UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

"FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL FROM THE FIFTH ACADEMIC YEAR IN THE ENGLISH III COURSE IN GROUPS 02 AND O3 OF THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MAJOR AT THE SCHOOL OF JURISPRUDENCE AND SOCIAL SCIENCES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR, SEMESTER 1-2018"

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is a very important and fundamental language skill for all kinds of purposes, but especially when writing an academic paper. Therefore, the present research project aims to find out the factors that influence students' writing skill from the fifth academic year in the English III course in groups 02 and 03 of the International Affairs Major at the School of Jurisprudence and Social Sciences from the University of El Salvador, semester I – 2018.

This report lists the factors that are affecting the students' writing skill as well as the most common issues found in their academic papers. One of the most important things to remember when teaching writing is that writing is a process, therefore, teaching how to write effectively is one of the most important life-long skills educators impart to their students. Important information can be found in the theoretical framework, information that reinforces the research. Among some of the information can be mentioned: different approaches to the teaching of writing, the most common factors students face when learning to write academic papers, and the like.

This project also explains the process followed by the research team to collect meaningful and important information regarding the factors that affect students' writing skill as well as the most common issues identified in their academic papers. For carrying out this present study, the research questions were answered by analyzing the information gathered through the surveys applied to both students and teachers and also by means of checking students' academic papers using a check list which contained important aspects of writing which should be taken into account when writing academic papers.

At the end, conclusions are presented based on the main findings and recommendations for students, teachers and the Jurisprudence and Social Science school are given with the intention of improving the students' writing skill so they can be more prepared when facing the labor market.

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

DELIMITATION OF THE PROBLEM

The following research project was carried out in the International Affairs Major at The Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School from the University of El Salvador, in groups 02 and 03, semester I, 2018.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Schools, colleges and universities have no worth without students. Students are the most essential asset for any educational institute, their performance (academic achievement) plays an important role in producing the best graduates. The International Affairs Major students need to have a good level of performance in the writing skill since it enables them to face the academic requirements which not only the major itself requires, but also what the work environment requests.

This study focused on semester I – 2018 in groups 02 and 03 since students of the fifth academic year were currently taking their third English course of a total of four, which was based in developing students' writing skill. The main reason of this research started with the necessity of identifying possible factors that affected the students' writing production. These students along their major have four English courses in which they are taught different English skills to communicate. However, not all the courses focus in developing the writing skill; students of this major get to have the opportunity to develop this skill until they reach the third English course in the first semester of their fifth academic year.

Therefore, some students have to take some additional English courses outside in order to get previous knowledge of the language so they can have a better performance in their English courses once they get into their third English course.

The pesum below shows how the different subjects are organized along the major.

Moreover, it was important to find out if one course intended to develop students writing skill was enough for them to be able to write academic papers that fulfill the requirements of the course's syllabus. Therefore, due to the academic syllabus's demands for students to produce academic papers at the International Affairs Major, it was considered really important to carry out a research with the objective of identifying if there were factors that affected the development of their writing skill in order for them to be capable of writing academic papers at the end of their third course. After all, what really matters is the educational quality of these students in order to be able to cope with the demands of the labor market when finishing their major.

OBJECTIVES

General objective:

- To identify the main factors that affect students' writing skill from groups 02 and 03 in the International Affairs Major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School from the University of El Salvador, in semester I, 2018.

Specific objectives:

- To determine if the teaching methodology applied is efficient at developing the students' writing skill.

- To identify the most common problems that students have in their academic papers.

- To check if students follow the correct writing stages taught by teachers when writing academic papers.

- To suggest viable strategies that may help students to improve their writing skill and improve their academic papers after have checked recommendations and observations given by experts in this field after checking students' academic papers.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are the factors that influence the students' writing skill from groups 02 and 03 in the International Affairs Major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School from the University of El Salvador, semester I - 2018?

SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS:

1. Which factors are mostly affecting the students' writing skill?

2. Is the teaching methodology applied efficient to develop the students' writing skill?

3. What are the most common problems students have in their academic papers?

4. What are the stages that students use when writing an academic paper?

5. Which writing approach is being used to teach writing?

JUSTIFICATION

This research project was focused on the factors that influenced students' writing skill in groups 02 and 03 in the International Affairs Major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School at the University of El Salvador, semester I - 2018, from the fifth academic year. It was decided to carry out this study since it was noticed by checking the syllabus of this course that there was a requirement of having students master their writing skill in order to produce well written academic papers; so that when they face labor challenges, they are able to perform a good job and take advantage of all the opportunities they were provided.

The writing skill has an important role in communication. A good command of the writing skill allows people to communicate massages with clarity and ease to far larger audience than through face-to-face or telephone conversations. It was decided to identify the most common factors that students of the fifth academic year from the English courses 02 and 03 at the International Affairs major faced because by becoming aware of these factors, solutions were proposed to teachers and students so that students can improve their writing in order to produce academic papers of higher quality. Moreover, it was intended to raise the educational level of students in terms of writing and its components since this was really important not only for students and the coordinator of the major, but also for the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School.

The researchers planned to identify the possible factors that affected students' writing performance by checking students' writing pieces which were revised by experts in the writing area to determine the most common problems that students had in their academic papers. Also, by interviewing teachers by making use of an interview. As well, students were asked to answer a questionnaire. Once these factors were identified, it was proceed to propose the most accurate and achievable recommendations as a matter of solution to improve the students' writing skill.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF WRITING

The history of writing is the history of how the human being recorded thoughts, events, and feelings. It is the history of civilization itself. The human beings would never have known their history without drawings, signs and words they have recorded. The first writing Instruments dated back to the cave-men and took many different forms as sharpened-stone, bones, etc. (cited in Nemouchi, 2008, p 16)

Writing has its foundation in oral language, but its unique purpose, form, and function set it apart (Goodman, 1986). Whereas oral communication can rely on immediate verbal and nonverbal feedback, written language is highly decontextualized (Sulzby, 1985; 1986). In other words, writing does not provide a lot of contextual clues to help with the communication process (Bruning & Horn, 2000). Writing requires more specificity and a better sense of an (absent) audience than does communication in the oral domain (Johnson, 1993).

During the 1950, the pedagogy of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes were dominated by the audio lingual method which focuses on oral proficiency. Writing on the other hand, was marginalized and was only seen as means of reinforcing and consolidating language patterns (Fujieda, 2006).

In the 21st century, writing has become an important part of daily life as technology has connected individuals from across the globe through systems such as e-mail and social media. Literacy has grown in importance as a factor for success in the modern world. In the United States, the ability to read and write are necessary for most jobs, and multiple programs are in place to aid both children and adults in improving their literacy skills. For example, the emergence of the writing center and community-wide literacy councils aim to help students and community members sharpen their writing skills. These resources, and many more, span across different age groups in order to offer each individual a better understanding of their language

and how to express themselves via writing in order to perhaps improve their socioeconomic status.

In the world of globalization, English has increasingly become the medium in every domain of communication, both in local and global contexts. As a result, the demand for using English effectively is necessary in every country. Teaching and learning English, except for the native language, is thus crucial for communicative purposes to cope with the growing local, national and international demands for English skills.

The process of learning English is slow and progressive and it could be interpreted as a series of challenges to face. This process consists of the development of certain skills. According to the Common European Framework References (CEFR), these are divided into productive and receptive. Receptive skills comprise reading and listening. They are important because they allow learners to understand contents, textbooks, works or documents. Productive skills consist of speaking and writing and they are significant because they permit learners to perform in communicative aspects such as oral presentations, written studies and reports among others. Therefore, these skills need to be developed and learnt properly.

Writing is not for turning out cookie-cutter essays in Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition. It's not for texting friends, keeping diaries. Writing is important because it's used extensively in higher education and in the workplace. If students do not know how to express themselves in writing, they will not be able to communicate well with professors, employers, peers, or just about anyone else.

Much of professional communication is done in writing: proposals, memos, reports, applications. Preliminary interviews, e-mails, and more are part of the daily life of a college student or successful graduate. Even if students manage to learn the material in their college classes without knowing how to write well, they will not be able to express their knowledge to the people who are making the big decisions. Potential employers will not know whether the knowledge that they do have can be applied to everyday demands unless it´s through spoken interview. Even the majority of certifications and licensures require basic writing skills to obtain greatly increase the opportunities for a well-paid and interesting career. Being able to

write in English solves one of the communication barriers between people from different countries.

The problems that colleges face today in developing and maintaining effective programs for poorly prepared students must be viewed in the context of the changes that are occurring in higher education in this country. As a matter of fact, The International Affairs major involves the study of the global community. This area of study looks at world societies and the interactions between them. Being an International Affairs major student requires professional skills and writing skills in order to take important decisions to trade agreements, international relationship among governments. The writing skill in the International Affairs major is seen as the core professional skill that allows all those working in the field to function as a conduit, transferring ideas smoothly and ensuring that their team can achieve their government's or organization's goals.

In addition to in-depth knowledge of world affairs, economics, culture, history, and language, this major aims at developing several valuable soft skills during the studies. They include listening, speaking, and critical thinking, problem solving, and writing that will qualify the graduates to work both in the corporate and non-profit sectors.

DEFINITION OF WRITING

"Writing is the physical manifestation of a spoken language". Joshua J. Mark

Writing is a medium of human communication that represents language and emotion with signs and symbols. In most languages, writing is a complement to speech or spoken language. Writing is not a language, but a tool used to make languages be read. Within a language system, writing relies on many of the same structures as speech, such as vocabulary, grammar, and semantics, with the added dependency of a system of signs or symbols.

In its simplest form, may be just using graphic symbols or reproducing in written form something which has been heard or read. Writing becomes more complicated when it involves producing meaningful segments to carry a message in the language. Accordingly, Widdowson

(2001) stated that "writing is the use of visual medium to manifest the graphological and grammatical system of the language.

The result of writing is called text, and the recipient of text is called a reader. Motivations for writing include publication, storytelling, correspondence, record keeping and diary. Writing has been instrumental in keeping history, maintaining culture, dissemination of knowledge through the media and the formation of legal systems.

MOST COMMOM PROBLES THAT AFFECT WRITING.

There is a common agreement that writing is the most complex and difficult skill for it requires a lot of training. Like all learning problems, difficulties in producing a good piece of writing can be devastating to the learners' education, self-esteem, self-confidence, and motivation to write. Many researchers (Harmer 2007, Nunan 1989, Tribble 1997, Richards

& Renandya, 2003) agreed that writing is the most complex and difficult skill. This difficulty lays not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text.

According to the experiences of some foreign language learners, most difficulties are found in the written skill, thus the main purpose of the study conducted by Lenny Johana Alvarado Rico (2014), the study focused on analyzing the factors that affected English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' performance when working on writing or speaking activities. This study aimed at helping EFL teachers understand why most of their students face difficulties throughout their learning process and to identify the factors causing those problems, i.e. control at the sentence level. Structure and integrate information cohesively and coherently within paragraphs and texts.

Nowadays, the writing skill has not been developed in the way that it should be. Through the history some of the main problems among students is the fact that many of them cannot develop their writing skills, mostly the ones who are writing compositions in a foreign language. This has become very difficult not only for students but also for professors, because there are factors that influence the students' writing skill such as the use of complex grammar structures when they want to write, the lack of an adequate vocabulary in order to be understood, the teachers 'methodology, the large classrooms, among others.

Firstly, it is not uncommon to say that grammar instruction plays an important role in language teaching. Regarding the status and importance of grammar instruction, a variety of opinions have been made. Zamel (1992, p. 473) who described writing as a "mean inset of skills which must be practiced and learned through practice. On the other hand, Bell and Burnaby (1984, as cited in Nunan, 1989, p. 23) had a similar point to Tribble (1997). They pointed out that: Writing is a very complex cognitive activity in which writers must show control over content, format, sentence, structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation, i.e., control at the sentence level. Besides, writers must be able to structure and integrate information cohesively and coherently within paragraphs and texts. Nacira, G. (2010).
Moreover, grammar instruction is an important factor that influences in the writing skill. Its primary goal is to enable students to carry out their communication purposes whether verbally or in writing. According to Chin (2000), effective grammar instruction begins with what students already know about grammar, and it helps them use this knowledge as they write. Teachers must determine what the students already know about grammar and build upon that knowledge. Grammar instruction needs to be couched in meaning contexts, which includes appropriate student support as well as involve them in learning experiences that encompass whole class instruction, small group instruction, collaboration in pairs, and independent work (Stathis & Gotsch, 2013).

Secondly, the ability to write effectively hinges upon having an adequate vocabulary even more than does the ability to read. Once students have learned to decode words, they may be able to read and pronounce many words that are unfamiliar to them. They may even be able to determine accurate meanings of unfamiliar words simply by examining the context in which

those words are used. During the writing process, however, a student does not have the luxury of examining the context in which a word is used; he or she is creating the context. Therefore, the writer must be able to spontaneously recall words that are known not only by sight, but that are understood well enough to use correctly. Mayher and Brause (1986) have stated that writing is dependent upon the ability to draw upon words to describe an event" (Corona, Spangenberger, & Venet, 1989, p. 18).

