

Running head: THE USE OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS TO DEVELOP THE WRITING
SKILL

Development of the writing skill in children through dialogue journals

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Pereira (Risaralda)
2015

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Trabajo de grado presentado como requisito parcial para obtener el título de:

Licenciado en Lengua Inglesa

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Pereira (Risaralda)

2015

Acknowledgements:

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my parents who taught me the value of education and perseverance, as well as to my siblings and colleague who constantly supported and encouraged me to accomplish this project.

I would also like to express the deepest appreciation to the professors Dolly Ramos, Claudia Cárdenas, and Clara Inés Gonzalez from my program who patiently provided me valuable guidance, suggestions, and words of encouragement throughout this whole process.

María Angélica Estrada Ortiz.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my parents for their effort, encouragement, support, and attention. I am also thankful to my boyfriend, my partner and some friends who supported me through this process.

Moreover, I am grateful to some professors from the language teaching program who believed in me, especially the professor Clara Inés Gonzalez and Sandro Echeverry, I am enormously thankful to them for sharing knowledge and supporting me throughout my career.

Eliana María Flórez Hoyos.

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Abstract

The aim of this classroom Project was to promote the students' writing skill in the foreign language through the implementation of the dialogue journal writing method. Fourth grade students from a public institution in Pereira Risaralda were part of this implementation. The group was formed by forty students between eight and ten years old. The dialogue journals were used in the last fifteen minutes of the class, usually once a week to analyze student's progress and involvement of the writing skill through the interaction between students and students and teachers- students.

The main objective of this classroom project was to develop the participants' writing skill by using the dialogue journals. The interactions in those journals were set by implementing two cooperative learning structures which grouped students in pairs or quartets depending on the structure used. After the implementation of this project, it was evidenced that the objective was only achieved by some of the students. The results showed that the dialogue journal writing method fostered students' writing skill in the foreign language. It was also evidenced that students needed to receive enough amount of English input before writing on their journals so they could create sentences and paragraphs using the content taught in class.

El objetivo de este proyecto de aula era mejorar la escritura de los alumnos en la lengua extranjera a través de la aplicación del método de escritura de un diario de conversación. Los participantes de esta implementación fueron cuarenta estudiantes de cuarto grado de una institución pública localizada en Pereira Risaralda, la edad de los estudiantes oscilaba entre los ocho y diez años de edad.

Los diarios se utilizaron una vez a la semana en los últimos quince minutos de la clase con el objetivo de comprobar el progreso en la escritura de los participantes a través de la interacción entre estudiante- profesor y estudiante- estudiante.

El objetivo principal de este proyecto fue desarrollar la habilidad de la escritura mediante el uso de los diarios de conversación. Las interacciones en esos diarios fueron establecidas algunas estrategias de aprendizaje cooperativo para fomentar la participación en clase. Después de la ejecución de este proyecto, se puede decir que el objetivo propuesto fue alcanzado en un número reducido de estudiantes. Sin embargo, se necesitaron algunas modificaciones en términos de aprendizaje cooperativo a fin de obtener un mejor resultado. Por otra parte, el método de escritura de un diario de conversación fomentó en los estudiantes la habilidad de escribir algunas oraciones en un idioma extranjero; aunque, se evidenció que los estudiantes requieren más conocimiento del tema y de las estructuras para crear sus propias entradas en los diarios de diálogo.

Introduction

This paper has been written with the purpose of presenting the results of the implementation of a classroom project in which a dialogue journal writing method was used in order to develop students' writing skills in a foreign language. The implementation was executed by two pre-service teachers from the ninth semester of the Language teaching program from the *Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira*.

It is important to mention that the current implementation was guided in a public school in Pereira (Risaralda- Colombia) in which one group of forty students between eight and ten years old from fourth grade was involved. English language in this institution was oriented according to the Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés proposed by the Minister of Education of Colombia.

The method mentioned above was implemented by using some notebooks called: "dialogue journals" in which students made some entries in the foreign language in order to develop their writing skill. Furthermore, some cooperative strategies proposed by Kagan (1994) were employed to organize the communication among the students with the purpose of improving students' involvement with their dialogue journals.

Additionally, in order to collect the data, reflection in and- on action was done through the use of reflective journals as well as the reflection parts from every pre- service teachers' lesson plans. Moreover, by the end of the implementation a rubric: "6+1 Arkansas Benchmark Writing Assessment traits for fourth graders" was used in order to set learners' proficiency in English writing based on the development of their productions in their dialogue journals.

Justification

Vélez (2006) says that the efforts of the Colombian government aim to cope with the demands for quality and coverage of education that this country needs; this, with the purpose of improving the conditions for social development and quality of life for its citizens. That objective influenced to encourage the different parties interested in the Colombian education so that they could combine efforts in order to create supportive tools that could assist educators to achieve that objective. Therefore, in terms of foreign language learning and language teaching the Ministry of Education released a document called “Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés”. (MEN, 2006) and which the main goal is to foster learners’ communicative competences in the target language. This is also supported by standards that meet the international requirements.

One of the intended goals of the document mentioned in the previous paragraph is to achieve a B1 level or pre-intermediate level of proficiency in English of all students who graduate from eleventh grade in Colombian schools. That “B1” belongs to a scale from the Common European Framework of Reference which determines learners’ competency in the language.

Notwithstanding, the ex- minister of education M F O; within a conference known as *“Encuentro con Instituciones de Educación Superior: Fortalecimiento en Lengua Extranjera”* in 2011, pointed out that the percentage of students from eleventh grade who reached a pre- intermediate level or B1 did not exceed 11%. In addition to this, in a more recent document titled *“Colombia very well”* released in 2014 by the Ministry of education created with the support of statistics from the “ICFES”, the results show that only 6% of students from the last grade of high- school obtained a pre- intermediate level of English in 2013. All in all, that information reveals that the main objective settled in the document *“Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés”* is not being achieved by schools.

The results might be a consequence of the traditional methods based on translation utilized by teachers in Colombian public schools. In order to support the aforementioned, Watson (2011) an expert in bilingualism from Spain carried out some observations in different schools in Bogotá in order to have a closer view on the implementation of English as a foreign language in Colombia. She concluded that teachers are still using archaic methods to teach in public institutions. Furthermore, she added that the focus of teachers is still on the verb “to be” and the modal verb “have”, despite the fact that it is not the objective of the “ Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo”. Hence, she states that it is essential to use a method that makes them utilize the target language or foreign language taught (English) for communication.

In a related project developed in different public institutions from Risaralda; Colombia, carried out by Arias et al. (2014) results showed that the lexical competence (the ability to recognize and use words) and the syntactic competence (the rules established to organize the structures of the sentences) of the English language is the focus of the linguistic competence (the system of linguistic knowledge a person has in English) in the English classes. This is to say, students in the public institutions involved in the project are exposed to grammar activities and some exercises in which they had to memorize some vocabulary and translate some sentences. For that reason, they argue that the functional use of the language is rarely used in the English classes.

Arias et al. (2014) argue that writing ability is the skill on which class activities are mainly based. Nevertheless, it was observed that what the learners are supposed to be able to do in every school year is not tied with the indicators proposed in the document published by the MEN (2006).

Based on the contribution mentioned in the previous paragraphs, we identified an important issue that is addressed in the following lines: there is a need for trying out modern teaching methods for fostering the development of the communicative competence in terms of writing performance in elementary students. We intend to

develop the communicative competence by reinforcing the writing skill since authors such as Foroutan et al. (2013) argue that the writing skill has not received enough attention from teachers as compared to speaking, reading, or listening. They state that those preferences on the other skills rather than on the writing may happen due to the fact that this ability requires more strengthening and organization while students are developing their productions.

Consequently, this classroom project attempts to implement an innovative writing method that has not been widely explored in Colombia by language teachers, that is, dialogue journal writing method. This concept refers to written conversations in which both teachers and students participate regularly in an ongoing conversation throughout the course. The conversation can be done daily or weekly depending on the duration of the course. This with the purpose of providing students from an elementary public school in Pereira the opportunity to communicate in written form by making use of the foreign language in a freeway, and without making explicit the grammatical rules (Peyton, 1993).

One of the major motivations for the development of this project is the personal experiences of working with journals. As a way to illustrate this, one of the practitioners had the chance to take advantage of a similar type of journal known as personal journal at the very beginning of her English learning process. Dossetor (2012) calls it 'learner diary' which refers to an appointment book or agenda in which a student writes about the activities and experiences that assist him/her to learn in class. This is made with the purpose of reflecting and reacting towards his/ her learning. The same author also claims that the teacher also may write comments or reactions towards the learners' productions in order to make it more dynamic and encouraging for the pupils. The important issue is that the two sorts of journals share the same goal which is to give learners a writing space to develop their writing skills.

The extraordinary results obtained by using personal journals as for instance, vocabulary building, reflection, word organization, coherence, and creativity, encouraged the practitioners to implement a similar diary to develop their learners' writing abilities in a way that could involve learners and teachers.

For this classroom project, some suggestions and procedures provided by Peyton (1993) and Valigurová (2010) are borne in mind in order to introduce the dialogue journals to the students. At the very beginning of the implementation, the students are shown two examples of dialogue journals. The first one is a written Spanish conversation about an imaginary student who inquires an unreal friend by using his journal. The second one, is a poster written in English which displays the specific parts of a conversation. For instance: the date, greeting, addressee, question, and response, and drawings. That is done with the purpose of giving the learners the opportunity to recognize the structure of how to use a dialogue journal. After that process, students are requested to start creating their own entries with some isolated words at first, and later with complete and simple sentences.

