order</b></p> <p>Students have to reorder the words and rewrite  the sentences through an instant message. e.g.  They / not / artists. / are  They are not artists.</p> <p><b>2.2 Adjective &amp; Synonyms Wrong word</b></p> <p>Students have to look at  the graphics and associate words with similar meanings. Connecting adjectives with the corresponding synonym. They have to use the vocabulary from the word bank given  and answer through an instant message. e.g. realistic → practical </p> <p><b>2.3 Adjective &amp; Synonyms - Something is missing</b></p> <p>Students have to read  the texts and  rewrite the sentences using the adjectives from the word bank</p>	<p>Students order the words and write affirmative and negative sentences using (SVC)</p> <p>Students write correctly the synonyms with the corresponding adjectives.</p> <p>Students rewrite sentences using the</p>
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	Suffixes	<p>given. 📌 Then they answer them through an instant message. e.g.</p> <p>a. Realistic people are <u>practical</u>, they like to use their hands.</p> <p><b>2.4 Suffix - Spelling</b></p> <p>Students have to 🎧 listen to the voice message from the teacher and complete with the correct suffix –er, -or, -ist, or –ian and complete the profession words. Then they send the answer through an instant message.</p> <p>e.g. 🖋️ <u>politician</u></p> <p><b>2.5 Unit assessment</b></p> <p><b>Unit review</b></p> <p>Students have to click in the link </p> <p><a href="http://s.mound.free.fr/skyblues67/jobs/jobsqcm.htm">http://s.mound.free.fr/skyblues67/jobs/jobsqcm.htm</a> and resolve the online activity. Then they have to 🖋️ rewrite five sentences through an instant message. e.g.</p> <p>🖋️ A farmer works in a hospital.</p>	<p>correct adjectives.</p> <p>Students write words using the correct suffix.</p> <p>Students write sentences following the model given.</p>
<b>Period 3<sup>rd</sup> Term - Quimestre 1</b>			
<i>Writing Objective:</i> to write sentences using present simple tense and the interrogative form of the verb to be.			
Units (textbook)	Level of difficulty	Activity	Assessment
3. Environmental Friendly!	<b>Basic:</b> <b>SVC</b>	<p><b>3.1 Renewable Energy</b></p> <p><b>Something is missing</b></p> <p>Students have to click in the link </p>	

Present simple tense		<p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEk6JLJNg0U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEk6JLJNg0U</a></p> <p>Then they have to listen to  the conversation on YouTube about the environment and complete the sentence according to the conversation. Then they rewrite the sentences using the words given in the video of the activity and send an instant message.</p> <p>e.g.</p> <p> The environment consists of <u>air</u>, <u>water</u>, <u>plants</u>...</p>	Students complete and write the statements according to the conversation using present simple tense.
Yes/no questions. with the verb to be		<p><b>3.2 Global warming</b></p> <p><b>Wrong word</b></p> <p>Students have to read  the chart about the yes/no questions with the verb to be -. Then they rewrite the sentences through an instant message using -  am, is, are.</p> <p>e.g.</p> <p><u>Is</u>  Global warming responsible for the increase in temperature?</p>	Students complete and rewrite the Yes/no questions with the verb to be.
Present continuous		<p><b>3.3 Telling sentences and questions</b></p> <p><b>Spelling</b></p> <p>Students have to read  the sentences and write  <u>Q</u> if the sentence is a question and write  <u>S</u> if is a sentence. Then they have to rewrite the sentences and answer through an instant message.e.g.</p>	Students write Q for questions and S for sentences.

		<p>1. Where did the New York Times mention? <u>Q</u></p> <p><b>3.4 Daydreaming</b></p> <p><b>Sentence Structure</b></p> <p>Students have to look at the pictures 🙄 and write ✎ the correct form of the present continuous. They have to use the verbs from 📌 the word bank given. Then they rewrite the sentences of the activity through an instant message. e.g.</p> <p>✎ Paul is <u>daydreaming</u> about swimming in the ocean.</p> <p><b>3.5 Imagine that</b></p> <p><b>Wrong order</b></p> <p>Students have to put in order the words and form sentences in present continuous tense. Then they ✎ rewrite the sentences of the activity through an instant message. e.g.</p> <p>1. moment / studying / at / I / am / the</p> <p>→</p> <p>✎ I am studying at the moment</p> <p><b>3.6 Unit assessment</b></p> <p>Students have to click on the link</p> <p>🔗</p> <p><a href="https://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/tests/present-progressive-1">https://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/tests/present-progressive-1</a> and develop the activity 1 and 2 that will reinforce the use of</p>	<p>Students write sentences using the present continuous form.</p> <p>Students reorder the words and write sentences using present continuous tense.</p> <p>Students write correct sentences using present</p>
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		<p>present continuous in positive and negative forms. Then they ✎ rewrite the sentences of the activity through an instant message. e.g. 🙄</p> <p>✎ I <b><u>am working</u></b> in the garden.</p> <p>✎ I am <b><u>not working</u></b> in the garden.</p>	<p>continuous tense</p>
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Table 14 Unit 1, 2, and 3, Sample for Quimestre 1 of the Proposal. Elaborated by the author.