In addition, the linguist David Wilkins argued that: "without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be. Vocabulary represents one of most important skills necessary for writing. It is the basis for the development of all the other macro skills: reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking, writing, spelling and pronunciation. Vocabulary is the main tool for the students in their attempt to use English effectively. When confronted with a native English speaker, when watching a movie without subtitle or when listening to a favorite English song, when reading a text or when writing a letter to a friend, students will always need to operate with words.

Besides, vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language" p. 55). Nation (2001) further describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. The importance of vocabulary is demonstrated daily in and out the school. In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary.

Besides that, vocabulary knowledge can be demonstrated in two ways: receptively or expressively. Knowledge of the words that are seen and heard would be described as the individual's receptive vocabulary. Expressive vocabulary consists of the words that are used to convey information, by either writing or speaking. Typically, receptive vocabulary is larger than expressive vocabulary. Although individuals may understand the general idea of a word

in their receptive vocabulary, they might lack the knowledge of the true definition that would be needed in order to use the word in their expressive vocabulary (Kamil & Hiebert, in press). Vocabulary knowledge can be demonstrated in two ways: receptively or expressively. Knowledge of the words we see and hear would be described as the individual's receptive vocabulary. Expressive vocabulary consists of the words that are used to convey information, by either writing or speaking. Typically, receptive vocabulary is larger than expressive vocabulary.

Thirdly, teachers' methodology teachers plays an important role in fostering the intellectual and social development of the learning process. The education that students acquire is key to determining the future of those students. Whether in elementary, high schools, in private or public schools or universities, teachers provide the tools and the environment for their students to develop into responsible adults.

Teachers act as facilitators or coaches, using classroom presentations or individual instruction to help students learn and apply concepts in subjects. Teachers observe and evaluate a student's performance and potential because education is one of the main ingredients in forming a successful society.

In the fourth place, exposure to receptive skills and writing practice are also required to develop one's writing skill. The amount of these provided to learners inside and outside the classrooms is not enough to master the skill, receptive skills are not considered very important for the writing. If practice starts at college, then they will have developed writing sufficiently to meet the requirements of a university.

Although it does not always make students better communicator, those who read tend to have a more varied range of words to express how they feel and to get their point across. This increases exponentially with the more volumes they consume, giving them a higher level of vocabulary to use in everyday life.

Through reading, students expose themselves to new things, new information, new ways to solve a problem, and new ways to achieve one thing. They might actually explore one thing they really like and it may end up becoming their career and success in the future. Exploration begins from reading and understanding.

In fifth place, motivation is another factor. Quintero's (2008) study pointed out that problems with grammar, punctuation, lexical choice and the like have a negative impact on the content and the general understanding of a text. In addition, this study indicated that writing was a complicated skill to develop since it implied the use of mental processes rather than only using the structures of the language. For instance, the author established that those difficulties could be solved by motivating the students, by giving them the opportunity to write about the topics of their particular interest, and also by giving them the appropriate feedback of their work. It takes a lot of time and effort to write, and so it is only fair that student writing is responded to suitably. Positive comments can help build student confidence and create good feeling for the next writing class. It also helps if the reader is more than just the teacher.

Lastly, large classrooms courses are also potential factors. For example, a classroom, crowed of students all being extremely loud and obnoxious, taking a test and all of the combined sounds and talking of other students make concentration difficult to keep. Classrooms fail to provide conductive environment to learners resulting in poor writing skill development.

Furthermore, not only are small classes good for students, but are good for teachers, too. When a class has less people, the teacher will feel less stressed. Students are also more comfortable in small classes. If they are more comfortable then they will feel less embarrassed and feel that they will be able to answer more questions because they don't have to hide. When there are a lot of people in a classroom, it is harder to get to know each other and when is needed to talk in front of the class, it is like speaking to an unknown crowd.

Therefore, it is necessary for researchers to identify the most common factors and problems that students of the fifth academic year from the International Affairs Major face when writing academic papers. The results of this research also will help to find out possible solutions as

well as propose techniques and strategies based on the findings and observations taken by their academic papers reviewed.

INFLUENCE OF L1 IN L2 WRITING PROCESS

First language (L1) transfer has been a key issue in the field of applied linguistics, second language acquisition (SLA), and language pedagogy for almost a century. Its importance, however, has been re-evaluated several times within the last few decades. In L2 writing, transfer can be considered both as a learning device and as a strategy to solve communication problems. As Mahmoud (2000) pointed out, when L2 learners attempt to compose a written piece, they might use transfer as a tool to learn or as a means to convey their meaning; they may use it to formulate hypotheses about target language and to test those hypotheses.

Many of the composing strategies are the same in the L1 and the L2, and thus, L2 learners may be able to transfer those from their L1 to their L2 writing. For example, learners who have already learned how to plan, develop ideas, revise, and edit their writing in their L1 may use the same strategies when they are composing in their L2 (Cumming, 1990; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989). Of course, for such composing strategies to be successfully carried over to the L2, L2 learners are required to have an adequate level of proficiency in the target language. Lower-level proficiency learners may not be able to successfully transfer such L1-based strategies because they have not yet reached a level of linguistic knowledge where they can linguistically compose a text in the target language (Berman, 1994).

L2 learners may also resort to their L1 to compensate for their deficiencies in the L2 knowledge. As adult learners who are cognitively mature, they may have complex ideas to convey in their writings. In such cases, shortage of the target language knowledge may push them to rely on the L1 to express those ideas. For these learners, reliance on the L1 can have both positive and negative consequences. Errors might occur if the learner inappropriately transfers a linguistic form from one language to the other or if the learner is misled by the partial similarities between

the two languages. As Eckman (1977) pointed out, there are some language features, such as unmarked features, which are more prone to be transferred. However, transferability of language forms may not always be predicted based on their linguistic features. There may also be psychological factors such as the learner's perception of the distance between the L1 and the L2 that may play a role in the transfer of a linguistic item from one language to the other (Kellerman, 1983)

STAGES OF TEACHING WRITING

Although there are many ways of approaching process writing, it can be broken down into three stages:

1.   Pre-writing

The teacher needs to stimulate students' creativity, to get them thinking how to approach a writing topic. In this stage, the most important thing is the flow of ideas, and it is not always necessary that students actually produce much (if any) written work. If they do, then the teacher can contribute with advice on how to improve their initial ideas.

2.   Focusing ideas

During this stage, students write without much attention to the accuracy of their work or the organization. The most important feature is meaning. Here, the teacher (or other students) should concentrate on the content of the writing. Is it coherent? Is there anything missing? Anything extra?

3. Evaluating, structuring and editing.

Now the writing is adapted to a readership. Students should focus more on form and on producing a finished piece of work. The teacher can help with error correction and give organizational advice.

Classroom activities.
The follow are classroom activities related to the stages above:

PRE-WRITING

- Brainstorming:

Getting started can be difficult, so students divided into groups quickly produce words and ideas about the writing.

- Planning:

Students make a plan of the writing before they start. These plans can be compared and discussed in groups before writing takes place.

- Generating ideas:

Discovery tasks such as cubing (students write quickly about the subject in six different ways. So they:
- Describe it
- Compare it
- Associate it
- Analyze it
- Apply it
- Argue for or against it.

- Questioning

In groups, the idea is to generate lots of questions about the topic. This helps students to focus upon audience as they consider what the reader needs to know. The answers to these questions will form the basis to the composition.

- Discussion and debate

The teacher helps students with topics, helping them develop ideas in a positive and encouraging way.

FOCUSING IDEAS

- Fast writing

The students write quickly on a topic for five to ten minutes without worrying about correct language or punctuation. Writing as quickly as possible, if they cannot think of a word they leave a space or write it in their own language. The important thing is to keep writing. Later this text is revised.

- Group compositions

Working together in groups, sharing ideas. This collaborative writing is especially valuable as it involves other skills (speaking in particular.)

- Changing viewpoints

A good writing activity to follow a role-play or storytelling activity. Different students choose different points of view and think about /discuss what this character would write in a diary, witness statement, etc.

- Varying form

Similar to the activity above, but instead of different viewpoints, different text types are selected. How would the text be different if it were written as a letter, or a newspaper article, etc.

EVALUATING, STRUCTURING AND EDITING.

- Ordering

Students take the notes written in one of the pre-writing activities above and organize them. What would come first? Why? Here it is good to tell them to start with information known to the reader before moving onto what the reader does not know.

- Self-editing

A good writer must learn how to evaluate their own language - to improve through checking their own text, looking for errors, structure. This way students will become better writers.

- Peer editing and proof-reading

Here, the texts are interchanged and the evaluation is done by other students. In the real world, it is common for writers to ask friends and colleagues to check texts for spelling, etc. You could also ask the students to reduce the texts, to edit them, concentrating on the most important information.

WRITING APPROACHES

A number of approaches have emerged to develop practice in writing skill. Applying one approach or another depends on what the teacher wants the leaner to do: whether he wants them to focus on the product of writing or its process, or whether he wants to encourage creative writing.

Writing is an important skill that is used throughout a person's life for academic, professional, and personal purposes. If students are a proficient writer, much of the process is automatic and requires little conscious effort. For a novice writer, there are many things to think about: forming letters on the page, writing left to right in a horizontal line, leaving spaces between words, using letters to represent the sounds in words, capitalizing proper nouns and the beginning of sentences, and placing punctuation in appropriate places.

Because writing is such a challenging task, over the years, teachers have taught writing in many different ways, and components of each approach are still found in classrooms today. To understand current writing instruction, it is helpful to understand how it has been taught in the past and why educators have introduced new ways of teaching it over time. The different approaches below that have been used, show how each has been critiqued, and includes research evidence about the effectiveness of each of them. Also recommendations are included for how teachers can best incorporate the components of each approach into their classroom practice.

- **Penmanship Approach**

In the United States, the earliest approach to writing instruction with novice writers was teaching penmanship, a practice that dates back to the colonial era. Penmanship focused on transcription—the physical act of writing—and it involved producing legible, accurate, and even beautifully formed letters on the page. Novices learned penmanship through imitation and practice, so they copied models over and over again from printed copybooks. Novice writers

began by practicing single letters, followed by words, sentences, and eventually paragraphs. In some classrooms, the teacher led the entire class to write letters in unison as she gave verbal commands: "Up, down, left curve, quick" (Thornton, 1996). Sometimes novices even practiced the motions of writing, such as pushing and pulling the pencil on the paper, without writing actual letters. Regardless of how penmanship was taught, though, "writing" instruction consisted of copying rather than writing original words.

The goal of penmanship instruction was to ensure novice writers formed letters correctly so they could produce neat, readable writing. However, students, and even many teachers, disliked the boring and mechanical drills. By the 1930s, some educators began to critique penmanship as an overly narrow approach to writing instruction (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). They suggested penmanship was not an end in itself, but a tool for communication. This led some teachers to encourage novices to write their own ideas for real purposes, such as making classroom signs or recording lunch orders. Teachers' manuals began to separate penmanship and writing instruction, and penmanship was renamed "handwriting."

Handwriting instruction continued in most classrooms throughout the 20th century, but it was given less priority as the curriculum began to focus on writing original compositions. At the same time, some educators began to view handwriting as unimportant because the use of technology (e.g., computers, tablets) had reduced the need for handwritten texts.

Recent studies show that handwriting is an important part of writing instruction, but for different reasons than educators believed in the past. The appearance of the writing, which was the focus of the penmanship approach, is no longer considered important for its own sake. Instead, researchers now know that proficient writers possess fluent handwriting skills, just as strong readers possess fluent decoding skills. They form letters quickly and automatically, without much conscious thought, which allows them to devote attention to the higher level aspects of writing such as generating ideas and monitoring the quality of their text (Christensen, 2009).

- **Rules-Based Approach**

Teachers in the U.S. have taught novice writers the rules of language and writing since colonial times. Initially, these lessons occurred in the subject of "grammar" and were considered separate from "writing" (penmanship) instruction. However, as novices began composing original sentences, grammar and writing instruction began to merge. By the late 1800s, teachers viewed rules-based instruction as a way to improve students' writing (Weaver, 1996).

Rules-based instruction involves teaching novices to correctly write words and sentences. It includes activities like identifying parts of speech, locating sentence elements such as subjects and predicates, learning and applying rules for subject-verb agreement and pronoun use, and practicing punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. One common exercise is sentence correction. Teachers provide sentences with language errors and ask novice writers to correct the mistakes. Students may also write original sentences for the purpose of practicing how to use language. For example, they may be asked to write a sentence that uses certain adjectives or homonyms appropriately. Other activities include adding prefixes or suffixes to lists of words, joining sentences by adding conjunctions, and changing fragments into complete sentences.