Furthermore, what makes this classroom project unique is that the forenamed writing method is intended to be implemented along with the use of cooperative strategies. Those cooperative strategies were proposed by Kagan in 1994 and some of them are selected for this project with the purpose to organize students' interaction in order to enhance their experience of using Dialogue journals. These strategies are part of cooperative learning. Stenlev (2003) defines cooperative learning as: "learning in small groups where interaction is structured according to carefully worked-out principles" (p.33). This is an essential element that has not been used with children to implement that kind of journals in Colombian public institutions.

In terms of linguistic outcomes, it is intended that by the end of this classroom project students may be able to construct simple and short paragraphs by using vocabulary related to the syllabus. Moreover, it is contemplated that students will have the capacity to articulate simple sentences about likes, dislikes and moods by using connectors of

addition and sequence as well as to describe some specific characteristics about people, animals, places and objects by using adjectives. Regarding the professional aims, we as novice teachers want to implement creative grouping strategies in order to see their impact on our skills to organize the groups and the usefulness of those strategies to arrange students' interaction for the dialogue journals.

Objectives

To implement the dialogue journal method to foster the writing skill in students from a public elementary school, and to include cooperative learning strategies to organize the interaction of those learners during the implementation of the journals.

To construct gradually simple and short paragraphs including connectors of sequence and addition, taking advantage of vocabulary about topics embedded in the syllabus of the course.

Theoretical framework

A vast number of researchers agree that assisting learners to develop writing has been one of the biggest challenges for language teachers. (Foroutan et al. 2013; Livant, 2006; Al-Buainain, 2009). Teachers must spend a great amount of time choosing the appropriate methodologies, materials or contents in order to provide students with opportunities to practice this productive skill. Thus, in order to guide the reader to a better understanding of this paper, three definitions are proposed.

The first concept in this part of the project is writing. According to the online encyclopedia Omniglot (n.d) writing is a method for communication which allows people to represent language through the use of a set of visible symbols. The second one is Dialogue journals. Based on the definition of Peyton (1993) dialogue journals refer to notebooks, diaries or entries used in education which are basically designed to be developed in small groups; usually in pairs. Their main goals are to share experiences, thoughts or analysis of peers' outcomes. And the last one is cooperative learning structures by Kagan (2002). They are part of a teaching method in which pupils are gathered in small teams, these are usually balanced regarding students' proficiency level in order to attain a higher understanding of a task. Thus, learners work collectively to attain a specific academic goal. These will provide the study with the necessary theoretical principles to organize the focus of inquiry.

The evidence to support our paper lies in the contributions of several authors. First of all, writing will be defined taking into consideration Jonah (2006), Moore-hart (2010), and Harmer (2007). Secondly, Dialogue journals; will be explored through the contributions given by, Foroutan et al. (2013), McGee and Richgels (2004) and Peyton (1993). And thirdly, Cooperative learning strategies will be developed through the

definitions given by Alghamdi *et al.* (2013), The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (1998) and Stenlev (2003).

To start with, we will address the productive skill which we intend to develop in this project, That is, Writing.

The Writing as a process and skill.

As mentioned at the very beginning of this paper, guiding students in writing is one of the hardest tasks language teachers face. (Foroutan *et al.* 2013; Livant, 2006; Al-Buainain, 2009; Tang permpoon 2008). The demand of time, resources, and strategies facilitators must possess, make this activity even more strenuous. Accordingly, English teachers seem to pay less attention to this productive ability. Hence, the focus goes to other skills (Foroutan *et al.* 2013). Perhaps, this may happen inasmuch as many researchers have reported the writing skill to be much more arduous contrasted to other skills; such as speaking and reading (Tangpermpon 2008).

Nevertheless, writing, due to its functions is one of the main abilities students need to master in order to become skilled in any language. Some of the teachers' duties are to aid and provide learners opportunities to develop their writing, and what is more, to select adequate methodology to attain it. Hence, this skill is required for the completion of this classroom project in the sense that it represents the aspects to be mostly developed in the students to be addressed. As consequence, further definition is needed to continue with the normal flow of this investigation. Thus, three definitions are provided.

The first interpretation is taken from the contributions of Jonah (2006). According to him, writing represents a means of communication that conveys meaning through the

impression of meaningful characters. Likewise, writing involves a series of activities, which go from the enlargement of content, revisions and reviews of the same content, so that the information transmitted will be accurate. The author also mentioned that writing involves indirect communication, which can be used to carry information. Thus, what the author intends to say with this is that writing involves the ability of printing symbols in order to deliver a certain meaning, and that it also goes through different stages which are essential for the correct transmission of information.

In a more elaborated definition by Moore-hart (2010) writing in itself involves different aspects. For that reason, she defines writing as a thinking process, a process of conveying meaning, and a process of expressing life experiences. Hence, and as a technique of illustrating this definition, Moore-hart (2010) states an example “a 10 year old girl writes a poem, and goes through a process of revising her writings. As the girl struggles with the poem, she shapes her message and expresses the message”. (2010:p10). It means that writing is a conscious process in which people can express themselves using their writing capacities, and at the same time, they can correct their mistakes and create new manuscripts.

The last two definitions provided by different authors diverge in the sense that in the first one writing is taken as something structural and technical since the author expresses writing as a mechanical process which is divided in dissimilar steps. On the other hand, the second definition is more concentrated on describing writing as the ability to express feelings, ideas through the creation of one’s own texts.

A more complex and broad definition is provided by Harmer (2007) who argues that writing can be seen as a cycle or as he calls “wheel process” in which learners follow certain stages such as, propound, sketch, review, modify until they achieve the final outcome which may be their written paper (2007 p. 326). At the end of this sequence, learners may return to the first stages in order to decide whether they lack something they need to include or if they have something to correct. However, he warns that

writing is time-consuming and that it might not work for classes in which time is quite restricted. Nevertheless, he suggests that no matter what the circumstances are teachers should motivate learners to follow the sequence mentioned above and to keep that work as evidence of improvement.

In addition, Harmer states that writing could be also conceived as a 'cooperative activity' in which students may make use of classmates and teachers by including them in the cycle process (2007 p.328). This appears to be valuable for facilitators and students in the extent to which they can attain better outcomes. As a final point, Harmer claims that working in teams allows students to be involved in several exercises such as: peer assessing, meaningful dialogues, team success among others.

In brief, writing, in the words of Harmer (2007) and Jonah (2006) consists of a series of phases going from proposing a subject, and modifying the ideas, to reviewing what is being developed; thus, it is not a simple process. For that reason, writing takes special attention in this project since it is the ability and the process that needs more time and elaboration along with more preparation from the teacher. As a result, writing is the central ability to be used in this project. It is also important to add that while students are involved in writing procedures, they might need to collaborate among themselves with the intention of making the process even more enriching.

Dialogue Journals:

The idea of using dialogue journals in education was suggested by a project carried out by Nancie Atwell in 1987. The project called *The Middle: Reading and Writing with Adolescents*, was about the interchange of messages between teachers and students. That is why; nowadays this type of journal is usually employed between the facilitator

and students. However, interaction between student-student can also take place in the development of Dialogue journals (Peyton, 1993; Foroutan, 2013). Consequently, when it comes to the implementation of this methodology in class, it is relevant to highlight its benefits in student's writing. McGrail (1991) cited in Peyton's article (1993) states that facilitators who have used dialogue journals in class have observed a positive impact on student's writing articulacy, accuracy, and motivation. Therefore, due to the advantages mentioned and some others to be stressed below, we will address dialogue journals as the main material to be used in this project.

As language teachers must know, there are different methods to develop students' writing performance in education, and journal writing is one of them. Currently, there are some variations of journals; for instance: Reading journals, Gratitude journals, Group or family journals, Project journals, Dialogue journals, among others (Rogers, n.d; Hamdan, n.d). Thus, it is suitable to select the kind of journal that fulfills the educational objectives of this paper which are basically focused on developing the learners' writing skill, and that at the same time, includes participation of all members of the class.

Conveniently, the use of Dialogue journals is one of the methods that contains all the elements listed above. However, it would be advantageous to be aware of the interpretation of its role as it varies depending on how distinct researchers conceive it, and how this kind of journals is to be used regarding different purposes. For this reason, it is important to explore different outside sources which add extra information; and what is more, they present interesting perspectives regarding dialogue journal concept.

For example, McGee and Richgels (2004), claim that a dialogue journal is an instrument that permits teachers to incorporate reading and writing. They also state that these sorts of journals are a good way to allow students to take the initiative of shaping their ideas or their thoughts in writing without thinking about its mechanism. This means that students are involved in a process in which they share their feelings, their ideas through writing without being aware of the structure but organizing them in order to

create their own texts. Moreover, McGee and Richgels (2004) say that teachers can use journal entries to specify explicit areas of writing for improvement given the fact that entries in journals are students' most authentic way of writing.

A similar definition is provided by Foroutan et al. (2013) who state that a dialogue journal is a kind of writing method which is based on constant interaction between student- teacher presented in written form. They also add that in some cases with this writing method, students are not imposed on writing about a specific topic proposed by the guide, but rather upon content related to students' interests or concerns. This is to say, teacher and learner communicate by means of writing; bearing in mind that the content of those interactions are usually related to students' likes or about topics related to the students' life.

The last two definitions differ in the extent to which the first author defines Dialogue journal as a tool used in writing instruction to permit students to freely communicate their thoughts with the purpose of imitating the natural way to develop the writing skill. On the contrary, the second researchers perceive it as a method for writing in which students are given a variety of topics and they may select the one of them with which to interact with their facilitators. That information confirms what was stated before introducing the researcher's point of view of the term. That is, authors may differ in distinct aspects such in this case; they diverge in the role of Dialogue journal regarding its implementation.