As explained in Table 14, the Mobile Instant Messaging tool for improving the skills of students with special needs of the third year of Baccalaureate at Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school is the proposal where the teacher will apply writing differentiated activities and messages. This plan describes each of the units that contain writing objectives, level of difficulty, activities, and assessment. The messages are illustrated and presented in a friendly format, so inclusion students feel at ease when they develop the task.

### **Proposal Assessment**

**Student Impact:** the proposal has two events that evaluate if the students react with enthusiasm and motivation. It will be evaluated with future academic reports. The possible outcomes will be recognized by the educational community and social webs.

**Financial Risk and Budget:** The implementation of this proposal does not represent any cost due to WhatsApp is free software that no need a special area nor laboratory to use it.

### **7.8 Lessons learned**

- The implementation of WhatsApp application for delivering writing activities and messages would report new issues in handling groups of learning EFL. It would be interesting to know what characteristics or difficult situations must be overcome.

- WhatsApp application will be an excellent digital resource that allows to send and receive writing differentiated activities to enhance sentence structure on inclusion students in the third year of baccalaureate of Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high school. However, it is not recommended sending the activities on weekend or holidays because students lose interest in doing tasks.

### **7.9 Textbook and other supplementary material**

The main content was considered regarding the unit content of the textbook B.1.2. The chosen bibliography in this proposal comprised textbooks and assistive technology programs.

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## Webgraphia

- <https://www.gingersoftware.com/content/grammar-rules/verbs/the-present-progressive-tense/>
- <http://www.eclecticenglish.com/grammar/PresentSimpleToBe1A.html>
- <https://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/tests/present-progressive-1>
- <http://www.esltower.com/GRAMMARQUIZ/advanced/phrasal%20verbs%20and%20similar%20verbs%20match.htm>
- <http://www.altastic.com/scramblinator/>

# APPENDIX

## Appendix 1

### WRITING ENGLISH QUIZ

UNIDAD EDUCATIVA FISCAL "AMARILIS FUENTES ALCÍVAR"



#### WRITING ENGLISH QUIZ 1

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_ SECTION: \_\_\_\_\_ FIP: \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER: Mgs. Marjorie Loor DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ROW: \_\_\_\_\_ SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_

Reorder the words in the box and answers these questions:

1. What is your name?

name / Carla / My / is

.....

2. Where are you from?

I / from / Ecuador / am

.....

3. How old are you?

years / seventeen / I / am / old

.....

4. Which grade are you in?

of / in / I / am / third / year / baccalaureate / the

.....

5. What is your homeroom teacher's name?

is / name / My / teacher's / homeroom / Marjorie

.....

6. Where do you live?

live / Guayaquil / in / city / I

.....

7. Have you got any brothers or sisters?

I / sisters / don't / have / or / brothers / any

.....

8. What are your hobbies?

is / music / hobby / listening / to / favorite / My

.....

9. What school subjects do you like?

and / studies, / English. / social / like / I / biology, / art,

.....

10. Why do you like these subjects?

like / are / subjects / to / easy / I / because / these / interesting / understand / and / very

UNIDAD EDUCATIVA FISCAL "AMARILIS FUENTES ALCÍVAR"  
WRITING ENGLISH QUIZ 2



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_ SECTION: \_\_\_\_\_ FIP: \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER: Mgs. Marjorie Loor DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ROW: \_\_\_\_\_ SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_

**There are 10 grammar mistakes in the text on the left. You have to find them and correct them.**

The Titanic was biggest and expensivest ship in the world. He was built in Ireland in 1911. First voyage of the Titanic was from Europe to America. In a ship there were about 1200 passengers. The rich passengers was on the upper decks and the poor passengers on the lower decks. On 14 April 1918 the Titanic hitted an iceberg. The iceberg make a big hole in the side of the Titanic and the ship began to sink. Some people survived because he got into a lifeboat. Many other people died when they fall into the freezing water.

## Appendix 2

### Writing Instruction Observation

Writing Instruction Observation			
Date :			
School:			
Teacher:		Course:	
Observer:		Topic:	
Objective :			
<i>References: 3 = fully applied, 2 = somewhat applied, and 1= not applied.</i>			
<b>Does the Teacher:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
1. States explicitly the writing session's objective			
2. Explains explicitly how previous lessons relate to today's writing session.			
3. Activates prior knowledge relevant to today's writing session.			
<b>Skills /Strategies Instruction /Practice</b>			
4. Provides inclusion skill /strategy instruction			
5. Provides an example of writing related to the instruction and/ or practice			
6. Models the writing process of using focus skill /strategies			
7. Explains how or why skill /strategies/processes will help students as writers.			
8. Engages the students in whole class discussion.			
9. Engages the students in small group discussion.			
10. Provides students with the time, in class, to practice the focus skills/ strategies			
11. Adjust whole class and/ or practice based on observations of perceived students' needs and students with special educational needs.			
12. While the students were working the teacher monitors the class			