Many educators have critiqued the rules-based approach to teaching writing as being decontextualized and inauthentic. It is decontextualized because students mostly write isolated words or sentences rather than full texts. It is inauthentic because, in the world outside of school, high school or college, people do not write in decontextualized ways. They write stories, blogs, emails, and reports, and those compositions serve meaningful purposes—to entertain, inform, or persuade their readers. Writers communicate meaning, not just correct sentences, so they must generate meaningful ideas and organize their thoughts logically. However, rules-based instruction does not address these higher level aspects of writing. Activities such as correcting sentences and adding prefixes to lists of words bear little resemblance to writing people use in their everyday lives.

Because rules-based instruction is decontextualized from writing authentic texts, it does not improve students' writing skills. As early as 1926, elementary teachers reported that "the study of grammar did not seem to affect pupils' speech and writing" (Cotner, 1926, p. 525). Later research provided empirical evidence to support what teachers noticed in their classrooms. Many studies synthesized by Myhill and Watson (2013) have shown that teaching novice writing students rules apart from meaningful writing tasks makes no impact on how they write. Even when students perform accurately on decontextualized activities, they often do not apply that knowledge in their own writing. For example, a student who can add punctuation to a sentence written by the teacher often incorrectly punctuates sentences in his or her original composition.

While decontextualized rules-based instruction does not improve students' writing, there is some evidence that teaching grammar within the context of writing is beneficial (Jones, Myhill, & Bailey, 2013). A contextualized approach looks very different from traditional rules-based instruction. In a traditional approach, students might learn about adjectives by underlining them in sentences printed on a worksheet. In a contextualized approach, they add adjectives to their stories to describe the characters and the setting. The teacher might introduce adjectives as "describing words" and ask the students to give some examples. She then will show them how to use adjectives to create a vivid description of a story setting, and the students will use adjectives to create settings in their own stories. Using adjectives in context, rather than on a worksheet, provides a meaningful purpose for learning about them. In addition, because students apply their knowledge of adjectives directly to their writing, the quality of their writing improves.

- **Process Writing Approach**

Like the name suggests, process writing instruction focuses on the process of composing texts. In this approach, students learn to brainstorm ideas, write rough drafts, and revise and edit those drafts. Process writing emerged in the 1970s, sparked by teachers' growing rejection of a rules-based approach. At the same time, professional authors, such as the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Donald Murray (Murray, 1968), began to advocate a "workshop" approach to writing

instruction that engaged students in the same writing process that published authors used. Soon thereafter, researchers began to study writers as they composed original texts (Emig, 1971; Hayes & Flower, 1980). The findings of this research provided models of what writers do as they compose and the composing process that occurs in writers' minds. Importantly, both this research and the instruction proposed by professional authors such as Murray were based on the writing processes used by adult writers rather than those used by novice writers. However, despite this limitation, process writing became increasingly prevalent in elementary schools.

Because process writing began, in part, in response to criticisms of rules-based writing instruction, it emphasizes what rules-based approaches did not. Rather than teaching rules for creating sentences, it focuses on writing full texts and meaningful ideas, and it de-emphasizes spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Although educators and textbooks often talk about the process approach to writing instruction, in reality it is many varied approaches that all share a focus on the writing process

People sometimes wonder why these different ways of teaching are all called "process writing instruction." This happens because teachers, and sometimes researchers, tend to label any approach in which children draft, revise, and/or edit as "process writing." Research shows that teachers who use process writing instruction implement it in different ways (Troia, Lin, Cohen, & Monroe, 2011). As a result, the term "process writing" means many different things.

Evaluating the benefits of process writing instruction is challenging for two reasons. First, few high quality experimental studies have directly examined this approach (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). As a result, causal evidence about its effectiveness is limited. Second, because teachers implement process writing differently, it is difficult to judge this approach holistically.

- **Process-Product Approach**

Writing is one the most important skills in learning a foreign language the nature of which has become clearer nowadays. It involves the development of an idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and of experience with subjects.

Writing accuracy is an important concern in EFL writing classrooms. Students' writing performance is usually evaluated based on how accurate they are in lexico-grammatical areas, spelling and punctuation. In some classes students are asked to write after analyzing the main components of a sample text. They are actually required to copy the sample text's organizational characteristics. This is what is done in product-based approaches. In process-product approaches, where a model text is present, students should also prepare their piece of writing after a careful analysis of the sample text.

- **Genre Approaches**

Although process writing provided a much needed response to ineffective, decontextualized language activities, the focus on process sometimes meant teachers ignored the quality of the writing itself (Baines, Baines, Stanley, & Kunkel, 1999). In some classrooms, students drafted, revised, edited, and shared their work, but their writing never improved. Particularly troubling was the fact that some students—usually white, middle class English speakers—seemed to excel in process writing classrooms while others— usually those from historically marginalized groups—did not. This fact led genre theorists to critique process writing and offer genre approaches as an alternative.

Genre approaches to writing instruction focus on how to write different types of texts. The notion of genre is grounded in the idea that writing is situational, so what counts as "good" writing depends on the context, purpose, and audience. For example, texting a friend and composing an essay are two very different writing situations. A "good" text message communicates ideas informally and efficiently, and background information is not needed because the author and reader share common knowledge and experiences. A text which states,

"Ok meet you at 10" suffices. A good essay, however, has very different characteristics than a text message. An essay author must use a formal tone, fully explain all ideas, provide examples, and use complete sentences. Thus, the form of the writing is tied to the situation in which it occurs.

Teachers who use genre approaches teach about different writing situations and the forms required in each one. Instruction usually begins with children reading and analyzing a genre (Dean, 2008). In a unit about informational texts, the teacher will read many informational books aloud to the class and ask the students to read informational books on their own or in small groups. After reading, they discuss questions such as, "What's the purpose of informational texts? When do authors write them? When do readers read them? What do readers expect when reading this genre? What are the features common to informational writing?" Once children understand the purposes and features of the genre of informational books, they would then begin to write their own.

Genre approaches answer critiques of process writing by emphasizing the text and explicitly teaching the features of different text types. However, because teachers often integrate genre instruction with process writing or strategy approaches (described below), it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of genre instruction by itself. Research does show that children need repeated exposure to a variety of genres (Donovan & Smolkin, 2006), so it seems plausible that genre instruction would benefit students. However, we currently have no confirmation that genre instruction alone improves children's writing.

- **Strategy Approaches**

Strategy approaches to writing instruction teach students the planning, drafting, and revision strategies used by skilled writers. These strategies are specific steps that guide students through each part of the writing process. For example, students might learn the planning strategy POW (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006): Pick my ideas (decide what to write about), Organize my notes (organize ideas into a writing plan), and Write and say more (continue to modify the plan while writing). The teacher would teach this strategy through a series of steps:

1. Develop the background knowledge students need to apply the strategy.
2. Discuss the strategy and how it will improve students' writing.
3. Demonstrate the thinking processes used while implementing the strategy.
4. Provide support as students use the strategy, such as working together with a partner.
5. Have students use the strategy independently.

Strategy instruction typically incorporates elements of both process writing and genre instruction. After learning the POW strategy, students learn other, genre-specific strategies for planning and drafting. When learning about persuasive writing, they learn TREE: Tell what you believe (state topic sentence), provide three or more Reasons (Why do I believe this?), and End it (wrap it up right), and Examine (Do I have all the parts?). This strategy teaches the features of persuasive writing and guides students through planning, drafting, and evaluating their texts. After completing their drafts, they might learn the SCAN revision strategy (Harris & Graham, 1996): Scan each sentence. Does it make sense? Is it connected to your belief? Can you add more? Note errors. Using POW, TREE, and SCAN together guides students through the process of writing a persuasive piece and directs them to include features of the persuasive genre.

Strategy instruction is a structured, systematic, explicit approach to teach writing. Teachers thoroughly explain the steps of the writing process and directly demonstrate both the thinking and the actions required to implement each step. Students practice each strategy, first with teacher and peer support and then on their own, until they have mastered it. Thus, while strategy instruction teaches the writing process and genre features, it is more systematic, explicit, and mastery-oriented than either process writing or other genre approaches. These features also seem to make it more effective. Numerous experimental studies have shown strategy instruction to be more effective than other types of writing instruction (Graham, 2006). However, strategy instruction is easily broken down into steps, which means that it is easier to research than other approaches. This may be one reason why more experimental studies about strategy instruction have accumulated compared to research on other ways of teaching writing.

IMSCI is an acronym for a series of steps, based on the concept of scaffolding. This model can be used to guide the teaching of any genre in almost any grade level.

This approach begins with Inquiry in which the teacher and students read various examples of a genre together and create a chart of the genre's characteristics. This inquiry is more consistent with other genre approaches than with models of strategy instruction in which the teacher directly describes and explains the genre features. However, the next step of IMSCI, Model, involves explicit instruction. The teacher directly demonstrates the thinking and actions required to plan, draft, and revise. The final steps—Shared writing, Collaborative writing, and Independent writing—are also similar to other strategy approaches in which students first work closely with peers and the teacher before writing independently. However, IMSCI is less mastery-oriented and somewhat less teacher-directed than other strategy instruction approaches.

Despite the strong evidence that strategy instruction helps students learn to write well, it is not widely used in elementary classrooms. This reality may be because teachers view it as formulaic or because it is more teacher-centered (rather than student-centered) than other approaches. Of course, teachers who use strategy instruction implement it in different ways. For instance, some teachers use IMSCI (A model for Scaffolding Writing Instruction), a somewhat less directed method of teaching strategies.

- **Multimodal Writing Approach**

Multimodal approaches to writing instruction acknowledge that people in the 21st century write differently than in the past. In addition to composing traditional, linear, paper-based texts, we also—perhaps more often—compose digitally. Writing digitally is not just a matter of typing on the computer rather than writing on paper. Digital texts use many different modes to communicate, and authors can develop proficiency in composing each one. Consider a typical webpage. In addition to written words, it may also contain photographs, artwork, audio, video, and text boxes that allow readers to post their own ideas. Designing and coordinating these various elements requires different skills than writing a words-only story.

Digital writing also links texts differently than traditional writing. Many traditional stories are linear; the author expects readers to proceed from the beginning to the end rather than jump forward and backward through the pages. In contrast, think about how people read digital texts. A typical sequence might be: Read half of the home page, click on a video link, watch half the video, click back to the home page, click on a hyperlink, read the first two sentences of the new page, then click on another hyperlink to yet another.

The word "design" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) is often used to describe digital composing because many elements must be considered beyond the written words. Unlike traditional books, there are many options for page size and orientation, font style and size, layout of elements on the page, use of white space, and modes of communication (music, video, pictures, and written words). The author of a digital text employs writing, graphic design, and possibly even musical, movie making, and visual art skills to design the text. Furthermore, because digital texts can be interactive, authors must also consider if and how they will provide opportunities for readers to make comments, participate in polls or surveys, or otherwise add to the text.

Although digital, multimodal writing is prevalent in our everyday lives, many elementary students continue to compose traditional pencil-and-paper texts in school. This may occur because the technology needed to write digital texts is too expensive or because the curriculum focuses on traditional paper-based writing. Still, some teachers are providing opportunities for students to combine traditional and digital writing.

As a conclusion, many different approaches to writing instruction have been used in elementary classrooms. Some approaches, such as short, structured handwriting lessons and strategy instruction, have a strong research base to support them. Other approaches, like penmanship and rules-based instruction are ineffective in improving children's writing skills. Many approaches, including teaching grammar in context, process writing, teaching genre, and multimodal writing, are promising practices that need more research to determine the best ways to implement them. Teachers commonly do, and probably should, combine the best elements of each approach in order to provide the most effective instruction for their students. They must also seek out newly published research on writing instruction so they can continue to make informed decisions about the best ways to teach.

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS WHEN WRITING ACADEMIC PAPERS

- **Coherence:** Coherence in writing is the logical bridge between words, sentences, and paragraphs. Coherent writing uses devices to connect ideas within each sentence and paragraph. Main ideas and meaning can be difficult for the reader to follow if the writing lacks coherence. Coherence can be created between sentences through repetition and transitional devices. Repetition of words across sentences helps to reiterate the same ideas between sentences.

- **Cohesion:** It is important for the parts of a written text to be connected together. Another word for this is cohesion. This word comes from the word cohere, which means 'to stick together'. Cohesion is therefore related to ensuring that the words and sentences you use stick together and make sense.

- **Syntax:** A writer uses words to communicate with his audience. After selecting the right words to convey his meaning, a writer must arrange these words to best express his intent, or what he means to say. This arrangement of words is syntax: the ordering of words to say what needs to be said.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Through the development of this research project, the group applied the appropriate procedures to enquired on the factors that influenced students' writing skill from the International Affairs Major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School in the theoretical groups 02 and 03 at the University of El Salvador, semester I, 2018 and at the same time to give recommendations to benefit all the parts involved as stated in the objectives that researchers pursued with this research. Moreover, this research explains every single stage on how the study was developed, including all the steps to answer the research questions stated at the beginning of the research.