In the same trend of ideas a similar definition is provided by another author; however, he presents a more structured and complete concept. Peyton (1993) says that dialogue journals are written conversations in which both, teacher and students participate regularly in an ongoing conversation throughout the course, which can be weekly, daily, and depending on the context and / or duration of the course. Also, the author states that peers can also participate in the conversations by free writing in other student's journals, and when the students get the journals back, they answer by adding

comments or replies. As a final idea, he points out that the teacher is not an inspector; instead he/ she is a participant in the conversation

As a way of conclusion, and specifically with regard to the authors' contributions, most of them (Peyton 1993; &Foroutan et al. 2013) agree that dialogue journals can take place by means of written discussions between student-student or teacher-student. This is important to this study inasmuch as the first concern of this project is to attempt to ensure the involvement of all participants in the writing tasks. Likewise, it is also meaningful to highlight that Peyton (1993) argues that in this kind of journals the teacher also participates in the dialogue by means of making comments to students writing. This will be useful for teachers in this investigation in the extent to which they have the opportunity to check student's progress and involvement of the writing task.

Hence, due to the educational implications, advantages, and characteristics listed in the previous paragraphs, the chosen writing method to be used in order to accomplish this project will be Dialogue journal. This will be used in this study in an elementary school classroom through the interaction between teacher–students and students – students.

In order to have a deeper understanding of this paper, another concept; cooperative learning, will be developed through the contributions of three different authors (Alghamdiet *al.* (2013), The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (1998)and Stenlev (2003). The following concept is relevant to this paper due to the fact that it represents the sort of methodology to be used in the arrangement of students' interaction.

Cooperative learning and cooperative structures.

Diverse researches have investigated with regard to the implementation of cooperative learning methodology in classrooms; the results had reported positive effects on pupil's learning, and student's accomplishments which go from the early grades of elementary school to university (Dotson 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Besides, due to the nature of cooperative learning to allow students to be involved in group-work, it fosters 'positive reciprocal interdependence' which means that every member depends on the others in order for the group to succeed as a team. It has been demonstrated that this promotes respect and good rapport among students. Therefore, cooperative learning has been verified to be beneficial for different kind of learners; among those can be found English language learners (Colorín Colorado 2007).

Furthermore, teachers have found cooperative learning to be effective in the language classroom (Yahya & Huie 2002). Stenlev (2003) argues that cooperative learning can be used to work on student's communicative competence on the grounds that all the elements that encompass the oral and written sides of this competence are rehearsed. It is important to know more about this concept and how it relates to this project. In the paragraphs below, some authors' points of view will be presented about cooperative learning which in turn will form the basis or the background information of this investigation.

The following contribution provides a general idea of what cooperative learning means in general terms plus the conditions under this method is conducted. The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (1998) states that cooperative learning refers to the variety of educational procedures carried out among small groups which are regularly composed from 2 to 4 people. The main characteristic of those instructional procedures is that they are interactive and this implies that the members of the small groups have to communicate and work together to develop a common learning activity. In other words,

a limited number of individuals are placed to work collectively in order to learn. Further, groups working under these conditions follow structures delivered by the facilitator in order to foster learning achievements, hence learners make efforts collectively in activities which are best controlled conjointly, and which have a shared aim.

A similar definition that shares almost the same principles of cooperative learning is included. Alghamdi *et al.* (2013) state that cooperative learning refers to the students' activity to jointly work in non-numerous groups to attain common objectives. These authors also add that cooperative learning is beneficial for foreign language learners to the extent to which it has been demonstrated that when using this sort of learning, students achieve higher scholar grades in comparison to single or personal learning.

The authors named above emphasize the benefit mentioned in the previous paragraph by citing two other researches; the first one is (Gillies, 2007) who claims that by using cooperative learning students are allowed to work in teams, hence, they have the opportunity to discuss about assignments. And the second one is (Johnson & Johnson, 2003), who argue that Cooperative Learning permits students who possess low English language knowledge to learn from other peers whose language competence is higher, instead of depending strictly of what the facilitator teaches them. It is to say, cooperative learning requires learners to work together in small groups which in turn consist of students whose language levels might slightly differ from one to another.

The last mentioned, provides an environment of cooperativism in the extent to which learners converse about their tasks so that each one of them may contribute to the understanding of their assignments. Hence, not all educational burdens falls on the teacher, but is distributed between students and teacher. Therefore, the important issue with regard to the differentiation between the first and the second authors rely in that the Johnson & Johnson (2003) focus their attention on using cooperative learning in relation

with foreign language learning, an extra element that might serve as valuable supporting information for the completion of this project.

The following definition contains a more detailed perspective of this concept concerning foreign language teaching and learning. At the very beginning of her article Stenlev (2003) provides a simple definition of cooperative learning. She states that CL is a method for teaching. However, through her whole paper regarding foreign language teaching, she presents and develops the cooperative learning concept making a deeper analysis of its features taking into account contributions of different authors such as Kegan (1994), Slaving (1990), among others. First of all, Stenlev (2003) provides a general definition of Cooperative learning: "Cooperative learning is learning in small groups where interaction is structured according to carefully worked-out principles" (p.33). By way of explanation, cooperative learning is an educational resource to construct and develop knowledge by means of a cooperative process among non-numerous groups of learners. Something to emphasize at this point, is the fact that teams should not exceed the average of people working in those groups which range from two to four students.

Furthermore, as a way to explain her definition, it is important to add the following information. Regarding interaction which she states is arranged bearing in mind certain principles, it is worth it to stress in a specific feature; that is, 'structure'. Stenlev explains this fundamental part of cooperative learning by mentioning Kagan's book (1994) about the 'structural approach' in her paper (2003. p 34). Stenlev (2003) states that a 'structure' refers to a gradually guided teaching strategy to organize students' communication; as an example she presents 'the structure Think-Pair-Share' . It is characterized by the teachers' freedom of choosing English language content to be embedded in the structure.

Stenlev (2003) mentions some structures of the long list proposed in Kagan's book (1994), one of them is 'Write- Pair-Square'. That is a modification of 'Think-pair-share' mentioned in the paragraph above which is basically intended to develop the speaking skill. Jette claims that the 'Write- pair-square structure' aims to promote the writing skill; in this structure, the facilitator writes something down which in turn will be the source for subsequent communication between pairs or among teams.

To summarize, it is important to indicate that in cooperative learning those students who have a higher level or who develop their language capacities with more efficiency, can assist their partners who have a lower competence level with the purpose of advancing the process of building knowledge (Alghamdi et al. (2013). Moreover, the fact that learning is a social process allows students to construct knowledge working in small teams since they may share, discuss, and reflect about the information given to them and what they already know with their classmates.

As mentioned by Stenlev (2003), when students work in that way, they share their opinions and hear others' thoughts to reach a conclusion; hence, participation of every member of the discussion is needed to succeed in a task. Accordingly, each member of the group must be aware of his responsibilities and different functions in the group. That is why, different aspects such as: cooperative learning grouping strategies , and benefits will be useful to the implementation of this project since all of the things just mentioned are connected to dialogue writing methodology to be used with the target population; elementary language learners.

As a way of conclusion, the past three concepts converge in the extent to which dialogue journal writing can be considered as a cooperative activity inside the classroom (Harmer 2007). Moreover, the use of dialogue journals requires learners to communicate by means of writing about their lives, interests, social experiences, and in some cases about materials provided by the facilitator. Thus, interaction among students is necessary to practice the writing skill (Foroutan et al. 2013) . This interaction

(learner -learner / or teacher- learner) may take place by using principles and different techniques of cooperative learning. That is, grouping students in small- teams so that they may be able to share thoughts and ideas cooperatively, and eventually to achieve a desired goal (Alghamdi *et al.* 2013).

However, every student must take a role during the discussion since it is not only a question of one student writing messages; it is a reciprocal process that involves both parties, so the dynamic of writing a journal may be truly cooperative; and thus, become successful. In addition to this, teachers must be perceptive at the moment of arranging the groups, being careful to balance them in a way that pupils may be able to contribute to each other's learning (Stenlev 2003).

Related studies:

“Using Dialogue journals to improve writing for English language learners”.

This segment offers an important study conducted by Datzman (2010) which provides useful information about the idea of improvements in writing performance through the use of dialogue journals. The study suggests that there is a relation between the implementation of dialogue journals and the evolution evidenced in the population addressed.

Datzman (2011) carried out a research project with the intention of investigating the impact of dialogue journal writing on elementary students' writing performance. Thus, the aim of that research was to evaluate whether the employment of dialogue journal was a successful instrument in fostering writing. The research question of that investigation was: “How does the use of dialogue journals affect the writing of English Language Learners?” To answer that question, ten participants were selected. Their ages ranged from nine to ten and they were fourth graders. There were ten English

language students who were learning the target language as *ESL*. Eight of them were Hispanic and their first language was Spanish. The other two students were Pacific Islanders and their mother tongue was Marshallese.

Thereupon, the researcher developed the study with two groups, an experimental and a control group. The experimental group received instruction on how to use dialogue journals, whereas the control group did not obtain any training on the same issue. While the project was taking place, the investigator measured the improvements in writing by using the Arkansas benchmark writing assessment which estimates advances in seven distinct areas such as: ideas, voice, and organization, the use of conventions, word choice, sentence fluency, and presentation. Each area was evaluated with scores fluctuating from one to five, and with a maximum score of thirty five. At the end, the researcher made a parallel between the two groups, which showed substantial progress in writing of the experimental as compared to results of the control group.