13. Gives students feedback on their writing or oral responses as part of the skills/strategies instruction and/ or practice			
14. Assigns homework that involves writing to practice the focus of targeted instruction			
<b>Students writing outcomes</b>			
15. Write single words or phrases			
16. Write single sentences (not connected)			
17. Work alone			
18. Work with a partner /small group			
19. Provide oral responses			

Table 15 Writing Instruction Observation, adapted from the work of Kotula, Aguilar, & Tivnan (2014)

### Appendix 3

#### Interview with the coordinator of the English area

1. Does the school have a written policy on Special Education Needs (SEN)?

YES \_ NO \_

2. Type of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Complete the information required

		male	female
a.	How many students with learning disabilities are there in the AFA high school?	14	11
b.	How many students with High Incidence Disability (e.g. Dyslexia; Borderline Personality Disorder / Mild General Learning Difficulty)	9	7
c.	How many students with Low Incidence Disability (e.g. Assessed Syndromes; Sensory-motor Disabilities; Autism)	5	4
d.	From students with learning disabilities, how many of them present difficulties in writing skill?	14	11

3. Are there procedures for determining how long LS (Learning Disability)/SEN (Special Educational Needs) should receive support?

YES \_ NO \_

4. Does your school currently design IEPs (Individual Education Plans) for students with SEN?

YES \_ NO \_

5. How do you describe the English textbook used in this institution?

Extremely helpful \_

Very helpful \_

Somewhat helpful \_

Slightly helpful \_

Not at all helpful \_

6. From your experience, how do the writing activities in the textbook need to be modified?
7. What advantages do you see in using the textbook as the focus for teaching writing?
8. What limitation do you see in using the textbook as the focus for teaching writing?
9. What is your advice for the teaching staff about helping students with learning disabilities engage in writing activities?
10. What is your advice for the teaching staff on helping LD students with writing problems to work out the same activities as the others in the class?
11. What kind of strategies have you seen in teaching LD students with writing problems to improve their academic achievement?
12. What kind of materials does your staff use when teaching these students in the classroom?
13. What kind of support do teachers need to help these inclusive students in the classroom?
14. Is it provided to the students any checklist to help in the error correction of words?
15. What kind of feedback do you advise teachers could provide after the writing activities?