TYPE OF THE STUDY (QUALITATIVE RESEARCH)

The type of study that was used in the research project was the qualitative research because the group interpreted and described the factors that influence the students´ writing skill to come to a conclusion. As well this study was based on a qualitative research because it determined that all those factors influence the students' writing skill of the students of the fifth academic year from International Affairs Major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School. In this way, the research tried to identify the main factors that affect the writing skill in the production of academic papers.

Since qualitative research is useful to gather an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and its reasons, this type of research is the one that applies the best in this study because all the information gathered in the literature review and the data that was expected to explain why the writing skill is difficult to master.

TYPE OF METHOD (DESCRIPTIVE – QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE)

This research was based on the descriptive method as an appropriate way to collect data; in order to find out the factors that were affecting students of the fifth academic year writing skill.

A qualitative and descriptive method is concerned with providing descriptions of phenomena that occur naturally without the intervention of an experiment of artificially contrived treatment. So by observing, researchers were able to describe the factors obtained at the end of the research.

Also quantitative since researchers were able to analyze and interpret the graphs by using percentages and in this way be able to collect all information needed at the end of the researcher.

POPULATION

This research covered the students from the fifth academic year of the International Affairs Major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School in the theoretical groups 02 and 03, from the University of El Salvador semester I, 2018.

SAMPLING FRAME

The sampling frame focused on the fifth academic year of the International Affairs Major because they had already taken the subjects in which they had learnt processes and techniques of writing. Within the 4 theoretical groups of semester I, of the English III course that students of the fifth academic year in the semester I were taking; the theoretical group 02 and 03 were selected from the four theoretical groups of this course, two in the morning and the other two in the afternoon, the sum gathered of 210 students approximately.

SAMPLE

The present research study took place at the University of El Salvador and it was developed with students of the International Affairs Major from the Jurisprudence and Social Science School, groups 02 and 03 in semester I, 2018. Taking into account that the research question was: What are the factors that influenced the students' writing skill from groups 02 and 03 in

the International Affairs Major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School from the University of El Salvador, semester I - 2018?

In order to calculate the estimated number for the sample, the next formula was applied:

$$n = \frac{NK2\,p.q}{e2\,(N-1) + k2.p.q}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population

K2 = Constant that must not be less than 25% (2.56)

Group 02 had 51 students registered and its sample was 46.

Group 03 had 68 students registered and its sample was 58.

It was decided to work on the subject of English III, groups 02 and 03 because at this level of their fifth academic year they had already taken two of the English courses required. Therefore, they were supposed to master the English writing skill. Moreover, the sample based in the formula applied was (136) students who were part of the groups 02 and 03 in semester I - 2018. The teacher of the subject confirmed the exact number of students registered in the course.

TYPE OF SAMPLING: RANDOM SAMPLING

Convenience Sampling

Theoretical groups 02 and 03 were selected within the English III courses due to schedule facilities, amount of students who signed up in this group and time availability; that is why convenience sampling is the proper one to gather all the data. In addition to the above, the group was selected randomly; the chosen groups were the ones from the afternoon being these two: the theoretical 02 and 03. This method is a type of sampling where the first available primary data source was used for the research without additional requirements. In other words, this

sampling method involves getting participants wherever you can find them and typically wherever it is convenient.

TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTATION

Techniques

In descriptive research, the techniques to collect data can be categorized in terms of relative degrees of explicitness in which data collection instruments require the response of the subject being studied. So in this study the following techniques are going to be used:

Survey:

Surveys are useful to collect data from large groups of subjects. The items on a survey may consist of questions or other stimuli that either limit responses to a very narrow range of possibilities or allow more latitude in response.

Description:

This type of technique is used as a means of describing the characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does not answer questions about how/when/why the characteristics occurred. The main goal of this type of research is to describe the data and characteristics about what is being studied for the research. The researchers used it to gather information or data needed to describe the aspect of the phenomenon that was studied.

Instrumentation

Questionnaire:

One of the instrument applied for the data collection gathering process was a questionnaire which contained 10 items.

The idea of applying this questionnaire was to gather as much information as possible from students in order to find out the possible factors that influenced their writing skills. Likewise, those factors were taken into account as well as students' ideas in order to improve either their domain of the skill or the way they considered appropriate to be taught.

Other:

In order to identify the problems students had when writing academic sample essays, some of these academic sample essays were chosen and then were checked and analyzed by composition teachers from the Foreign Language Department (FLD) of the Sciences and Humanities Faculty from the same university by making use of a rubric provided by researchers. These findings were also useful because they were compared with what students and teachers from the subject English III said in their responses in order to determine if the results were similar or not.

Piloting

As a matter of piloting test, five students from the theoretical group number 01 were taken in order to apply the instrumentation tool; in this case a questionnaire was applied to verify if students understood what they were being asked. The group was selected in a non-random way due to the facility of the researchers. Moreover, each detail was taken into consideration in order to improve the instrumentation tool before has being applied to the target sample. Students were provided with a survey which helped to identify students' reality and / or opinion related to their domain of the writing skill.
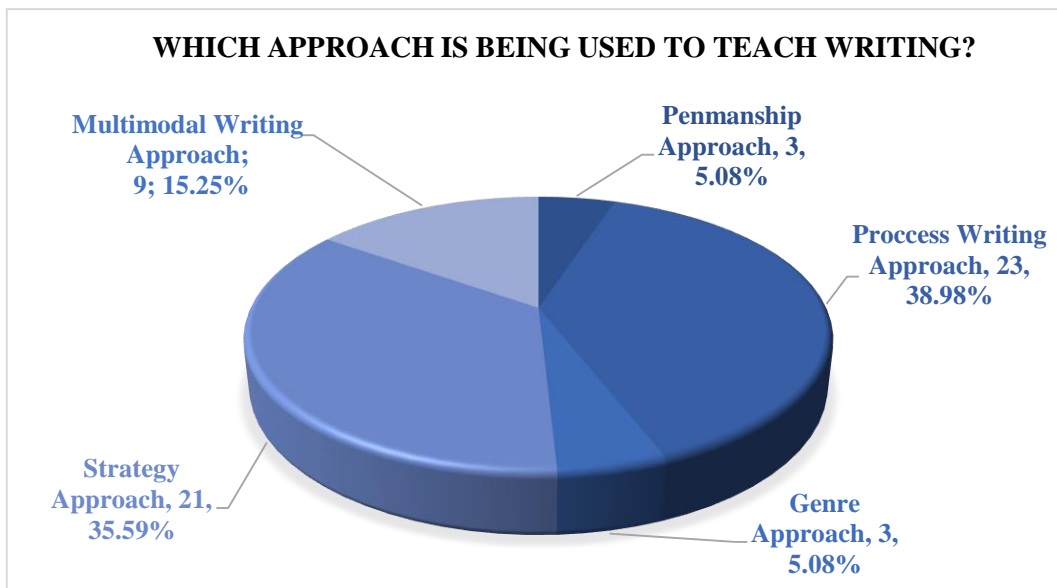
The piloting helped to know that some students were not comfortable by answering in English so they did it in Spanish. Some of they also asked for the meaning of some words so it was tried to use the most common and simple vocabulary in the instrument applied to the target sample.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

The instrument applied for the data recollection was a survey which consisted of 10 items (questions). 3 questions with multiple options (questions 1, 3 and 4) and 7 open – ended questions with YES/NO and WHY option (questions 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10).

The results of the survey are the following:

QUESTION 1:

WHICH APPROACH IS BEING USED TO TEACH WRITING?

Multimodal Writing Approach; 9; 15.25%

Penmanship Approach, 3, 5.08%

Proccess Writing Approach, 23, 38.98%

Strategy Approach, 21, 35.59%

Genre Approach, 3, 5.08%

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

Note: Students were allowed to select more than one option in this question.

Analysis: in question 1 with a total of 59 responses from a total of 58 students who took the survey, the 38.98% of the responses indicate that the Process Writing Approach is used at teaching writing; also with a similar percentage, the 35.59 of the responses indicate that students are being taught writing by using the Strategy Approach. On the other hand, the 15.25% shows that the Multimodal Writing Approach is being used while with only 5.08% each both the Genre Approach and the Penmanship Approach are the least used when teaching writing skills according to the 58 students.

Interpretation: in this graph can be observed that according to the students of the fifth academic year from the English III course at the International Affairs Major, the two most used

approaches are the Writing Approach and the Strategy Approach, while the least used approaches are the Penmanship and the Genre.

According to the theory of the writing process, the Writing Process Approach assumes that a writer needs to be writing for authentic purposes in an extended process that includes prewriting, writing, revising, and editing. Likewise, the Strategy Approach also teaches students the planning, drafting, and revision strategies used by skilled writers. These strategies are specific steps that guide students through each part of the writing process.

QUESTION 2:
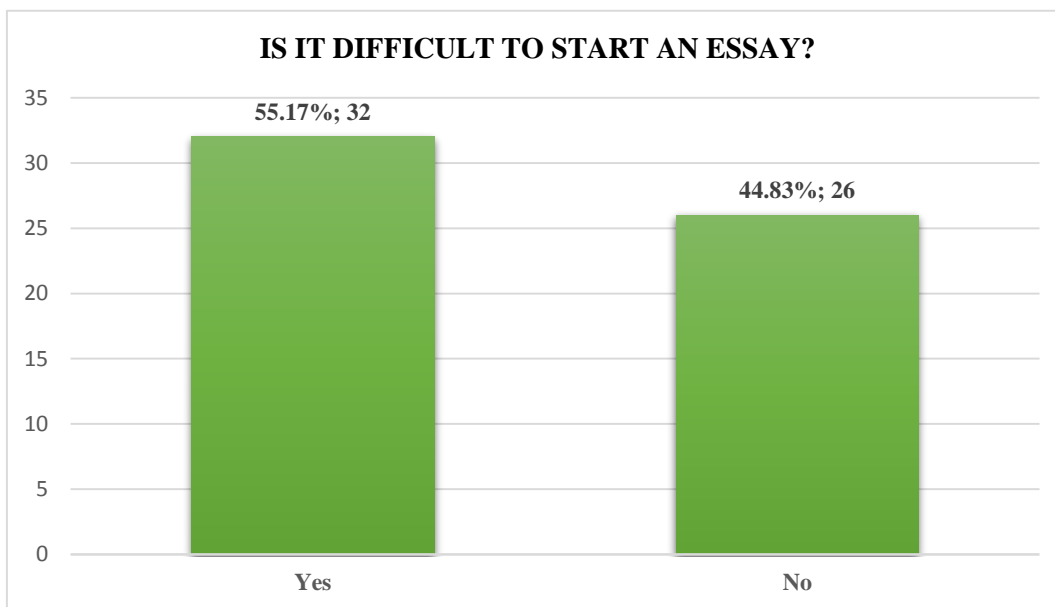
IS IT DIFFICULT TO START AN ESSAY?

Yes: 55.17%; 32
No: 44.83%; 26

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

Analysis: from a total of 58 students who took the survey, the 55.17% answered that it is difficult for them to start an essay; while the other 44.83% answered that starting an essay is not complicated at all.

Interpretation: base on the results obtained it can be determined that students find difficult to start an essay due to some factors such us not having an idea about what to write and some others, while the other half of them do not find it as difficult as their classmates, however, there is a slight difference.

The following are the most representative comments obtained in the "Yes" and "No" answers.

Comments for Yes:

- Difficulty at choosing and delimitating a topic.
- Selection of interesting topics to catch readers' attention.
- Do not know the correct structure of an essay
- Do not have ideas about what to write.
- Different writing methodologies at writing essays.
- No writing skills due to no previous courses related to it.
- Lack of vocabulary at writing and expressing ideas.
- Lack of motivation.
- Difficulty at connecting ideas in an academic paper.
- Lack of grammar.
- Follow Spanish writing style.

Comments for No:

- If outline is well done
- Simple structure and easy to follow
- Appropriate teachers' methodology
- Writing techniques given were very effective
- Previous knowledge on how to write an essay
- Students are used to writing and reading a lot.
- Taught how to write an essay in the previous course.