For instance, the results in Datzman's (2011) study, informed that dialogue journals were an useful strategy to promote writing in the fourth grade students involved in that investigation. She reported the experimental group to have improved in terms of quality of writing, especially in sentence fluency, use of conventions, and arrangement of thoughts. Moreover, Datzman (2011) stated that the fourth graders presented noteworthy developments due to the repeated and regular use of dialogue journals. All of this was also accompanied with the ability to concentrate their ideas into short texts, and by using opening and closing sentences.

Moreover, it is relevant to mention that the control group did not display advances as great as the ones depicted by the experimental group, which is the one that received instruction on dialogue journals. It was evident by comparing the scores of the pre and post tests taken by both groups, and that were based on the 6+1 traits included in the Arkansas Benchmark Writing Assessment for fourth graders. Finally, she suggested

that by implementing that sort of project in other contexts, researchers might encounter similar results.

In conclusion, the findings from this study are relevant to our classroom project due to the fact that the population involved in Datzman' study is similar to the participants to be included in our project. Moreover, based on the results from Datzman's investigation, she suggests that researchers could find similar results in different context. The setting from this project is the case of an elementary public school in Colombia; hence, this study could be a guide that may support the development from this paper.

The use of Dialogue Journals might affect the writing fluency of low literacy adult Somali students.

Different studies through time have used dialogue journals as the main method for fostering the improvement of writing performance. In that sense, another study related to the topic proposed at the beginning of this research is an experimental investigation carried out by VanderMolen (2011). In this research, the author intended to increase the writing fluidity in her grown- up Somali students. To do so, she explored the effects of dialogue journal writing on her low- literacy language learners' fluency, production, and confidence. Moreover, they were learning English as a second language.

The population consisted of seven volunteers Somali learners from the basic level class who belonged to a program sponsored by the peripheral public institution. Additionally, all participants ranged in ages between 23 and 45. The participants' mother tongue was Somali and they had taken between five years of formal Somali instruction and two other years in the U.S.A. The students informed to have lived there for about five to ten years.

At the very beginning of VanderMolen's (2011) investigation, she designed some questionnaires in order to have some basis about her students' writing competence. In the case of writing fluency, she used observations from learners' dialogue journals; as well as, the use of a strategy of counting words to determine improvements in writing. It consists on the pursuance of the number of words students use throughout the process in the aspect just mentioned. By the end of her study, she used some interviews and questionnaires to collect data about pupils' confidence. Those tools allowed her to know about her participants' perceptions of journal writing.

Thereafter, the results indicated that by using dialogue journals students' increased the number of words written in their productions. However, VanderMolen (2011) argued that the increment would vary depending on the topic learners used to write their entries. That represented a new interesting outcome to support students' improvement regarding writing fluency. Further, she claimed that by using Dialogue journals, participants' confidence in their writing skills had a considerable increment. That was evidenced in the pupils' answers from the questionnaire she delivered at the end of her investigation.

Finally, VanderMolen suggested teachers to pair students in large classes to write Dialogue journals. Additionally, she argued that by putting students together, they may have the chance to read and write each other's productions; that would probably allow learners to assist their partners in the development of writing and reading tasks. Therefore, for the completion of this classroom project, this related study serves as a guide for implementation.

Moreover, their findings realize that dialogue journals might serve to advance writing performance of different populations, and ages along with certain limitations we may find, and which in turn will be addressed.

Dialogue journals: a pedagogical strategy to analyze students' English writing development.

Recently, a third related study was found. This study was carried out in a public school of Tunja, Boyacá Colombia with eighth graders by Ramos et al. (2013). The researchers were focused on analyzing how students' English writing performance was developed through the use of dialogue journals.

In order to implement their research they raised an important question; that was, *“what does the use of dialogue journals tell us about students' writing development?”* (p.10, 2013). They argued that while learners wrote in L2, they could notice that pupils tended to pay more attention to grammar than the content itself resulting in a strenuous and boring experience. Consequently, they aimed to find a strategy to assist learners to develop their thoughts without paying much attention to the grammatical issues.

They had two mixed groups from eighth grade, one with 35 learners and the other with 36 students whose ages ranged between 12 and 17 years old. In the first group, participants took two classes per week of English instruction while in the second one it was only one hour. To accomplish their study, they designed nine workshops applied to the two groups of learners but they only took as a sample 10 people from each group.

In the methodological part learners were asked to use the journals twice a week completing two hours each group during six months. They were not given specific time to develop their conversations between learners nor a certain length for their entries. The topics were based on the workshops given by the implementers and also they took some models as starters from them to continue their conversations, grammar was not corrected.

The results pointed out that learners used a couple of strategies to support their writing while performing in their journals; for instance, the use of code switching.

Therefore, when they encountered a problem that might interrupt their conversations in terms of vocabulary, they tended to write it in Spanish and continued with the natural flow of their interactions. Furthermore, the use of models assisted them to have more confidence on the task they were developing. Regarding the benefits of using dialogue journals, the researchers concluded that they assisted learners to improve fluency in writing and that they allowed learners to increase their confidence since they did not pay attention to the grammar but rather to the content to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and expectations.

This study provides relevant information about the positive results and possible outcomes that might appear in such context; Colombian public school, where groups over 30 students participate by making conversation between learners.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Context and settings

The current classroom project was carried out by two pre-service teachers from the ninth semester of the Language teaching program from the *Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira*. The elementary school in which the project was implemented corresponds to a public institution located in Pereira Risaralda.

English teaching at that school was oriented by some standards from the “Estandares en lenguas extranjeras: Ingles”. The English instruction was based on a syllabus designed by the elementary school in which there were different competences to be developed. There were also some standards adapted to the context. The syllabus was organized into four parts: “ ser”, “ saber”, “ hacer”, “ evaluacion” and the syllabus was focused on grammatical items.

Participants:

This classroom project was developed with students from fourth grade from a public institution In Pereira Risaralda. The group was comprised by forty students between eight and ten years old thirty six of them were boys and the remaining students were girls. The learners participated actively in the activities, and they felt interested in several activities in which they had to solve a variety of worksheets puzzles. They enjoyed developing some kinesthetic activities and they liked listening to songs. In addition to this, they liked to move around and to draw. Moreover, they liked topics related to soccer games, animated movies, and cartoons. In terms of their English language proficiency they were classified in first level or *A1* according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. That was evidenced in the students’

results of the activities proposed by the researchers such as: interviews, crosswords among others.

The other participants of this project were two novice teachers that took the roles of observers, designers, planners and implementers. Thus, they were in charge of planning the lesson for every session, analyzing the results during the development of this project, evaluating the methodology used to execute it, and observing the implementation of this classroom project.

Implementation:

In order to implement this classroom project, it is important to mention that learners from that public institution received two hours of English instruction per week, and those hours were spent by the practitioners for the accomplishment of this work.

This classroom project intended to develop the children's English writing skill through the use of a writing method called dialogue journal. Furthermore, in this project some cooperative learning strategies such as round robin, jigsaw, write- pair-share etc. were used in order to arrange students' interaction.

First of all, the implementation of dialogue journals followed some suggestions, and procedures provided by Peyton (1993) and Valigurová (2010). First, we took one class for introducing dialogue journals to the students. We delivered two sheet papers per student containing the procedures and rules in English and in their native language for the appropriate development of the dialogue journals. Then, some examples of the conversations written in a dialogue journal were displayed in Spanish as well as a poster containing an example of a message in English (See appendix 1) Afterwards, the students received a survey in English about students' likes and interest in order to obtain information that guided the planning of the classes likewise of the dialogue journal.

After the survey, the students developed their first interaction in the dialogue journal. They had to personalize their journal; thereafter, they had to make their first messages in their mother tongue. In the other entries, the communication between teacher and student or among learners took place by means of drawings. Within the same pictures, students wrote some words next to the drawings as a way of describing what they drew. Subsequently, the students passed to further level in which they started the processes of writing complete and simple sentences.

With regards to the arrangement of learners' interaction, we used some of the structures proposed by Kegan (1994) structures. For example:

Write-pair-square (modification of Think- Pair-Share) Stenlev (2003).

The first step of this activity consists of writing on the board one general question for students to copy it down in their dialogue journals and also to think about the question. Then, learners were paired to interchange the journals with their peers so they could respond to the question, they were given about six minutes to do it. Next, learners returned the notebooks to the respective owner so that they could read, comment or react to what their partners answered in the first question. The final step was to gather in groups of four people, they are also asked interchange their dialogue journals so each one of them could know the order in which they are supposed to read the conversations. Then, each the other two classmates add extra information, comment, reflect or react to what they wrote in the first two stages.

Team Jigsaw:

Learners were given numbers from one to four. Thereafter, students were grouped depending on the number they were assigned; for example, all students whose number was one gather in the group number one. They received a part of a story, then within

those groups they discussed about what they read. Next, learners had to join in different groups of four learners; every team had to include one student from group number one, two, and three, and four from the previous activity and they discussed what they read in those groups. Finally, the teacher wrote on the board some questions such as: What did you learn from this activity? How did you feel working with your teammates? Learners copied on their dialogue journals those questions and they had seven minutes to answer them. The educator collected the notebooks and commented to their answers.

This project followed a teaching model proposed by Harmer (2001) called *ESA* that stands for *Engage, Study and Activate*. According to Harmer, there are three stages during the class. The first one is named *Engage*, in this step teachers activate the attention on students and involve them emotionally; in this project this phase was developed by using some resources such as: PowerPoint presentations, and flashcards. As an example, there is an activity that consists of two different parts: in the first phase students had to guess what was inside the box. In the second part teacher showed students some of the flashcards, the idea was that one student received a flashcard to say aloud the name of the image, the expression or the word. Then, pupil gave the card to another student that had to perform the same action.