Written \_

Peer feedback \_

Self-feedback (self-correction) \_

16. Do you think that there is anything else that can improve the writing skill of the LD students?

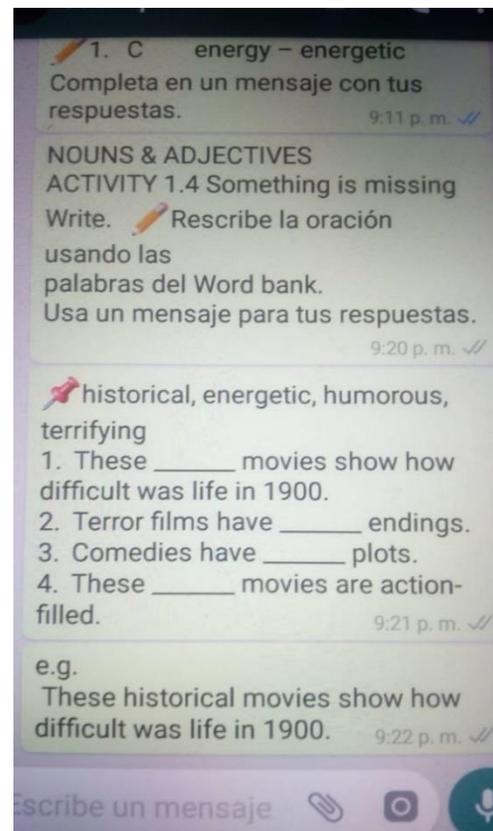
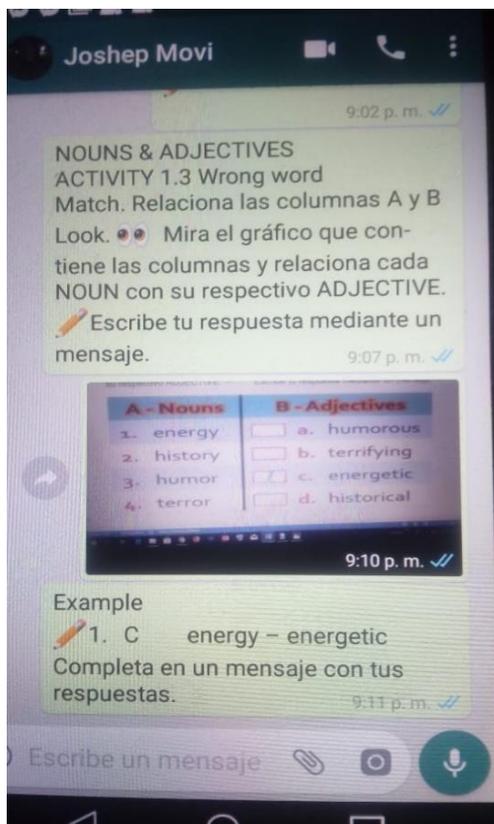
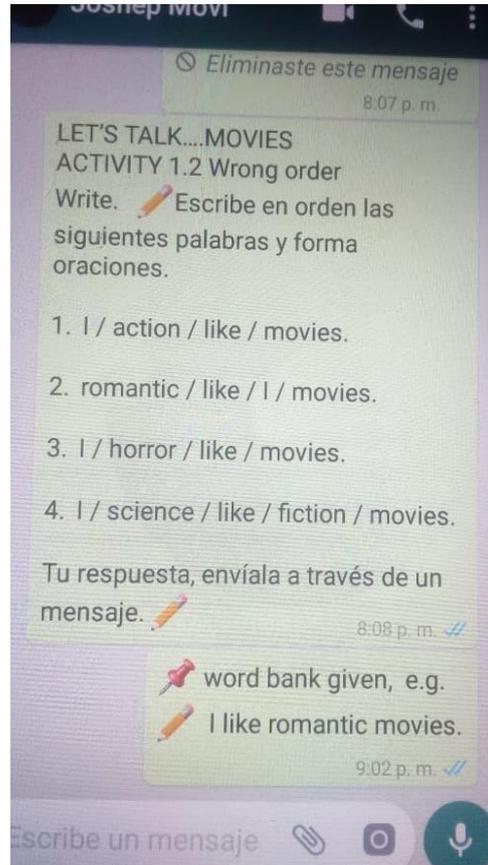
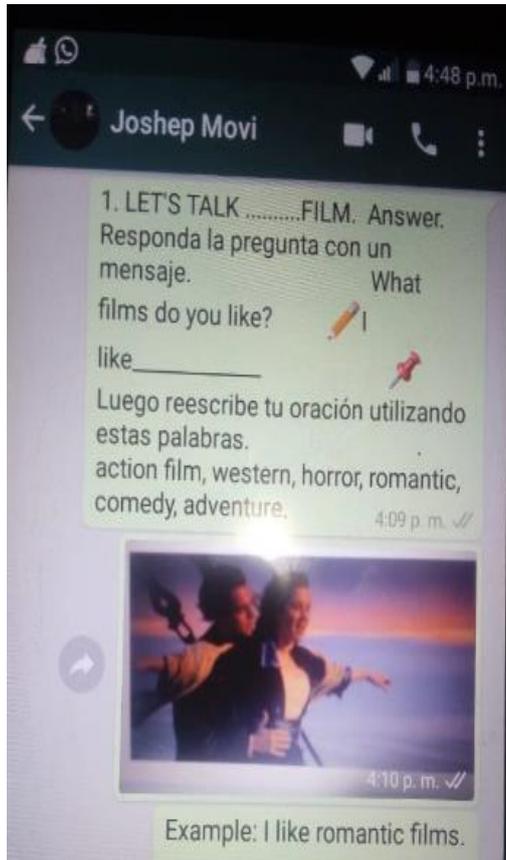
## Appendix 4

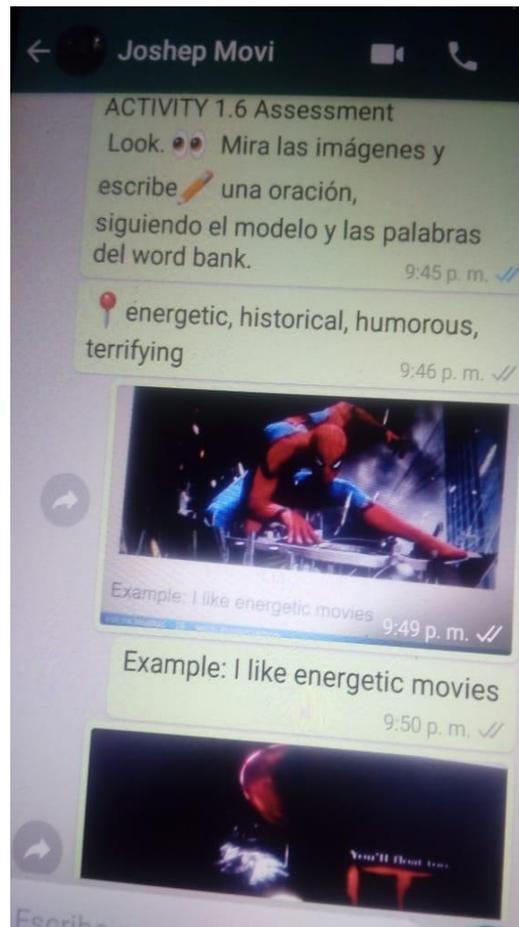
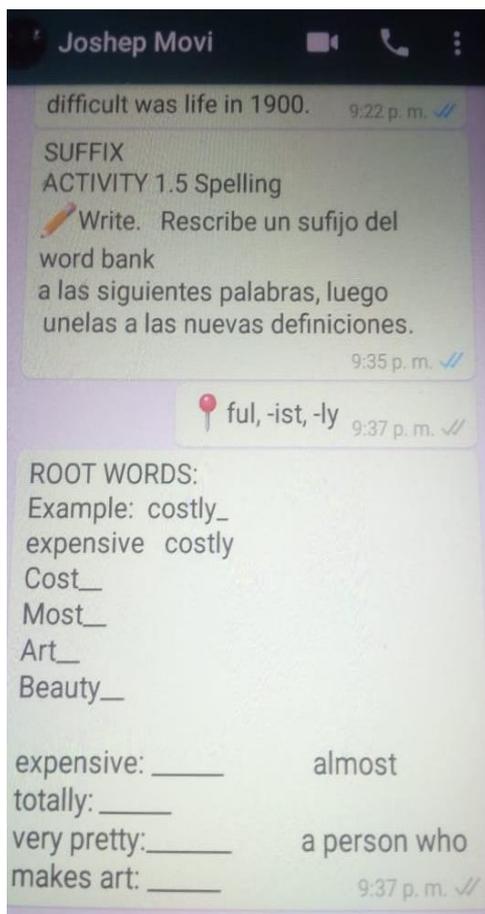
### Type of Special Educational Needs (SEN) at AFA