QUESTION 3:
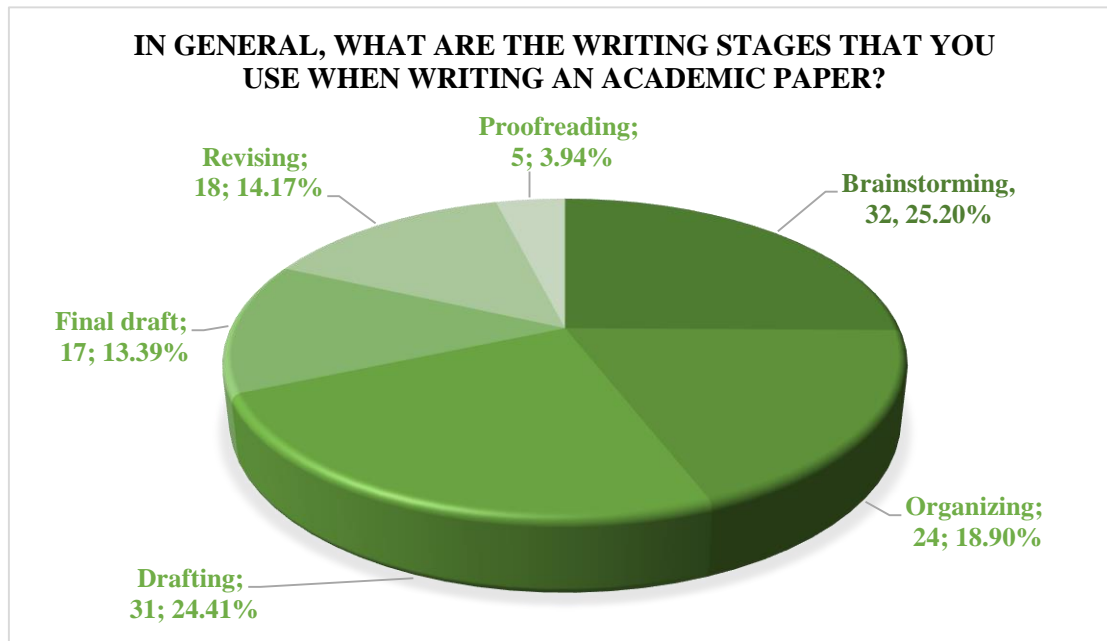
IN GENERAL, WHAT ARE THE WRITING STAGES THAT YOU USE WHEN WRITING AN ACADEMIC PAPER?

Proofreading; 5; 3.94%
Revising; 18; 14.17%
Brainstorming, 32, 25.20%
Final draft; 17; 13.39%
Organizing; 24; 18.90%
Drafting; 31; 24.41%

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

Note: Students were allowed to select more than one option in this question.

Analysis: in question 3 with a total of 127 responses from a total of 58 students who took the survey, the 25.20% of the responses indicate that brainstorming is one of the most used stages by students as well as drafting with 24.41% of the responses. Organizing, final draft, and revising are used by in less scale than the two mentioned above, however, the least used by students is proofreading with just the 3.94% of the responses.

Interpretation: in this graph it can be interpreted that when students write academic papers, the most used stages are brainstorming and drafting based on the responses gotten from the survey. However, the stage that according to them they do not use is proofreading with just five responses from a total of 127.

This reinforces what theory says about the Process Writing Approach and the Strategy approach in which students in order to write for authentic purposes in an extended process they need to include in the writing process planning, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, and also a final draft.

QUESTION 4:

WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT YOUR WRITING SKILL?

Spanish grammar influence; 21; 14.69%

Other; 1; 0.70%

Lack of reading expousure, 10, 6.99%

Class size, 57, 39.86%

Motivation; 10; 6.99%

Teachers' methodology; 11; 7.69%

Lack of vocabulary, 33, 23.08%

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

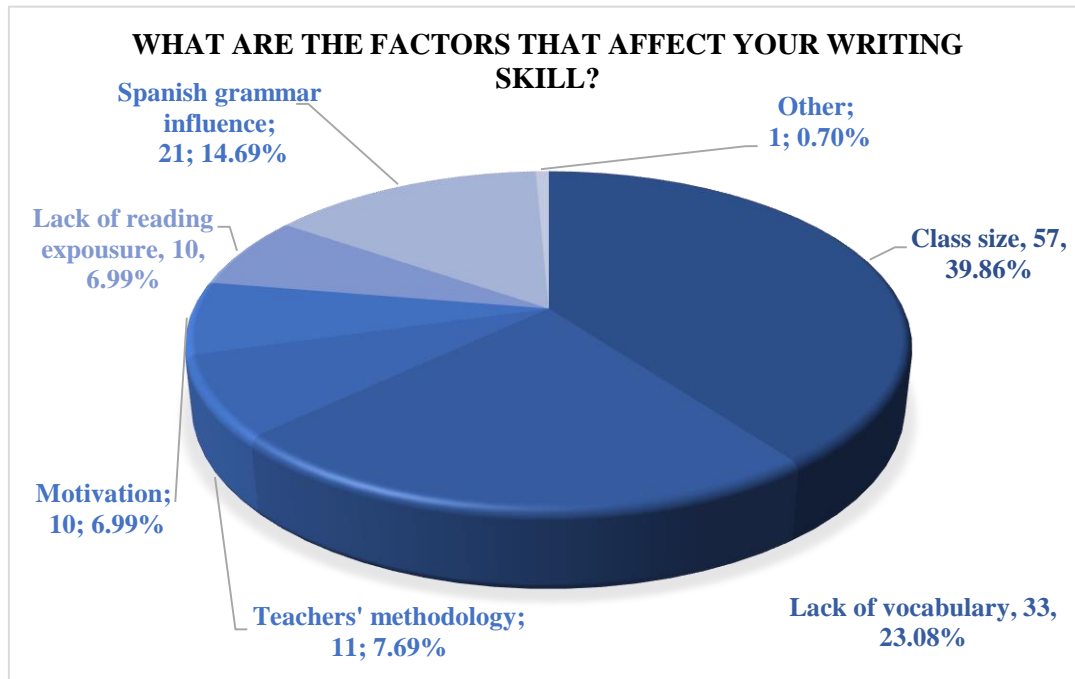**Note**: Students were allowed to select more than one option in this question.

Analysis: in question 4, from a total of 58 students who took the survey, 57 of them agreed that the class size is one of the most common factors that affect their writing skill. On the other hand, 1 of them, selected the option other and added the comment "**lack of ideas**" explaining it as another factor that also affects them. The factors with more responses are: class size with 57 (39.86%), lack of vocabulary with 33 (23.08) and Spanish grammar influence with 21 (14.69%).

Interpretation: by observing the graph of question 4, it can be concluded that class size, the lack of vocabulary and Spanish grammar influence are the three main factors that affect their writing skill. Students are also aware that the courses focus on learning one of the four macro skills need more personalized classes and not crowded classrooms.

QUESTION 5:
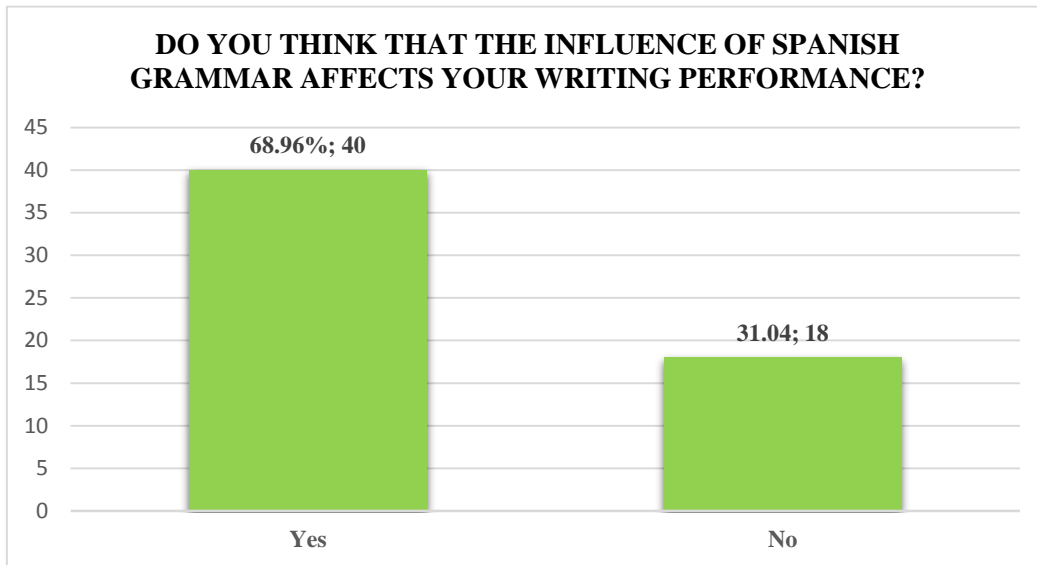
DO YOU THINK THAT THE INFLUENCE OF SPANISH GRAMMAR AFFECTS YOUR WRITING PERFORMANCE?

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

Analysis: From a total of 58 students who took the survey, the 68.96 % of them considered that their writing performance is affected by the influence of Spanish grammar, while the 31.04% of them did not consider this as a problem when writing.

Interpretation: By reviewing the question 5, it can be interpreted that almost 70% of the students emphasized that they tend to translate literally from Spanish to English while they write. It should be pointed out that most of this influence is experienced by the students of the English III course at the moment they have to create a sentence, moreover, students said that there has been times in which they did not know how to put the words in the correct order.

From the total of responses from both "Yes" and "No", students provided the following comments:

Comments for Yes:

- L1 interference
- Difficulty at expresing ideas in regards to vocabulary
- Confusion at writing in English
- Difficulty in distinguish synonyms in English. (words that have several meanings)
- Confusion of words (false cognates)

- Translation of thoughts.
- Follow Spanish patterns instead of English patterns.
- Do not know the correct use of connectors like in Spanish.

Comments for No:

- Previous knowledge on how to write academic papers.
- Follow the English grammar structure at writing.

QUESTION 6:
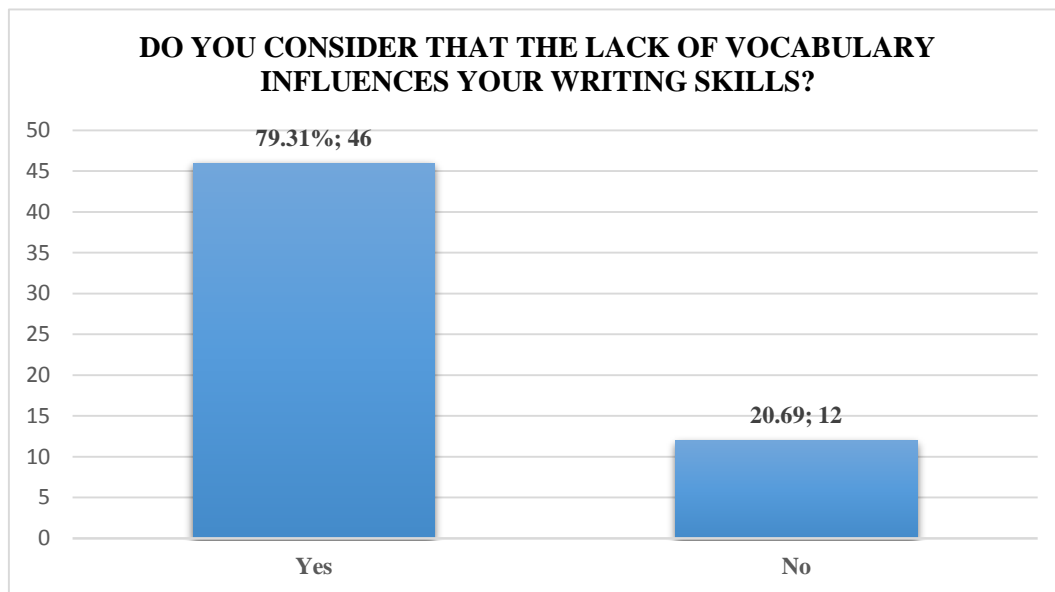
DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE LACK OF VOCABULARY INFLUENCES YOUR WRITING SKILLS?

79.31%; 46

20.69; 12

Yes · No

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

Analysis: According to this graph, from a total of 58 students who took the survey, the 79.3% of them, which is a significant portion of the sample, considered that the lack of vocabulary affects when writing an academic paper. Then, a small percentage of students, 20.6% stated that it does not influence at all.

Interpretation: By checking the results obtained in question 5, it can be determined that the majority of the students considered that the lack of vocabulary influences when they write an academic paper. Most of the students said that they have weaknesses because they have a limited

vocabulary in the second language so that, it does not give them a successful academic development.

In accordance to the results of the survey, students expressed that they experience difficulty when they write due to the fact that they do not have enough vocabulary. Some of their opinions are listed below:

Comments for Yes:

- Do not know the meaning of technical words, complicated L2 words.
- Lack of synonyms in L2 not to repeat words.
- Lack of vocabulary.
- Do not know the translation of some words from L1 to L2 or vice versa.
- No reading practice.
- Use of false cognates when lacking vocabulary.

Comments for No:

- Extensive vocabulary already learned.