During the second phase of the lesson, known as *Study*, teachers focused the attention on language and the construction of it, some information was presented and students could elaborate some activities that permitted them to have a better understanding on the topic. Finally, the phase called *Activate* is the one in which students used and practice the concepts learned during the lesson; during this step students wrote some simple sentences once a week in the dialogue journals using the knowledge acquired .

Methods:

For this classroom project, some materials were used, such as: dialogue journals represented in notebooks; this was used in the last fifteen minutes of the class as recommended by Peyton (2000). In those dialogue journals students made some entries related to some specific question of different topics proposed by the practitioners. They were implemented through a written interaction between teacher-student, student-student, or among learners.

We used some readings connected to the topics proposed in the syllabus of the school as an input that helped students to make entries in their dialogue journals. The process was divided in two parts: in the first part, students had to read some information written in a piece of paper. Those readings related to a specific topic such as stories about values, descriptions etc. The paper included some questions that students had to solve. In the second part students used their dialogue journals to make entries in which evidence a reflection about the readings read before.

Other resource used in this project was the computer laboratory. In that place students were exposed to different activities that served as an input for their productions in their own dialogue journals. Those activities consisted of playing virtual games, or solving online exercises focused on the topics proposed in the syllabus for that term.

Reflection stage:

Reflection takes an important role in education inasmuch as it provides information of both the learning and the teaching processes that take place in the classroom. Moreover, reflection helps educators to identify whether instruction is being appropriately developed, or if on the contrary it needs to be modified. To fulfill this purpose, our reflection format incorporated a series of questions during and after the class, such as: *“Which aspects need improvement? What went well? What future*

actions can be implemented in upcoming sessions? How are our students feeling?" In this sense, reflection was truly important for us because that process was basically made to find out which aspects required enhancement. There are different types of reflections; however, for this project the most pertinent type of reflection was the one formulated by Schön (1983) who defines two kinds of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.

As for this project, reflection in-action helped to monitor the written processes of the students during the classes. In other words, it helped to observe whether the instructions that we gave for the development of the dialogue journal were clear for the learners and they were able to start writing, or if they were having any problem while making their entries. This type of reflection was complemented with reflection on-action since it assisted us to identify issues that were not evident during class session.

In order to obtain the aforementioned data, the two practitioners monitored the process of the students' writing in the dialogue journals, and analyzed the learners' productions. The teaching practice itself was evaluated at the end of every session by utilizing the squares from the lesson plan of the class in order to make the corresponding comments.

Furthermore, two *reflective journals* were used in order to add extra information about the usage of the dialogue journal. Those journals served as a tool to collect information about the two practitioners' professional growth in terms of reflecting upon the teaching practice, and gaining experience on the application of a new teaching method. Regarding the learners' linguistic outcomes, and students' responses; notebooks known as *dialogue journals* (Peyton 1993) were analyzed in order to observe how and what students did, reacted, and produced in the implementation of this classroom project. It was done by using the *6+1 writing* rubric which assessed aspects such as: sentence fluency, ideas, organization, voice, word choice, conventions, and

presentation. Moreover, we adapted the chart according to the learners' level and needs for the project.

Results:**Professional growth:**

Pre-service teachers' first steps towards developing professional growth.

It is well known that a good teacher does not emerge from one day to another; thus, in order to become one of them it is necessary to spend time on training, practice, critical awareness and analysis of their work to gradually enhance the quality of her teaching. That is why it is so important to constantly reflect upon the teaching ability so teachers may recognize their strengths and things to improve that may lead to foster their personal growth as educators. In the practicum of the teachers who carried out this project, they could observe some strengths for professional growth in terms of teamwork, and personal critical analysis of their classes.

The first aspect that it is necessary to mention in order to have a deep reflection in our teaching process is how we together planned the classes and the course in general. In this aspect, we consider that we had some positive and some negative results during this time.

To start with, a positive aspect that can be highlighted during the implementation of this classroom project was teamwork. According to Vogt (2002), teamwork refers to the process in which a particular group of people share common practices and gather in order to work cooperatively. Moreover, the process of working together includes interaction among teachers to design lessons, decision-making, and improvement. Teamwork permits teachers to deliberate about their practice and their work as a group which in turn promotes professional growth (Gerlach, 2002). In this particular case, there were two pre-service teachers in charge of guiding a single group, thus, it was

required to attempt to agree about the kind of materials, methodology, and activities to be presented to the students.

Joint work was evidenced more specifically in terms of lesson planning, design, and teaching. The implementers discussed together about the design, steps, and materials for every class. Furthermore, responsibility was divided into two while implementing the lesson. The two novice educators had a specific role while teaching and it was previously specified in the class planning.

From the very beginning, the two teachers worked conjointly in order to agree about the appropriate material to be used in the classroom as well as the possible strategies and techniques for teaching; those activities continued throughout and along the whole implementation. After every single class was completed, the two teachers developed a work plan for improvement. It consisted on writing on their journals the positive and negative aspects based on the information collected from the situations that arose during the implementation of the dialogue journal.

After a deep analysis of the situations, taking into account both points of view, we strive to come up with a solution towards certain concern observed in class; for example, in terms of classroom management and situations from the implementation of the dialogue journals. It may be observed in the parts from the personal journals:

“stage: Reflect, think about: What are the good and the bad aspects of the situation?”

“The second issue was the strategy used to pick the Dialogue Journals up which turned out to be problematic. For example, one student had a fight with one partner because he did not want to return the notebook on the grounds that he said that he had not finished coloring. This kind of situation also happened with some other students in charge of collecting the journals”

“Fifth stage: Personal action plan: What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time?”

“I will definitely use another strategy to collect the Dialogue journals. I will tell learners to put their journal on the desk and the other in-service teacher and I will pick them up in order, nobody could leave the classroom until the last notebook has been taken. The other novice teacher might start from the right side of the classroom and I with the left, with this I consider that they will know that this process will be more organized”.

Teacher 2- reflective journal 2- entry 1.

It implied processes of discussing together, analysis, and research which meant that we had to acquire certain abilities of reflection which in turn served to raise awareness of our pedagogical practice and, as a result, we grew professionally.

In order to continue, one of the strengths presented during the implementation of our classroom project was giving instructions since at the beginning students did not comprehend what they had to do during some of the activities taking more time than the expected disturbing the execution of the project. However, during the implementation teachers found a good solution for that problem becoming strength.

That was supported in teachers' reflections.

Teacher #1 reflection- November 11-2014 (See appendix 2)

What didn't go that well?

“There was a confusing moment in which the instructions were given by the two practitioners at the same time providing different information and generating some misunderstandings...Furthermore, there were a lot of problems giving instructions

during the whole class frustrating the adequate development of the implementation of the dialogue journal .”

What would you do different next time?

“When you are providing instructions, it is necessary to take into consideration different aspects such as: students’ level, students’ learning styles and the topic itself in order to provide students the opportunity to understand what they have to do without having problems. It is also important to modify the words used in the instructions or provide some examples to allow students’ understanding of the exercise asked by the practitioner. If you give some clear instructions, students might develop the entries in the dialogue journals successfully”.

As it was mentioned in the previously paragraphs, the challenge occurred during some classes. Thus, the teachers decided to find a solution for that problem; that is why they used some strategies based on Penny Ur (1991). One of the procedures that she mentions is to catch students’ attention before giving the instructions. The scholar states that it is important to repeat to students the instructions by using different words and gestures in order to express the meaning. Taking into considerations Penny Ur (1991) contributions the practitioners decided to start using gestures, some movements and changing the vocabulary to give the instructions during the implementation. It had good results because students started understanding the instructions; that was evidenced in the teachers’ reflections.

Teacher 2 reflection lesson 6:

What went well?

Some students followed the instructions given by the practitioner.

How do you know that?

The students repeated the instructions in their mother tongue and they developed the activity we asked them to do in the dialogue journals.

To sum up, the theory proposed by Penny Ur (1991) worked in the group in which this classroom project was developed. If the learners know what to do in the stages asked by the practitioner, the lessons might become more manageable allowing developing different activities for the class.

Establishing ground rules in a classroom has been demonstrated to be effective when used to cope with classroom management issues related to the learners' behavior. Therefore, Marzano (2003); Brown (2001) agree that sharing rules in a class assists the improvement of the rapport, teacher-students and learner- learner' relationships, and/ or students' discipline Thus, some teachers have used a variety of strategies and procedures to implement rules in the classroom setting in order to avoid misunderstandings and undesired behaviors, which may appear during and out of the class session. In our teaching practice, it has been quite useful to set a list of rules for the appropriate development of the classroom project inasmuch as they have contributed to reduce the disruptive behavior of some learners (See appendix 3)

Moreover, taking into consideration some ideas proposed by Marzano (2003) and Brown (2001) the pre- service teachers negotiated those ground rules with the whole group and they did not impose them. They clarified at the beginning of the classes and at the beginning of the implementation of this project the teachers' expectations associated with two different aspects. The first one was the behavior in terms of turn

taking; the importance on respecting others' opinions and the teamwork. It was evident in our implementation that providing ground rules in the class is a favorable strategy due to the effectiveness in the improvement of students' attitudes in the classroom.

Additionally, the authors mentioned in the previous paragraph proposed some strategies of how teachers could use the rules in the classroom; those strategies were used in our implementation. The first one was creating the rules; in that stage pre-service teachers determined the rules to be used during the sessions that served to create a good environment in which students and teachers could develop their learning and personal process without problems. The second strategy was linked to the stage when teachers shared rules list; those strategies were useful to improve students' behavior since they often followed the rules established.

Thus, Establishing rules at the beginning of the implementation of the dialogue journal permitted students to know what they could do or what was restricted. It is not only to give students a nonsense list of rules, the idea is to explain them the consequences and the benefits they could obtain if they follow or not follow the rules.