	Type of Special Educational Needs (SEN) at AFA	Male	female
a.	How many students with learning disabilities are there in the AFA high school?	14	11
b.	How many students with High Incidence Disability (e.g. Dyslexia; Borderline Personality Disorder / Mild General Learning Difficulty)	9	7
c.	How many students with Low Incidence Disability (e.g. Assessed Syndromes; Sensory-motor Disabilities; Autism)	5	4
d.	From students with learning disabilities, how many of them present difficulties in writing skill?	14	11

## Appendix 5

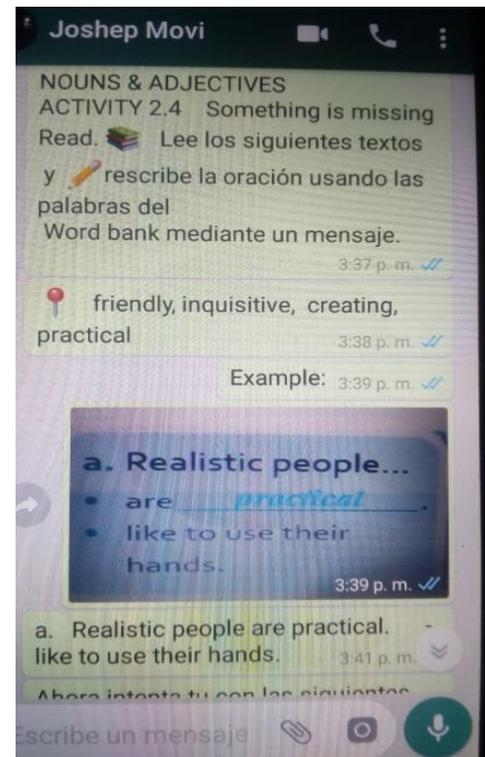
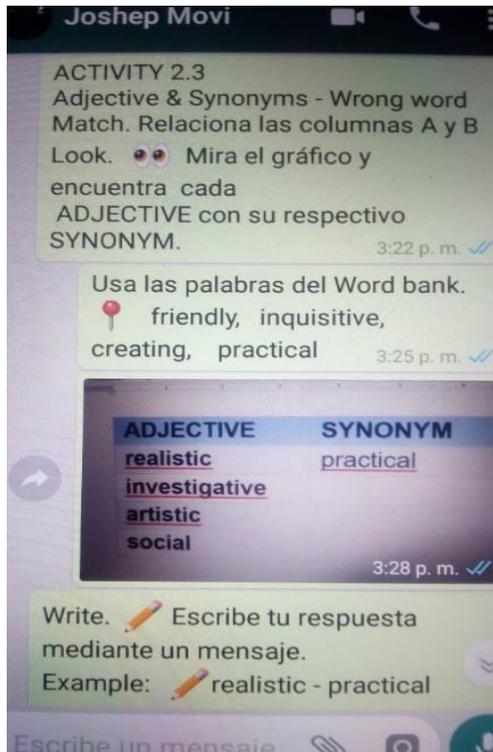
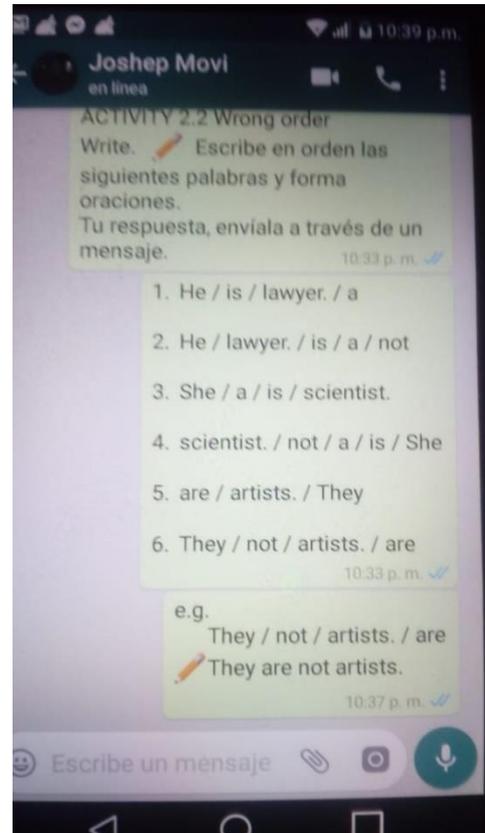
### Visual representation of the Instant messages from the Unit 1