QUESTION 7:
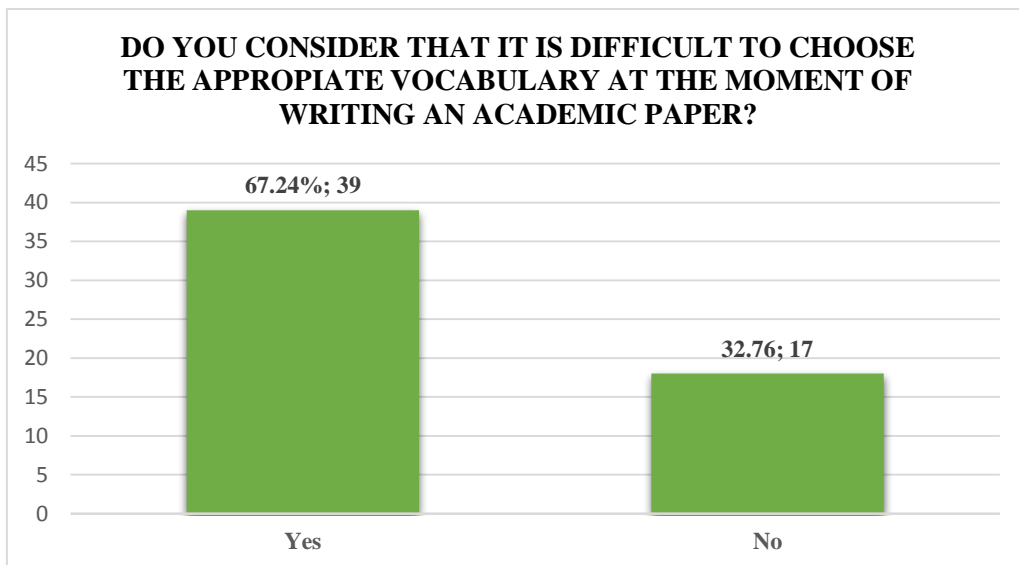
DO YOU CONSIDER THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO CHOOSE THE APPROPIATE VOCABULARY AT THE MOMENT OF WRITING AN ACADEMIC PAPER?

Yes: 67.24%; 39
No: 32.76; 17

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

Analysis: According to the graphic above, the 67.24% of the population considered that choosing the appropriate vocabulary at the moment of writing is difficult. On the other hand, 32.76% of the students do not have any difficulty when they choose the vocabulary at the moment writing academic papers. Although some of them said that they had studied technical vocabulary in the English courses, they still have problems with that.

Interpretation: By checking the results obtained in question 7, it can be interpreted that the majority of the students considered that the lack of appropriate vocabulary influences when they write an academic paper. There is a very strong tendency on the students where they admit that the lack of vocabulary influences when they write since the misuse of words in their academic papers not always express the ideas of what they want to say.

In accordance to the results of the survey, students expressed that they experience difficulty when they write due to the fact that they do not have enough technical vocabulary related to the topics they are asked to write about, so if they do not a previous reading related to the topics, they get lost. Some of their opinions are listed below:

Comments for Yes:

- Bad use of words to express ideas.
- It needs to be academic.
- Difficult vocabulary for academic papers.
- Unknown words.
- Difficulty at selecting a good topic.

Comments for No:

- If outline and draft is well done.
- If you know about the topic.
- If you know what you will write about, it becomes easier.
- Know about the vocabulary that will be used.
- Necessary vocabulary taught.
- Previous English knowledge.

QUESTION 8:
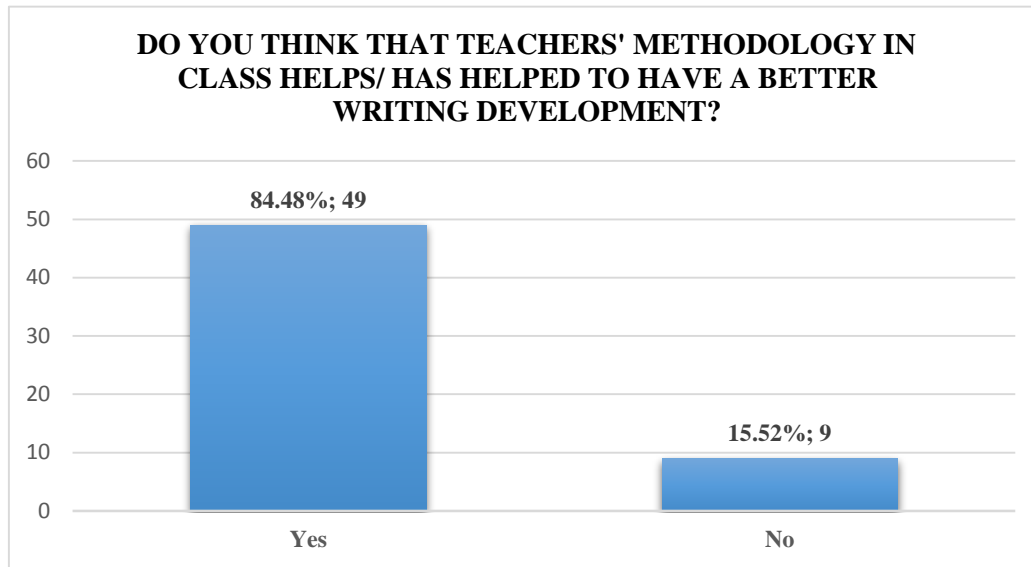
DO YOU THINK THAT TEACHERS' METHODOLOGY IN CLASS HELPS/ HAS HELPED TO HAVE A BETTER WRITING DEVELOPMENT?

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

Analysis: from a total of 58 students, the 84.48% of them considered that their writing performance is affected by/ the teacher's methodology. Their methodology have helped them to have a better writing development, while the 15.52% of them did not considered this is a problem.

Interpretation: Among the interviewed students, it seems that a high percentage think that the teacher's methodology has helped them to have a better writing development. In other words, it means that the teachers in charge with their explanation and methodology make the writing process easier. Moreover, the feedback in groups provided by them, the writing activities in class, and the time to practice get students motivated. All this have helped students to improve their English writing skill.

 The following are the most common responses provided by them.

Comments for Yes:

- Teacher checks to correct mistakes
- More practice with good methodologies
- Teacher provides time to practice.
- Easy explanation and methodology

- Excellent teacher

- Improvement in my English writing skill

- Teacher encourages to get motivated.

- Methodology makes writing process easier.

- Provide feeback in groups

- Writing activities in class

Comments for No:

- None

QUESTION 9:
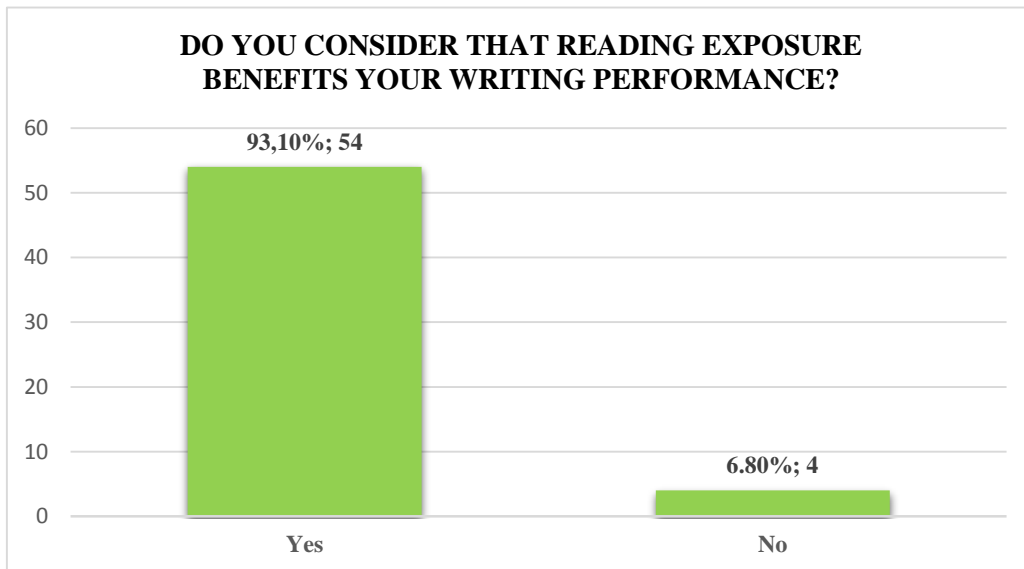
DO YOU CONSIDER THAT READING EXPOSURE BENEFITS YOUR WRITING PERFORMANCE?

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

Analysis: from a total of 58 students, the 93.10% of them considered that reading exposure benefits their writing skill, while the 6.80% of them did not considered reading exposure as something beneficial when writing academic papers.

Interpretation: It can be interpreted that almost all of the students considered that reading exposure really benefits their writing skill in order to get more vocabulary, to learn new topics, to check writing structures in order to write better academic papers. Also, for students reading exposure it is beneficial because they learn how to write a well written academic paper. On the

other hand, the minority of the students considered that it is not so necessary because it takes time and if students know how to write ideas come to them easily.

The following are the most common responses provided by them.

Comments for Yes:

- Learn new vocabulary
- Learn about new topics
- To check writing structures
- To check grammar examples in paragraphs.
- It is beneficial
- Learn how to write well written papers.

Comments for No:

- It needs time to practice
- If you know how to write, ideas come to you.

QUESTION 10:
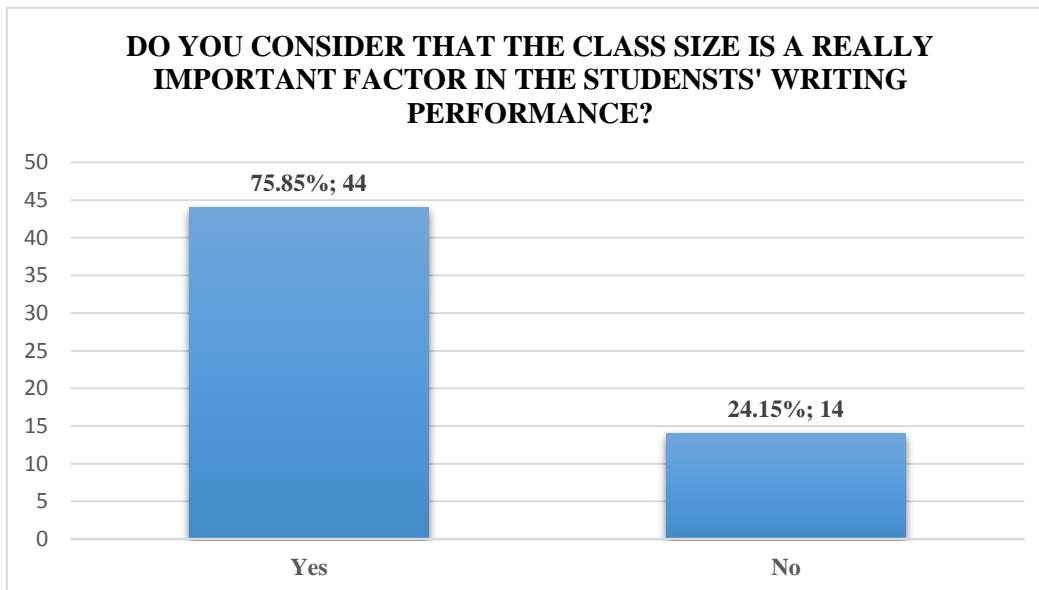
DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE CLASS SIZE IS A REALLY IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE STUDENSTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE?

75.85%; 44

24.15%; 14

Yes   No

Factors that influence students' writing skill for the International Affairs Major semester I - 2018

Analysis: from a total of 58 students, the 75.85% of them considered that the class size is a really important factor in their writing performance, while the 24.15% of them did not considered this is a factor that affects their writing process.

Interpretation: It can be interpreted that most of the half of the students considered that the class size is a really important factor in their writing performance. It means that according to the students it is really important to have a more personalized class in order to have time to check all the doubts in class because the less students the more practice in the class and they can be taught better too.

However, the minority of the students considered that what it really matters is their own knowledge because all of the groups are large and the learning process depends on each of them.

The following are the most common responses provided by them.

Comments for Yes:

- We are taught better.
- More personalized teaching.
- No time to check all students' doubts.
- The less students, the more practice.

Comments for No:

- If class has good methodology.
- What it matters is your own knowledge
- Learning depends on you.
- All group of classes are large.

TEACHERS' RESPONSES ANALYSIS

In order to have the teachers perceptions about the factors that influence students 'writing skill from the fifth academic year in the English course III courses 02 and 03 of the international affairs major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School from the University of El Salvador in semester I – 2018, the researchers carried out interviews to the teachers in charge of subject. The interview was focused on the ten questions below:

1. What are the factors that affect your students' writing skill?

FACTORS	GROUPS 01 & 04 TEACHER	GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER
Class size	✓	✓
Lack of vocabulary	✓	✓
Teacher's methodology		
Motivation		
Lack of reading exposure	✓	
Influence in Spanish Grammar	✓	✓
Other		

Interpretation: It can be observed that teachers from the English course III agreed in 3 of the 7 different factors which they consider are affecting their students' writing skill. These factors are: class size, lack of vocabulary, and the influence of Spanish grammar and reading exposure.

In regards the teachers' methodology and motivation, none of the two teachers in charge of the subject considered them as factors that affect their students writing skill. This should be due to their perception or in what they have observed in the class.