In the previous paragraphs, it could be evidenced the positive effects of establishing rules on the students' and teachers' attitudes towards the class, and the quality of the learning environment. These results could be obtained if at the very beginning of a course the facilitator proposes, discusses, clarifies, and agrees along with the students the expectations about the course, the facilitator, and learners' responsibilities.

As an example, we used the strategy of sharing rules during the first implementation of the dialogue journal in order to allow learners to know how they were required to

behave in class, the way in which they must treat their peers and teachers, as well as the materials used in the educational setting. This has demonstrated to be beneficial in the extent to which learners have responded positively to the agreements discussed when we started the implementation; misbehavior was reduced in every class session helping to the appropriate development of the activities proposed by the practitioners. Furthermore, the classroom practices have assisted to improve aspects such as: academic achievement, orderliness, and self-control.

To sum up, when comparing theory and our teaching practice with regards to rules established in the classroom and their main purpose, it may be said that if they are properly used they may help in different aspects of instruction and classroom management.

Challenging factors in our professional development

Some challenges were evidenced during our implementation; those were proved through the reflection in action and reflection on action based on the Schon's (1983) model and some personal journals. (See appendix 4) Those reflections permitted us to differentiate the most current problems in terms of institutional limitations, time management and giving instructions in order to grow professionally.

The idea when you are teaching it is not to teach different topics in disorder during the classes, it is to have into account a logical order that permits a connection between the lessons. However, during the implementation of this classroom project it has been demonstrated a recurring problem; that is, the lack of time management due to the fact that some activities took more time than the expected interrupting the development of the project.

Teacher 1 reflection 4 Thursday, 11/09/ 2014

What would you do different next time?

“For next sections it is important to be realistic in the time assigned for each stage taking into consideration different facts such as: students’ level, students’ behavior. In addition, it is necessary to give instructions in an easy way in order to permit students to have a better understanding of the activity. If students understand the commands given by the practitioners, they might not take too much time solving the exercises.”

Teacher 2 journal 1 Thursday, 11/09/ 2014

What are the good and the bad aspects of the situation?

“The bad aspects are for instance that the tasks planned to develop the first entry in their dialogue journals could not be completed. In fact, it just was done until the part in which they had to decorate the cover.”

Moreover, the fifteen minutes assigned for the development of the dialogue journal in each lesson were not enough for the writing students’ performance since some students needed more time than the others to write their sentences or to draw in their journals.

Teacher #1 personal journal- September 9 -2014

What you have learned.

“I learned not to give students the assignment of collecting the dialogue journals in order to avoid misunderstandings. Another important aspect that I learned is that some activities could take more time than the expected. Thus, it is necessary to develop the

lessons; in which they have to use their dialogue journal, taking into account the time management”

Taking into mind the reflections of the lesson and the personal journals, teachers decided to assign more time for the steps in the lesson. That strategy aided to solve the problem mentioned above since the students could perform all the activities designed for the whole lessons and they had enough time for writing on their journals.

Moreover, some of the issues that impacted negatively on the implementation of this project were some institutional limitations that restricted us to some extent to arrange groups in the classroom. That affected the implementation of the cooperative learning strategies. To start with, we were told at the beginning of the classes that we should not organize groups in the classroom due to learners' misbehavior and different negative previous situations presented by the time of grouping students. Participants were always arranged in rows; hence, the only way to group learners was to gather them with the students who were next to them. As an example; in the “write-Pair- Square” activity in which the teacher writes on the board a question as the source of information for consequent writing, learners are paired to work together in order to develop a conversation (Stenlev, 2003). That grouping strategy was implemented under certain restrictions mentioned in previous lines from this paragraph which in turn needed to have the in-service's permission.

In the second implementation of the dialogue journals, the students indeed worked with their classmates next to them; this made the grouping process faster but a little chaotic in the following implementations since the pupils were usually changed from their seats due to their bad behavior. Therefore, when we were to analyze the conversations it was an overwhelming activity because we had to identify different outcomes from distinct conversation within the same journal.

Second of all, we attempted to convince the teacher to allow learners to work in groups of four people in order to implement the second structure “Team Jigsaw”: It basically requires learners to work in small groups in this case, four learners. They are given numbers from one to four. Thereafter, students are grouped depending on the number they are assigned; for example, all students whose number was one gather in the group number one.

Due to the restrictions of grouping students with more than two students, we had to modify the cooperative learning structure. We agreed with the in-service teacher that we could gather the learners in groups of four but they could only join with the students next or close to them. Moreover, participants were not allowed to move around or change groups because the class management would get out of control. Thus, learners were joined in groups of four people. Inside the groups they had to talk about the same topic “daily routines” but they all had a different part of the day. Hence, learners could write to the classmate next to them and to read their responses among them.

Another situation was that we had a day set for the implementation that was on Thursdays; notwithstanding, there were some changes in the schedule due to a mismatch from the in-service teachers’ and implementers’ schedules as well as the days for English class. The day for the implementation was then modified to Fridays, this was a real obstacle inasmuch as four classes were not guided since that day was usually taken as a cultural day, or they did a cultural event, or the day for teachers’ meetings. This also was detrimental for the quality of the learners’ disposition to write on the dialogue journals on the grounds that they were so excited to leave school as it was the last day of the week. In addition to this, learners were used to watch a movie or a documentary in order to relax from the pressure from the week as it was expressed by the in-service teacher. Moreover, the project was implemented after the break time, the hour in which learners entered the classroom full of energy and wanting to keep moving but journal writing requires concentration and calmness.

Additionally, it is worthwhile to mention different interruptions and difficulties we had to experience due to learners' behavior and external noise. The coordinator and the teacher in charge usually interrupted the class to scold students about previous disciplinary issues or the misbehavior problems that were happening in the class. This delayed the time to be spent in the activities and thus time management and sometimes learners' attitudes towards the class since they were so stressed, bored, or angry about that situation that they rather stayed crying or spellbound. And finally, the fact that the classroom was next to the playroom affected negatively the sonority of the teachers' spoken instructions as well as their concentration.

In one of the observations from the fifth implementation, comments from the journals were taken to support the aforementioned:

"...for Instance the time is not enough to use the dialogue journal as it is planned; also the noise affects students' concentration because they were focused on the students who were playing soccer outside and also to the sounds (...)And finally, we started the class one hour later and pupils felt stressed and angry for the situation they had with the coordinator for their bad behavior. Also, we had to deal with the condition of working in groups but they could not move around nor have different classmates apart from those who were near to them in order to avoid misbehaviors and excessive noise. " Teacher #2; p. Journal 2; entry 5-date 05/11/2014.

Teacher 1 personal journal entry 2 26-09-2014

"Regarding the negative aspects we can tell that most of the participants took much time to write and draw in their dialogue journals, this caused that they did not have time to respond to their peers, some of them just read what their partners wrote. We knew this on the ground that when they seemed to have finished (they started to talk with others and to stand up) thus we approached to them and asked them what the other had written to them, they said in L1 what they understood and we checked so.

Furthermore, the survey could not be done on the grounds that in the previous activities for input they asked teachers for more time to do the drawings and to copy the information from the board. Therefore, we decided to replace that activity so learners could have more supportive information for them to start writing in English in their dialogue journals. This affected the structure of the lesson and thus, time management.”

To conclude, the three challenges mentioned before aided us to reflect on the aspects to be improved and changed for future implementations of the dialogue journal. First, giving instructions is an important aspect that needs a deep reflection in order to find a strategy to avoid that problem taking into consideration different aspects such as: students' level. Second, in terms of the time management it is necessary to be realistic with the time assigned to each stage. Finally, it is important to have in mind some possible answers to the institutional limitations as an example: making an agreement with the in- service teacher.

Students' responses

In order to evaluate the positive aspects and aspects to improve related to students' responses of this classroom project, four items will be presented: the first one is planning (course and classes), the second one is classroom management, the third one is discipline control, and the last one is design and use of didactic materials.

To start with, one of those issues which we must strengthen was the *classroom management*. Wong (2000) defines this term as the strategies, techniques, methodologies that permit a teacher to arrange a set of elements such as: time, resources, setting, learners, and instructions in order to make learning happen. Hence, the later implies that a teacher must be creative and practical when it comes to design and implement her lessons.

There is a factor that is important to mention since that was one of the strengths in terms of students' responses. The aspect is related to students' affective factors through the implementation of the dialogue journals. Padron et al. (2005) state that the use of didactic materials permits students to attain their aims during their learning process. They also argue that there are two kinds of materials, some of them designed for the teaching practice and some others are created for the learning development. We used different materials for the teaching process such as: flashcards, a magic box, a new notebook used as their journals and some others that helped the students to improve their English and to put into practice their learning skills.

From the beginning of the classes students felt enthusiastic, motivated and they had a good attitude to use their journals. In the teachers' reflections and personal journals there is evidence of students' responses through the implementation of this classroom project in the classes:

Teacher 1 reflection lesson 4th

What went well?

Students understand the stages of how they have to write their entries in their dialogue journals. Students felt enthusiastic about their dialogue journals.

How do you know that?

Students formulated some questions to the practitioners: “¿Profe de verdad que nos van a regular cuadernos?”. “¿Profe ese cuaderno no es mío? ¿o sí?” all the students were thankful for the notebooks. Moreover, students said correctly the steps of the dialogue journal’ entry showed by the practitioner: “the date”, “dear”, “images”. I consider that checking students’ understanding helps to know if the students have an adequate comprehension of the topic. Thus, if there are some problems I can solve them.

Teacher 2 personal journal entry 2: 26-09-2014

What are the good and the bad aspects of the situation?