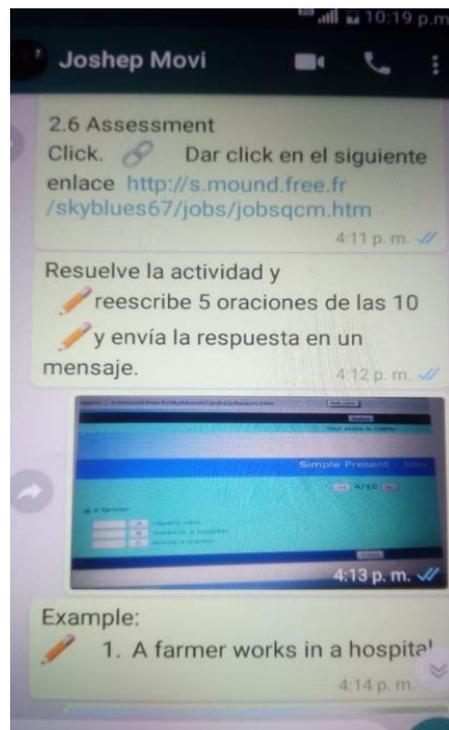
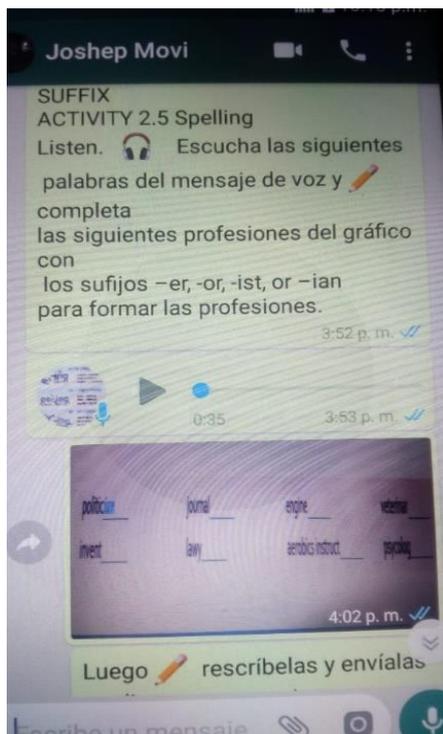




## Appendix 6

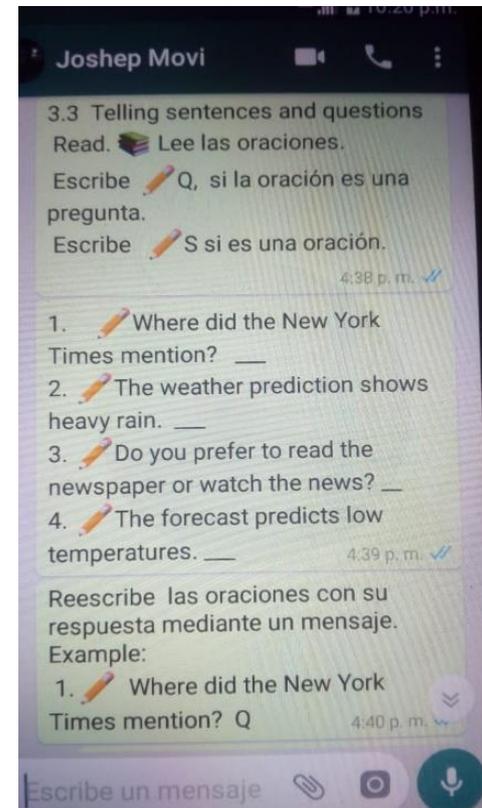
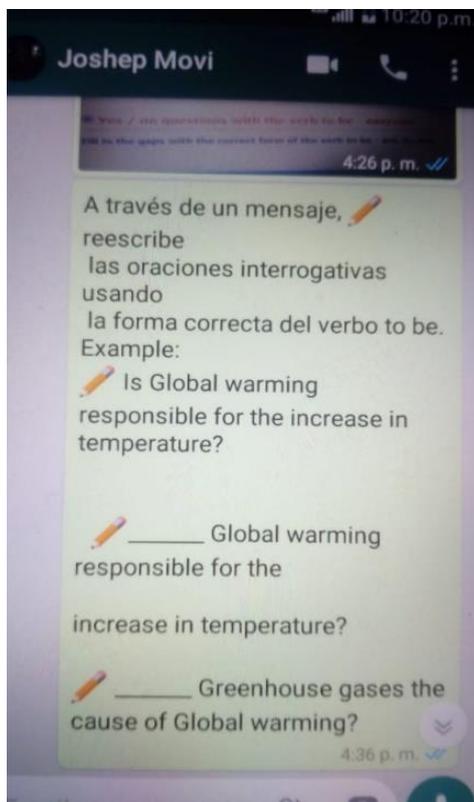
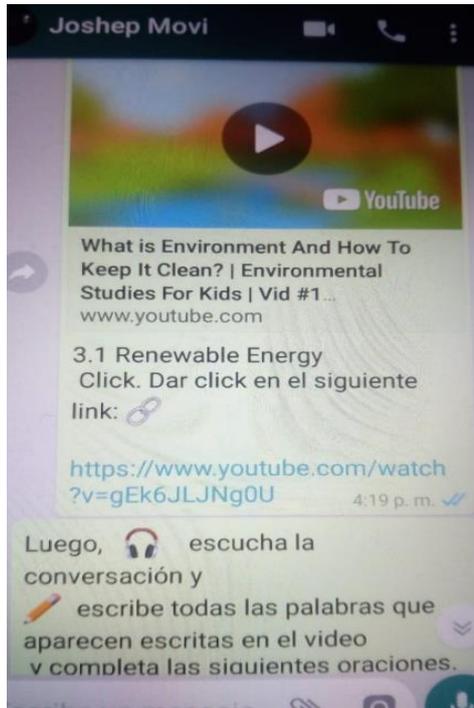
### Visual representation of the Instant messages from the Unit 2