2. In general, what are the writing stages that students use when writing an academic paper?

STAGES	GROUPS 01 & 04 TEACHER	GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER
Brainstorming	✓	✓
Organizing	✓	✓
Drafting	✓	✓
Final draft	✓	✓
Revising		✓
Proofreading		✓

Interpretation: It can be observed that teachers from the English course III agreed in 4 of the 6 different stages when writing an academic paper. According to teacher from groups 01 & 04, the revising and proofreading stages are not used by students; however, the teacher from groups 02 & 03, students follow all the stages listed.

3. Do you think that students follow all the writing stages when writing an essay?

GROUPS 01 & 04 TEACHER:

- No, they write using Spanish language patterns instead of English writing stages.

GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER:

- No, they get confused and they forget the steps.

Interpretation: It can be observed that both teachers of the English III course in the fifth academic year from the International Affairs Major agreed that students do not follow the correct writing stages when writing academic papers. That can be observed in the academic papers students were asked to write by teachers as their final project.

4. Do you think that the influence of Spanish grammar affects students' writing performance?

GROUPS 01 & 04 TEACHER:

- Yes, academic papers show it.

GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER:

- Yes, they tend to translate every single word into the native language.

Interpretation: It can be observed that both teachers of the English III course agreed that students are influenced by the Spanish grammar when writing academic papers.

5. Do you consider that the lack of vocabulary influences the students' writing skill?

GROUPS 01 & 04 TEACHER:

- Yes, they do not have a lot of vocabulary to make use of.

GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER:

- Yes, they do not have the reading habit, so they do not have enough vocabulary.

Interpretation: both teachers agreed that the lack of vocabulary affects their students' writing skill.

6. Are students required to use technical vocabulary at the moment of writing an academic paper?

GROUPS 01 & 04 TEACHER:

- Yes.

GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER:

- Yes.

Interpretation: Students are required to make use of technical vocabulary when writing academic papers.

7. Do you think that teachers' methodology is an important factor that helps students to have a better writing skill performance?

GROUPS 01 & 04 TEACHER:

- Yes, they do not even know how to write an essay in Spanish so the methodology they use is important to teach them how to write in English.

GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER:

- Yes, is part of the teacher's duty

Interpretation: both teachers agreed that the teacher's methodology helps to improve the students´ writing skill. Moreover, students can observe that English and Spanish have difference writing style.

8. What role does reading play in students' writing performance?

GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER:

- It helps with vocabulary

GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER:

- It is very important since there they get different knowledge.

Interpretation: for teachers the role of reading in their students' writing performance is important not only because they get new vocabulary, but also because they learn more about the English writing style.

9. Do you consider that class size is a really important factor in the students' writing performance?

GROUPS 01 & 04 TEACHER:

- Yes, it is impossible to give them 1 on 1 advisory when needed.

GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER:

- Yes, the shortest the group, the best they learn.

Interpretation: both teachers agreed that the class size is a crucial factor when teaching students how to write academic papers because the number of students in a class has the potential to affect how much is learned in a number of different ways. For example, it affects how much time the teacher is able to focus on individual students and their specific needs rather than on the group as a whole.

10. Do you think that it is difficult for students to come up with ideas when starting writing an academic paper?

GROUPS 01 & 04 TEACHER:

- No, they know about the topics, they just lack the knowledge.

GROUPS 02 & 03 TEACHER:

- Yes, they are not used to it.

Interpretation: In this question teachers did not agree and gave different points of view about the difficulty students have to come up with ideas when starting to write an academic paper. This could be interpreted as the way they teach or the way their students perform in their written papers.

RESULTS FROM STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PAPERS (ESSAYS)

Students from the fifth academic year in the English course III of the International Affairs Major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School, as a final project were asked to write an academic paper in groups of 4 or 5 by making use of all the writing stages, techniques and approaches taught in the course.

These essays were checked by experts in the writing field from the Foreign Language Department (FLD) from the University of El Salvador. A checklist with the most common aspects in writing was attached to each academic paper, so the experts took it as a reference at the time of checking those papers. In addition, experts were asked to add comments if needed as further observation.

In order to analyze and provide a clear explanation of each question, it was decided to take into consideration the following:

In total there are 27 academic papers written by students. In order to determine if the response of the question was considered as YES or NO, it was proceeded to do the following:

The number of responses divided by the total of academic papers. If the result for YES or NO was more than the 51%, that was the result taken into account.

For example:

QUESTION	RESPONSES FOR "YES"	RESPONSES FOR "NO"	FINAL RESULT
Does the academic paper have misspelling words?	10 (37.03%)	17 **(62.97%)**	The 62.97% of the academic papers did not have misspelling word issues, so the response for this question will be **NO**
Does the academic paper show grammar mistakes?	18 **(66.67%)**	9 (33.33%)	The 66.67% of the academic papers showed grammar mistakes, so the response for this question will be **YES.**

The following are the results obtained from the students' academic papers:

POSITIVE ASPECTS:

QUESTION	EXPLANATION/INTERPRETATION
1. **Does the academic paper have misspelling words?**	Students' academic paper does not show misspelling words (**17/27**), few of them do, but most of them do not have misspelling words.
2. **Does the academic paper have word form problems?**	**20/27** students' academic papers do not show word form problems, just few of them do.
3. **Does the academic paper have contracted words?**	**23/27** students' academic papers do not have contracted words, students wrote good academic papers just few of them wrote some words contracted but no repetitively.
4. **Does the academic paper have repetition of ideas?**	**24/27** students' academic papers do not show repetition of ideas; just few of them do but not constantly.
5. **Does the academic paper have coherence?**	**19/27** students' academic papers have coherence between paragraphs; just few of them do not have coherence in some paragraphs.
6. **Does the academic paper have cohesion?**	**18/27 students' academic papers** have cohesion; just few of them have lack of it.
7. **Does the academic paper have an essay format?**	**24/27** students' academic papers have an essay format; students have the idea on how the structure of an essay is. Just few of those academic papers do not have the format.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS:

QUESTION	EXPLANATION/INTERPRETATION
1. **Does the academic paper show grammar mistakes?**	**18/27** academic papers from students of the fifth academic year checked by experts on the writing field have a lot of grammar mistakes. **Example:** • *It is showed…*
2. **Does the academic paper have syntax problems?**	Syntax problems are present in most of the students' academic papers, **16/27** of them. **Example:** • *In conclusión, to recapitulate…*

3. Does the academic paper show L1 interference?	**17/27** academic papers showed L1 interference in more than one idea, sentence or paragraph. **Example:** • *Corea del Norte, Sudán…*

INTERMEDIATE ASPECT:

QUESTION	EXPLANATION/INTERPRETATION
1. Does the academic paper show lack of vocabulary?	The half of academic papers shows lack of vocabulary **(14/27)**, however, the other half do not have lack of vocabulary **(13/27)**. This shows that half of the class know technical vocabulary about the topics and half have some difficulties.

COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS FROM THE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PAPERS

The following are the most common observations made by experts after checking students' academic papers:

✓ **Omission of article "the":** some sentences do lack from article 'the' that should be related with the L1 interference for the lack of knowledge or how to use it.

    Examples:
        o *When I finished the university…*

✓ **Capital letters/ punctuation:** Students do not use capital letters after a period in order to start a new sentence, also proper name do lack of capital letters. Punctuation is also a common problem.

    Examples:
        o *On July 2…*
        o *corea*

✓ **Syntax:** Students sentence shows some grammatical problems at creating coherent sentences.
    Examples:

o *The final solution it was…*

✓ **L1 interference:** one of the most common issues, L1 interference is present in students' academic papers since they lend to follow native language patterns when writing.

Examples:

  o *is to make known...*

✓ **Misspelling issues:** Students have some misspelling issues in the academic paper. Missing words are common issues observed students confused similar words.

Examples:

  o *After a referendum held <u>whit</u> is population…*

✓ **Omission of ''it'':** Students omit ''it'' since they in the native language are used to write without adding the subject when writing or talking. Some sentences do lack from the pronoun ''it'' when talking about something.

Examples:

  o *However, <u>it</u> was not a simple process…*

✓ **Verb issues (verb conjugation):** Students still have some conjugation problems in verbs. They use third person when no needed or in first person, also they do not use third person when it is required.

Examples:

  o *The state <u>have</u> the responsibility…*

✓ **Verb ''to be '' is missing:** few essays showed the lack of verb ''to be'' when talking about the subject. It should be related with the lack of reading exposure or just student forgot to add it, syntax issues related.

Examples:

  o *The first form of government we have <u>is</u> the Monarchy.*

✓ **Omission of the subject:** few cases showed that students forgot to add the subject of the sentence. This is related to the L1 interference since in Spanish subject is not required and sentence has sense by itself.

Examples:

- *Then wanted to run and be safe… (I)*

✓ **Word order:** Academic papers show some word order problem. Students follow Spanish writing style and words do not follow the correct order.

  Examples:
  - *I prove the food typical…*

✓ **Grammar issues:** As statement (questions about grammar indicates) students have general and common grammar issues .Some of them are related to the verb conjugation.

  Examples:
  - **Poland became a _develop_ country in Europe.**

✓ **Incomplete ideas:** Some words are missing in some sentences ideas are incomplete and not coherence at all.

  Examples:
  - *Fleeing the punishments and especially of death.*

✓ **Missing words/ omission of words:** students did not complete the sentences, they forgot to add any word to give sense and complete the sentence. Also, they omitted some words in some sentences.

  Examples:
  - *I did not where to start… (know)*
  - *Began with the war… (It)*

RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are the factors that influence the students' writing skill from groups 02 and 03 in the International Affairs Major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School from the University of El Salvador, semester I, 2018?

After checking, analyzing, and interpreting the results of the instruments, the factors that are affecting students' writing skill based on the findings are:

- L1 interference
- Lack of vocabulary
- Class size
- Lack of reading exposure
- Motivation
- Spanish grammar influence / grammar mistakes.
- Lack of practice

SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS:

1. Which factors are mostly affecting the students' writing skill?

Based on both students and teachers´ responses, the factors that they consider are affecting mostly their academic papers (students) are:

- Lack of reading exposure: 93.10% from 54 of 58 students' responses.
- The lack of vocabulary: 79.31% from 46 of 58 students' responses.
- Class size: 75.85% from 44 of 58 students' responses.
- Influence of Spanish grammar: 68.96% from 40 of 58 students' responses.

Based on the ones that have the highest percentage, it can be interpreted that the factors that are affecting mostly students' writing skill are: The lack of reading exposure, the lack of vocabulary, the class size, the influence of Spanish grammar which according to both, teachers and students responses in the survey applied; are the main factors that affects their writing skill.

2. Does the teaching methodology influence the development of the students' writing skill?

The researchers found that the teaching methodology that was used in the course influenced the development of the writing skill.

To begin with, student said that through the course teachers were very organized and prepared making the development of the writing skill a success. According to the teaching method used in the classroom, students kept saying that the way the teacher taught writing was comfortable, and enjoyable.

In the academic field, for instance, the majority of students pointed out that the teacher explained in an easy way to develop an academic paper. Also, they said that their teachers were very knowledgeable about the topics under study and created a good atmosphere that motivated them to develop a well written academic paper. Moreover, they seemed to keep their classes under control by providing feedback as much as possible while working in and outside of the classroom.

In addition, some of the students said that their teacher was opened to answer all of the questions or doubts they may have in writing. Consequently, the teachers expressed that they try to help them while developing their classes in order to improve the students' writing skill.

Finally, the researcher concluded that the teachers' methodology is very important since much of the confidence depends a lot on this.

3. What are the most common problems students have in their academic papers?

The most common problems found on the academic papers are:

- **Grammar issues** with 66.67% from a total of 18 out of 27 academic papers
- **Omission of the article "the"** with 62.96% from a total of 17 out of 27 academic papers.
- **L1 interference** with 62.96% from a total of 17 out of 27 academic papers.

- **Omission of "it"** with 59.26% from a total of 16 out of 27 academic papers.
- **Syntax** with 59.26% from a total of 16 out of 27 academic papers.

The problems listed above are some of the most common found in the academic papers. Also, the lack of reading exposure can be associated to these problems since students are not used to write in English. Moreover, this also includes the lack of vocabulary which is not only one of the factors that is affecting their academic papers, but also a problem that they face when writing and expressing ideas.

In addition, the low performance in writing even in their native language is affecting them when writing English academic papers, this was one of the comments that one of the teachers made in the survey they were asked to complete.

On the other hand, academic papers not only had negative aspects, but also good aspects which indicate that students did not have a lot of issues with when writing their final academic paper. Among those aspects are:

- **Repetition of ideas** with only 3 out of 27 academic papers.
- **Paper followed an essay format** with only 3 out of 27 academic papers.
- **Not that much contracted words found** only 4 out of 27 academic papers.
- **Not that much word form problems with** only 7 out of 27 academic papers.
- **Not that much coherence issues with** only 8 out of 27 academic papers.
- **Not that much cohesion issues** with only 9 out of 27 academic papers.
- **Misspelling issues** with only 10 out of 27 academic papers.