“The good aspects are for example that all learners paid attention to the conversations and to the teachers. This can be evidenced by their interest shown in their questions about their future written conversations as well as inquiries about the content of the conversation. Also, the learners show excitement for their new belonging (the notebook) this can be noticed through expressions such as “ ¿esto es mío?” “¿Me lo van a regular?” “¿Y puedo escribir y hacer muchos dibujos ahí?” (Facial expressions). In addition to this, the students’ creativeness when they decorate the cover of the notebook is observed when they use different colors, drawings and words

to make their journal as personal as it should be and they express verbally their eagerness to start writing.

Moreover, the use of posters was an effective strategy to catch pupils' attention. While we were explaining the situations the learners were quiet, and paying attention to the class, they seemed curious about what we were explaining. One of the learners expressed "Tan lindos los dibujitos teacher, ¿los hizo usted?" when he saw the poster. Nevertheless, at first it caused a little mess when some of them tried to stand up to see the poster in a better "angle".

During the implementation of this project there was another strength presented. It was connected to the students' understanding of the dynamic of working cooperatively. The students knew that they worked every class with a partner or a group and even some of the students felt excited of working with their partners. In the teachers' reflections there is a proof of this.

Teacher 2 personal journal entry 4th: 15-10-2014

"The good aspects are for example that the learners are used to the routine used to gather in pairs (the one next to them), they do not do too much noise and they remember who they were working with. Also, most of learners work actively with their peers and help each other to correct their mistakes"

As a conclusion, based on the use of ground rules at the beginning of a course, it was verified that learners were more attentive in academic terms when they have a clear idea about what they have to do. In addition, when students have a motivation and a good attitude to learn the process of learning could be easier for them and for the teachers.

Challenges in the students' responses:

During the implementation of this project there were some aspects that needed to be analyzed by us as implementers in order to find strategies that served us to avoid those situations. One of them is related to students' responses to the cooperative learning and cooperative structures.

Colorado (2007) argues that cooperative learning permits students to work in teams promoting respect and empathy among the pupils. In this classroom project some of the students felt enthusiastic working in teams. However, some others did not want to participate in this process affecting their partners' work. Moreover, the structures proposed by Kagan (1994) cited in Stenlev (2003) at the beginning of the classes had to be modified in the classroom since some institutional limitations were presented.

Teacher 2 personal journal entry 5th 05/11/2014

What are the good and the bad aspects of the situation?

"The bad aspects are for instance that the time is not enough to use the dialogue journal as it is planned; also the noise affects students' concentration. We did not prepare the structure: team jigsaw, as it is usually done; we modified it due to the small space to make learners move around the classroom and because of previous reports of disruptive behavior of the learners".

Teacher 1 personal journal entry 4th: 15-10-2014

What are the good and the bad aspects of the situation?

“Furthermore, some learners do not have the same peers on the grounds that the in-service teacher asked some students to change seats due to their behavior. This caused confusion among them, and they could not be with their respective peers and had to change with others. This happened due to the fact that learners are not allowed to walk around the classroom because they are many and that causes distractions and mess”.

After some reflections, we noticed that there might be some unexpected situations in the classroom that can change the plans established for the project. If the practitioners deal with students’ behavior and institutional limitations they can implement the activities in an easy manner. Furthermore, teachers started making pairs instead of groups to avoid those situations.

Teacher 1 personal journal lesson plan number 8

What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learned?

First, I am going to gather learners in pairs due to the fact that I have noticed that the dialogue journals writing goes better when they work in pairs. Second, I am going to make sure that they understand what they have to do and write; and third, I am going to take into consideration their attitude before they start writing on their journal and to take advantage of it to gather information about their perceptions of the class.

Learners' linguistic outcomes regarding the implementation of dialogue journal and input given during class time.

The learners' linguistic outcomes are relevant to this project since they represent the data collected that informed us about their achievements, progress, or about their weaknesses and shortcomings regarding what has been taught or implemented. That is why we used a set of different data collection methods in order to gather as much information as we could for the implementation of this project. In the 6+1 *writing* rubric the lowest level was 1 or beginner- no proficient and the maximum was 6 or exceptional- proficient (see appendix 5).

At the very beginning we aimed to develop learners' writing performance gradually. Hence, learners started from making simple isolated words plus drawings, then sentences, until they were able to construct coherent paragraphs including connectors of sequence and addition. The aforementioned process could not be achieved by all of students; nevertheless, there is one point to highlight. Learners started exploring their English grammar doing it through a natural way; that is, conversation. In the second implementation of the dialogue journals, most of the learners could carry out a short conversation; it is to say, to include date, greeting question, and answer (see appendix 6) but any reply after that answer within the same conversation could be observed; a subsequent question or response that indicated that the conversation continued. According to Peyton (1993), learners might start making entries in their mother tongue and whenever they feel ready they may pass from their L1 to continue writing in the target language.

Taking into account the previous information, we planned to introduce the dialogue journals in Spanish so they could understand better the mechanic of the conversations. Nevertheless, due to different limitations that we had to face and the fact that learners

took more time to decorate the covers of the notebooks, we decided to allow them to do the first entry in English taking advantage of the topic taught “Likes and dislikes”. Learners understood the mechanic of a conversation in which one asks and the other responds taking into consideration the protocol for addressing a person eg.

- “Date: Friday, September 26th 2014
- *Dear J. F (greeting) What do you like doing?”*
- *“Dear D. I like playing soccer and...” (See appendix 7)*

Most of the learners drew some sketches in order to represent what they had written and to give the conversation a little reinforcement and a touch of creativity. This could be one of the reasons why there could not be a second response or reply since learners took their time to design what they wanted to express in a visual way (pictures).

In the following implementation, a survey was done. In the photocopy they were able to answer the question in English and Spanish. Some of them took advantage of the vocabulary learned in class as well as their previous knowledge to write in English, and when they did not know how to say something in English they made use of their first language eg. *“My food favorite is la Costilla a la BBQ” (see appendix 8)*. In the third implementation learners were asked to work in pairs in order to correct their mistakes. One positive aspect was that some of them worked in pairs and assisted one another to edit their mistakes; nonetheless, for some of them it was confusing because they were constantly changed from their seats and the pairs who worked together in the previous implementation were no longer one next to the other. Therefore, some of them ended up correcting their own mistakes or from another peer.

During the implementation of the Dialogue Journals the “Team Jigsaw” strategy proposed by Kagan (1994) was used to arrange learners into groups of four people. What may be excelled is that learners argued that their partners assisted them and supported them to carry out their tasks, and sketches of paragraphs started to emerge.

This kind of situations is likely to appear when using group work. Alghamdi *et al.* (2013) says that cooperative learning has great benefits for foreign language students since learners tend to achieve better grades or outcomes in contrast to individual learning. Furthermore, the same author cites other scholars (Johnson & Johnson, 2003) who argue that in these cases learners are grouped with different learners whose language proficiency might slightly differ one from another. Therefore, they have the possibility to learn from other mates whose English competence is a little higher. Eg.

- *“Teacher mire, ellos me ayudaron a terminarlo porque yo no sabía bien eso pero ya entendí. Así está bien ¿Cierto teacher?”*
Teacher 2 – reflective journal 2 -entry 5 -student F.C.

In the last implementation of the journals, we started the conversation by writing the leading questions. It is to say; before the class started we already had written the questions as well as the greetings and everything. Some of the questions were in Spanish to know their perceptions towards the method for writing and group work. A last question was displayed in which the teacher asked every learner about their free time activities. In this part some of the learners were able to do what we expect them to do, use appropriate greetings to address the reader, and a complete paragraph in English using connectors of sequence and contrast. Some others were able to pose similar questions using the original model in order to inquire the teachers about the topic presented (see appendix 9)

The learners’ written productions from the beginning to the end were then contrasted with the *6+1 writing* rubric. Only five learners obtained the maximum level which was exceptional proficient, and the remaining learners stayed at the middle and lower levels. (See appendix 10)

Despite the great results collected from the outcomes from some learners, it is essential to mention different challenges that we faced during the implementation of the dialogue journals affected the learners’ linguistic outcomes in a negative way. First of all, some learners were reluctant to participate in the process of writing on the dialogue

journals making that their corresponding peer could not develop his/ her conversation; and thus, the opportunity to practice and develop his/ her writing could not take place.

Learners had the entry, greeting, date, and question but no response was observed, hence, no assessment could be done in terms of ideas, sentence fluency and voice. Some others took much time to develop their drawings and a second reply could not be observed. And finally, external limitations such as learners' disposition and attitudes towards the class, lessons cancelled and time for receiving enough input were detrimental for the quality of the participants' outcomes and exposure of the method for writing.

To conclude it can be said that the goal set in the objectives for this project were achieved only for a limited number of students, and for some others the goal was partially reached. Notwithstanding, it is worthwhile to mention that these learners were not exposed to this sort of writing activities which entail meaningful communication. For them writing was to copy some isolated words as it was evidenced in their notebooks. By the use of this approach to teaching learners had the chance to explore their English grammar and to take it to a further level. They were aware of their improvements as it was observed in the last questionnaire (see appendix 11) and the best of this is that they were excited to try new things and they took care of their belongings.

Limitations:

This classroom project was carried out in a particular context which presented some issues that limited the proper implementation of the dialogue journals along with cooperative learning structures in the classroom. It implies that the application of what it was initially proposed had to be modified at a certain point, and thus, that lead us to have some obstacles that affected the data collection and results of the present paper.

To start with, the population involved in the development of the project had certain misbehavior problems; hence, in some cases the implementers were more focused on solving the problems presented during the classes than on teaching the topics. Consequently, the input for the classes was reduced.