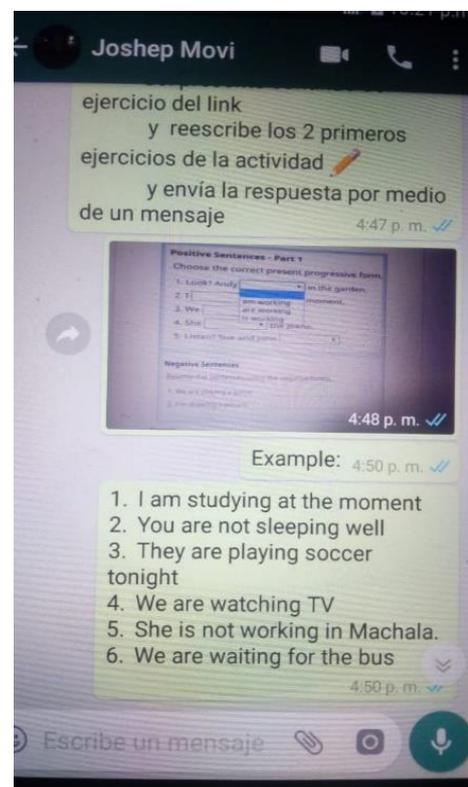
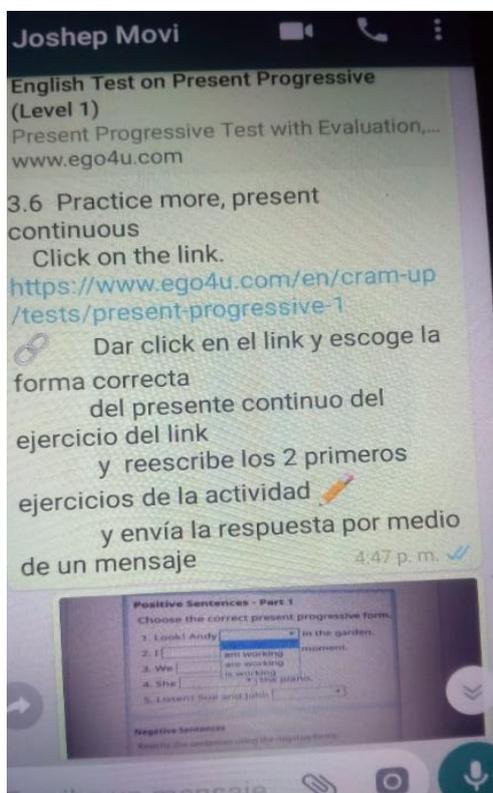
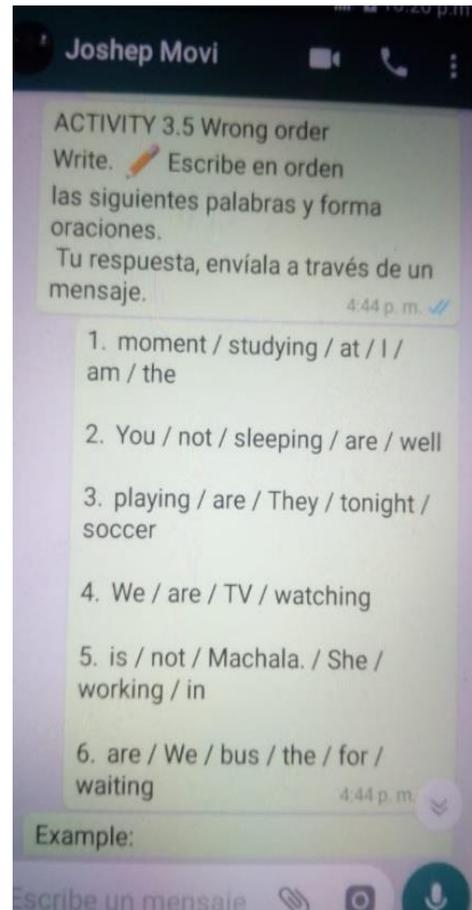
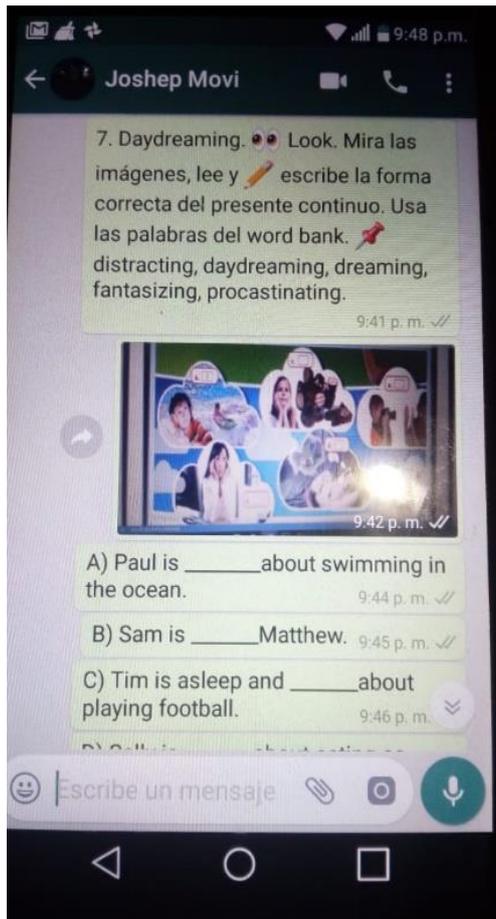