As a conclusion, all academic papers have problems which can be easily identified when reading them. These common factors are: grammar issues, omission of the article "the", L1 interference, omission of "it" and syntax issues.

4. What are the stages that students use when writing an academic paper?

According to the results, the stages students use the most when writing an academic paper are: brainstorming and drafting. In other words, when using brain storming the students can come with ideas easily because they can divide or select the topics before starting to write. Drafting is when they start putting their ideas, knowledge and thoughts together when writing academic papers; in other words, they start to develop a more cohesive product.

Moreover, students not only use brainstorming and drafting, they also use organizing, final draft, revising and proofreading which are stages taught in the English III course. The reason why students use brainstorming and drafting the most is because they believe they are the most practical at the time of writing an essay.

As a conclusion, students make use of all the stages listed above but brainstorming and drafting are the most used. Furthermore, in some cases they write by following Spanish language patterns instead of English writing stages.

5. Which writing approach is being used to teach writing?

Based on the findings, the researchers identified that the process writing approach is used the most. First of all, students said that they learn how to focus on the writing process by putting into practice the several steps that were taught: brainstorming ideas, write rough drafts, revising and editing. In the process writing approach, students are seen as central in learning, so that students' needs, expectations, goals, skills and knowledge to produce a well written paper is essential. Students pointed out that the teacher provided an overall assistance by using this approach with the only purpose of emphasizing the good use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. For instance, what they really care is to write a well academic paper by following the writing stages to present their final academic paper. Teachers emphasized that they act as a guide in order to make the writing process easier.

Having said that, the process writing approach is used the most. Unfortunately, teachers said that even though they introduce these techniques directly into their classes. Students do not follow these steps in the writing process.

For example, the teachers indicated that students do not make use of the brainstorming stage. They mentioned that students just start writing their academic papers without doing any brainstorming stage. On the other hand, there is a contradiction since students say the opposite; they stated that they make use of both brainstorming and drafting when writing academic papers.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

After collecting, analyzing and interpreting the information, it is concluded that:

- It is difficult for students to start writing an essay due to some reasons such as: the difficulty for them to choose and narrow down a topic, the selection of interesting topics to catch readers' attention, the lack of vocabulary when writing and expressing ideas, the lack of grammar, Spanish writing style influence, and the poor knowledge of the writing process.

- The factors that influence students' writing skill are: L1 interference, lack of vocabulary, class size, lack of reading exposure, Spanish grammar influence / grammar mistakes, and the lack of writing practice.

- The factors that are mostly affecting students' writing skill are: the lack reading exposure, lack of vocabulary, class size and the influence of Spanish grammar.

- The stages students use to write an essay are: brainstorming, organizing, drafting, writing a final draft, revising and proofreading. However, the most used when writing an academic paper are brainstorming and drafting. This reinforces what the theory says about the Process Writing Approach and the Strategy approach where students write for authentic purposes in an extended process. For doing this, they need to include in the writing process: planning, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, and also writing a final draft. On the other hand, teachers state that students do not use brainstorming and drafting.

- The teacher's explanation and methodology made the writing process easier. Students believe that the feedback they receive from their teacher helps them to become better

writers. As well, they expressed that the teachers motivate them by using different activities in class.

- The most common problems found in the academic papers are: omission of article "the", L1 interference, no use capitalization when needed, syntax problems, misspelling issues, omission of "it", verb tenses, grammar issues, word order and omission of the subject in some cases.

- The lack of vocabulary affects students' writing skill since they do not have vocabulary to express ideas and in some cases they get confused by false cognates. This is mainly related to the lack of reading exposure which can help them not only to acquire new vocabulary, but also to know more about the English writing structure and see the patterns that English writing follows. Moreover, this also makes students have difficulties when choosing and write about a specific topic which requires technical vocabulary.

- The class size also affects the students writing performance, since pedagogically speaking, small groups are taught better and students have a more personalized teaching, more time to receive feedback, more practice inside the classroom that big groups cannot have.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are provided which are closely related with the research questions.

For students:

- To put into practice the writing techniques taught in order to improve their academic papers.

- To read English materials in order to get familiar with the English writing style, learn new vocabulary, check paragraph structure, and also improve grammar. This will help them to improve and reduce the omission of article "the", omission of "it", the verb conjugation for first and third person, and some other aspects immersed in writing.

- To use their own ideas or make use of the paraphrasing to avoid copying and pasting.

- Watch videos on YouTube about how to write an essay, the different components of an essay and useful tips in order to reinforce what they have been taught.

For English teachers:

- Administer a diagnostic test at the beginning of the semester to find out about what students lack in regards to the English writing skill. This will help to reinforce those weaknesses and improve the students writing skill.

- Advice students to look for more information about the correct use of citations by making use of the MLA citation style (Modern Language Association) or APA (American Psychological Association) since it is the most used in the writing field.

- Allow student teachers' assistants from the Foreign Language Department (FLD) to share with their students the experience they have had not only in their English Composition courses, but also in the Reading and Conversations classes.

- Select moderators based on the diagnostic implemented at the beginning of the course, who can help the rest of students. These moderators can help his/her classmates with doubts and let teachers know what his/her students need to reinforce or questions they may have.

- To provide more English reading materials to the students to improve their writing skill.

For the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School:

- When organizing the schedules and the number of students in each theoretical group, try to take into account that students need to be given enough time to practice and receive feedback, for this, the groups cannot be large. It is known that administratively speaking, that is a bit complicated. However, there could be an improvement in the student's English learning process, especially in developing the macro skills.

- In the next update of the plan of studies, add at least 2 new English courses related to writing since students of the International Affairs Major need to have an acceptable level of the writing skill to communicate and express ideas at the moment of facing professional challenges in their work. These courses could be focused on English composition.

- Establish an alliance with the FLD to create reinforcement groups in the writing skill, one of the four macro skills, which allows students of the International Affairs Major to polish what they know and at the same time to learn new writing techniques. This

will be beneficial for both, students and for the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences School.

ANNEXES

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCE
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

TOPIC: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL FROM THE FIFTH ACADEMIC YEAR IN THE ENGLISH III COURSE IN GROUPS 02 AND 03 OF THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MAJOR AT THE JURISPRUDENCE AND SOCIAL SCIENCES SCHOOL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR, SEMESTER I - 2018.

Objective: To inquire about the factors that influence students' writing skill of the International Affairs major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences school from the University of El Salvador in semester I, 2018.

Thank you so much for participating in this study! This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to be answered and is concerned with the factors that influence the students' writing skill of the International Affairs major. You are the expert in this case. Your identity is completely confidential. By completing this survey, you consent to participate in this study.

In this section, please read each of the following statements carefully; and then mark depending on your answer according to each question.

1. **What are the factors that affect your students' writing skill?**

    ☐ Class size

    ☐ Lack of vocabulary

    ☐ Teacher's methodology

    ☐ Motivation

    ☐ Lack of reading Exposure

    ☐ Influence in Spanish Grammar

    ☐ Other _____

2. **Do you think that students follow the correct process when writing an essay?**

Yes _____   No _____
Why _____

3. **In general, what are the writing stages that students use when writing an academic paper?**

☐ **Brainstorming:** is an informal way of generating topics to write about, or points to make about your topic.

☐ **Organizing:** stage such as concept mapping, searching for specific information on a topic, and creating an outline.

☐ **Drafting:** is the preliminary stage of a written work in which the author begins to develop a more cohesive product

☐ **Final draft:** a final version of something (such as a document) usually after a lot of editing and rewriting.

☐ **Revising:** is the process where the author reviews, alters, and amends her or his message, according to what has been written in the draft.

☐ **Proofreading:** is the final stage of the editing process, focusing on surface errors such as misspellings and mistakes in grammar and punctuation.

4. **Do you think that the influence of Spanish Grammar affects students' writing performance?**

Yes _____   No _____
Why _____

5. **Do you consider that the lack of vocabulary influences the students' writing skill?**

Yes _____   No _____
Why _____

6. **Are students required to use technical vocabulary at the moment of writing an academic paper?**

Yes_____ No_____

Why _____

7. **Do you think that the teachers' methodology is an important factor that helps students to have a better writing skill development?**

Yes_____ No_____

Why _____

8. **What role does reading play in students' writing performance?**

_____

9. **Do you consider that class size is a really important factor in the students' writing performance?**

Yes_____ No_____

Why _____

10. **Do you think that is difficult for students to come up with ideas when starting writing an academic paper?**

Yes_____ No_____

Why _____

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCE
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

TOPIC: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL FROM THE FIFTH ACADEMIC YEAR IN THE ENGLISH III COURSE IN GROUPS 02 AND 03 OF THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MAJOR AT THE JURISPRUDENCE AND SOCIAL SCIENCES SCHOOL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR, SEMESTER I - 2018.

Objective: To inquire about the factors that influence students' writing skill of the International Affairs major at the Jurisprudence and Social Sciences school from the University of El Salvador in semester I, 2018.

Thank you so much for participating in this study! This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to be answered and is concerned with the factors that influence the students' writing skill of the International Affairs major. You are the expert in this case. Your identity is completely confidential. By completing this survey, you consent to participate in this study.

In this section, please read each of the following statements carefully; and then mark depending on your answer according to each question.

1. **What are the factors that affect your writing skill?**

    ☐   Class size

    ☐   Lack of vocabulary

    ☐   Teacher's methodology

    ☐   Motivation

    ☐   Lack of reading Exposure

    ☐   Influence in Spanish Grammar

    ☐   Other _____

2. Is it difficult for you to start writing an essay?

Yes _____   No _____

Why _____

3. Which approach is being used to teach writing?

☐ **Penmanship Approach:** focused on transcription—the physical act of writing—and it involved producing legible, accurate, and even beautifully formed letters on the page.

☐ **Process Writing Approach:** It includes activities like identifying parts of speech, locating sentence elements such as subjects and predicates, learning and applying rules for subject-verb agreement and pronoun use, and practicing punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

☐ **Genre Approach:** Genre approaches to writing instruction focus on how to write different types of texts. The notion of genre is grounded in the idea that writing is situational, so what counts as "good" writing depends on the context, purpose, and audience.

☐ **Strategy Approach:** Strategy approaches to writing instruction teach students the planning, drafting, and revision strategies used by skilled writers. These strategies are specific steps that guide students through each part of the writing process.

☐ **Multimodal Writing Approach:** Multimodal approaches to writing instruction acknowledge that people in the 21st century write differently than in the past. In addition to composing traditional, linear, paper-based texts, we also—perhaps more often—compose digitally. Writing digitally is not just a matter of typing on the computer rather than writing on paper. Digital texts use many different modes to communicate, and authors can develop proficiency in composing each one.

4. What are the writing steps you use when writing an academic paper?

☐ **Brainstorming:** is an informal way of generating topics to write about, or points to make about your topic.

☐ **Organizing:** stage such as concept mapping, searching for specific information on a topic, and creating an outline.

☐ **Drafting:** is the preliminary stage of a written work in which the author begins to develop a more cohesive product.

☐ **Final Draft:** a final version of something (such as a document) usually after a lot of editing and rewriting.

☐ **Revising:** is the process where the author reviews, alters, and amends her or his message, according to what has been written in the draft.

☐ **Proofreading:** is the final stage of the editing process, focusing on surface errors such as misspellings and mistakes in grammar and punctuation.

5. Do you think that the influence of Spanish Grammar affects your writing performance?

Yes _____ No _____

Why
_____

6. Do you consider that the lack of vocabulary influences yours writing skill?

Yes _____ No _____
Why _____

7. Do you consider that is difficult to choose the appropriate vocabulary at the moment of writing an academic paper?

Yes _____ No _____
Why _____

8. Do you think that the teachers' methodology in the class helps/ has helped you to have a better writing skill development?

Yes _____ No _____
Why

_____

9. Do you consider that reading exposure benefits your writing performance?

Yes ____ No _____
Why _____

10. Do you consider that class size is a really important factor in the students' writing performance?

Yes ____ No _____
Why _____

WRITING SKILL CHECKLIST

Instructions: By using a check mark select "Yes" or No" on each statement below to indicate if the academic paper accomplishes or not.

STATEMENTS	YES	NO
Does the academic paper show grammar mistakes?	☐	☐
Does the academic paper have syntax problems??	☐	☐
Does the academic paper show lack of vocabulary?	☐	☐
Does the academic paper have misspelling words?	☐	☐
Does the academic paper have word form problems?	☐	☐
Does the academic paper have contracted words?	☐	☐
Does the academic paper have repetition of ideas?	☐	☐
Does the academic paper show L1 interference?	☐	☐
Does the academic paper have coherence?	☐	☐
Does the academic paper have cohesion?	☐	☐
Does the academic paper have an essay format?	☐	☐

Comments:

_____

_____

_____

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