## Appendix 7

### Visual representation of the Instant messages from the Unit 3





## DECLARACIÓN Y AUTORIZACIÓN

Yo, **LOOR ALDÁS MARJORIE DEL ROCÍO**, con C.C: # **0911001386** autora del trabajo de titulación: **Analysis of writing skills in students with special needs at third year of Baccalaureate in Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar High school**, previo a la obtención del título de **Master en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera** en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil.

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Guayaquil, **Agosto de 2020**

f. *Marjorie Lora A.*

Nombre: **Loor Aldás, Marjorie del Rocío**

C.C: **0911001386**

<b>REPOSITORIO NACIONAL EN CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA</b>		
<b>FICHA DE REGISTRO DE TESIS/TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN</b>		
<b>TÍTULO Y SUBTÍTULO:</b>	Analysis of writing skills in students with special needs at third year of Baccalaureate in Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar High school	
<b>AUTOR(ES)</b>	Loor Aldás Marjorie del Rocío	
<b>REVISOR(ES)/TUTOR(ES)</b>	Vásquez Barros Mariela, MSc.	
<b>INSTITUCIÓN:</b>	Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil	
<b>FACULTAD:</b>	Sistema de Posgrado	
<b>CARRERA:</b>	Maestría en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera nombre de la carrera	
<b>TITULO OBTENIDO:</b>	Magister en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera	
<b>FECHA DE PUBLICACIÓN:</b>	<b>de Agosto del 2020</b>	<b>No. DE PÁGINAS: 112</b>
<b>ÁREAS TEMÁTICAS:</b>	Educación Inclusiva, Enseñanza de Inglés, Pedagogía	
<b>PALABRAS CLAVES/ KEYWORDS:</b>	English Foreign Language (EFL), assistive technology, writing difficulties, learning disabilities, inclusion, WhatsApp	
<b>RESUMEN/ABSTRACT (150-250 palabras):</b> This research work was developed upon students of inclusion who have writing difficulties in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course at Unidad Educativa “Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar” (AFA, acronym in Spanish) high school. A case study methodology and a mixed-methods approach (MM) were conducted. In collecting the data, the researcher used a quantitative writing evaluation, writing instruction observation, and an interview. The study was focused on the analysis of the academic achievement in writing skills of two inclusion students from the third year of baccalaureate of AFA high school. Thus, the analysis of the data determined that the students with learning disabilities presented a higher frequency of errors in the wrong order, grammar, wrong words, spelling mistakes, and missing words. Results also proved that some teachers used traditional resources, like the textbooks which were slightly helpful and did not provide enough support for writing activities for LD students. The design of a proposal based on assistive technology is presented to foster the writing difficulties observed in the LD students through WhatsApp application.		
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