One the limitation that this project encountered was related to the number of the students involved in this implementation since the process of replying to students' entries took a lot of time and some of the conversations could not be developed.

During this implementation there were some institutional limitations one of them was related to the restrictions of the in-service teacher in the classroom since students' grouping was avoided; thus, the implementation of cooperative learning structures was affected. The second limitation has to do with the distinct interruptions during the classes by the coordinator and the in-service teacher. The third one was that the day assigned for the implementation of the project on the grounds that it had to be changed since the schedule of the in-service teacher and the practitioners did not match, and the other day selected to guide the lessons some classes were missed.

Another limitation was that the fifteen minutes assigned for the development of the dialogue journals were not enough to write the entries.

The limitations within a project in such context like this are inevitable to appear, nevertheless is the implementers' responsibility to attempt to predict the possible barriers that could arise during the execution as well as knowing how to address the ones that cannot be expected. That is done with the purpose of finding the appropriate and prompt solution at the right moment so that those limitations may not have such negative impact on the implementation itself, and thus on the results.

Implications:

With regards to the use of cooperative learning structures such as *Team Jigsaw* which was used to arrange learners' interaction for the implementation of dialogue journal writing, it may be concluded that for this specific type of population it was not an effective technique to group students' interaction. First of all, when the population is not allowed to move around the classroom due to different reports of misbehaviors, the aforementioned structure becomes incomplete and tedious to modify. However, having more than two students gathered in the same group sometimes promotes a collaborative environment. Learners tend to assist each other when writing their productions but they are likely to talk loud and to distract in other issues.

Second of all, it becomes a real challenge for the implementers to attempt to analyze the conversations in the dialogue journals on the grounds that the participants have conversations among different learners and the process of studying their responses gets confusing most of the time.

During the last implementation the interaction in the dialogue journals was done through teachers- students' communication. This was the best way of carry out the conversations. First of all, the advantages were that the teacher had posed the questions so the time spent to develop the conversations was reduced and there was more time left for the students to write their replies and even the subsequent questions to be asked to the pre-service teacher. Therefore, based on the information from the previous paragraphs, the best way of arranging learners' interaction may be by unchanging peers or student-teacher communication.

For the use of the other cooperative learning structure known as *Write- pair-square* (Stenlev, 2003), evidence points out that when learners work in pairs; especially the ones closer to them, the writing experience becomes more organized and cooperative. Students have established roles within the conversations in order to accomplish a

common goal which in turn is the development of a conversation between them. Nevertheless, when learners often change their partners throughout the implementation it becomes tedious for the teachers to analyze students' progress, improvements or productions from distinct conversations though different momentums since they have to identify in which notebook they wrote and to whom.

Moreover, it is important to mention that it is necessary to provide enough input to the students about the topics and exercises in which they have to create their own sentences by using a model that permits students to recognize the structure and to compare those examples with their own sentences.

Conclusions:

When we decided to work on this project we were novice teachers; however, we had a clear aim which was to implement a classroom project that assisted our students to improve their writing skills in the foreign language. That is why; we decided to use the dialogue journal writing method which gives them the opportunity to explore and develop their communicative competence in terms of writing. Consequently, during the implementation some of objectives set were partially achieved and some others were not.

Regarding the content observed from the dialogue journals contrasted to the objectives of this paper, it is concluded that the goal in which learners were able to articulate simple sentences to make paragraphs by using connectors of sequence and addition was achieved only by a few of students. Only seven participants were able to write more than five lines using the content learned in class as well as the elements to write it, such as connectors, punctuation and content itself. Nevertheless, all learners were exposed to the language and could write short sentences to express their thoughts. All in all, dialogue journal writing assists learners to develop their communicative competences and make them be aware of the purpose of using the foreign language which is communication.

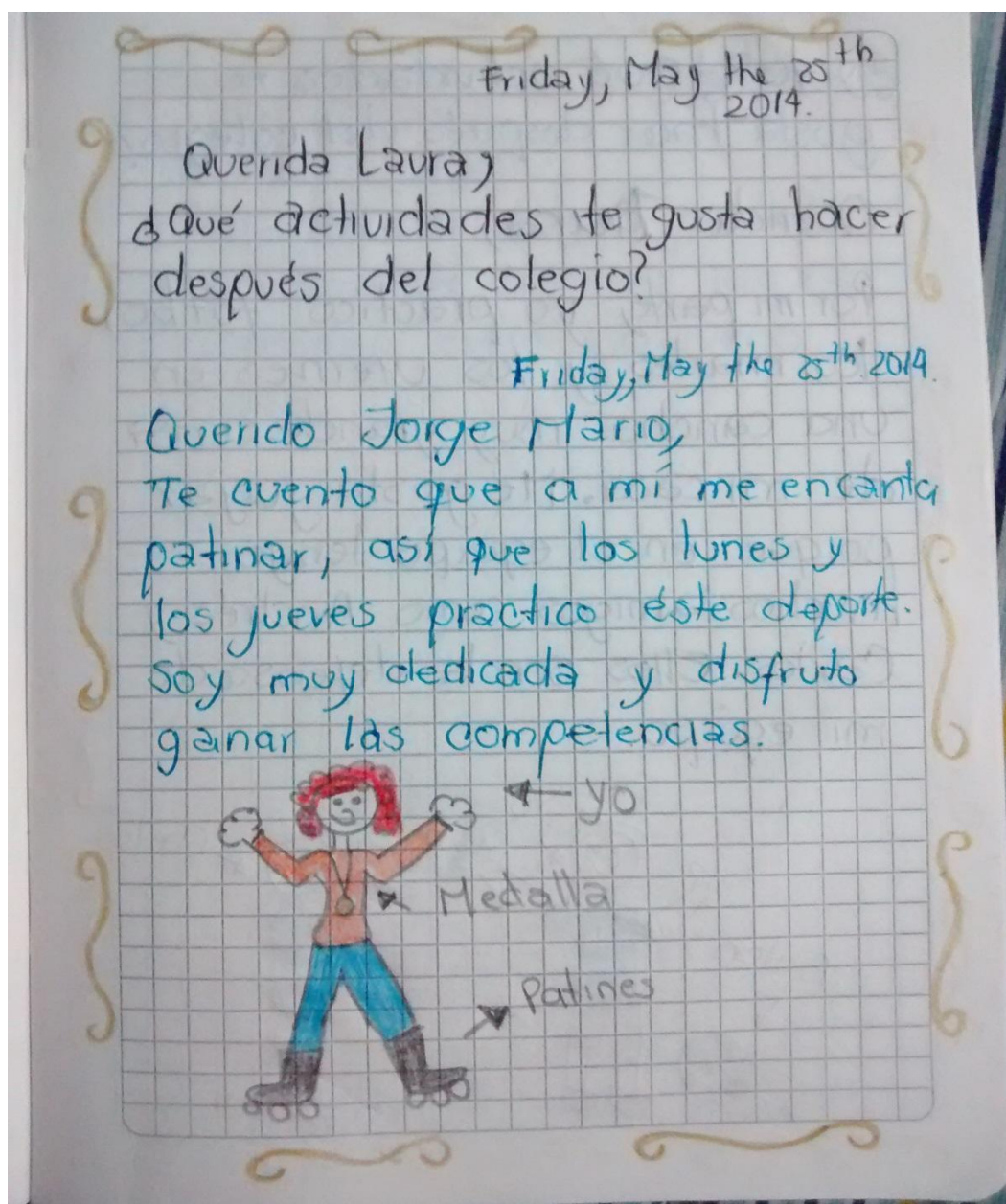
Moreover, dialogue journals assist teachers to have observable evidence of the learners' progress, improvements, needs, and lacks as well as different strategies they use to communicate and to continue the flow of the interaction; such as the use of L1 (code switching) along with English.

As a final aspect to be addressed, the use of the dialogue journals increases students' motivation and students' affective factors during the classes since learners engage during the tasks performance and they feel excited to work with the journals; it

also permits to have a good communication or dialogue, between teachers-and students, and interaction among the students as it based on the frame of respect.

Appendixes

Appendix 1



¿y tu? ¿Qué actividades te gusta hacer después del colegio?

Querida Jara,

Por mi parte, yo practico fútbol los martes y los viernes en una cancha muy grande cerca de mi casa. Me gusta jugar porque en el equipo tengo muchos amigos como Andrés y Carlos. Ellos son la defensa de mi equipo.

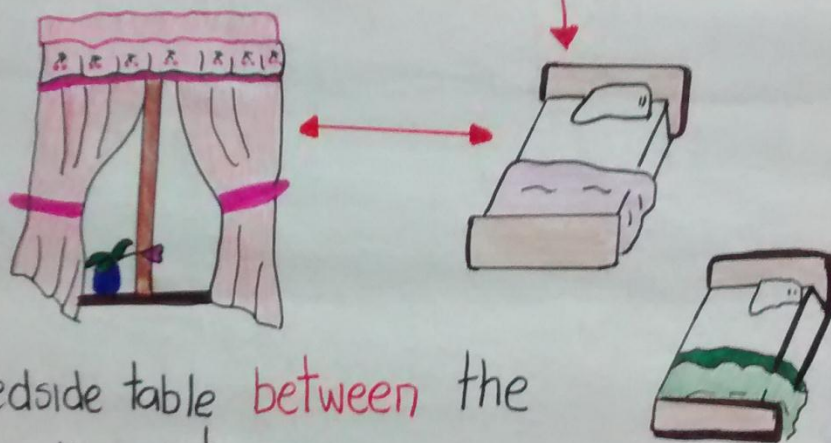


Wednesday, August 18, 2014.

Dear Angélica,

MY BEDROOM

In my bedroom there are two beds next to the window.



There is a bedside table between the beds and a pink carpet.

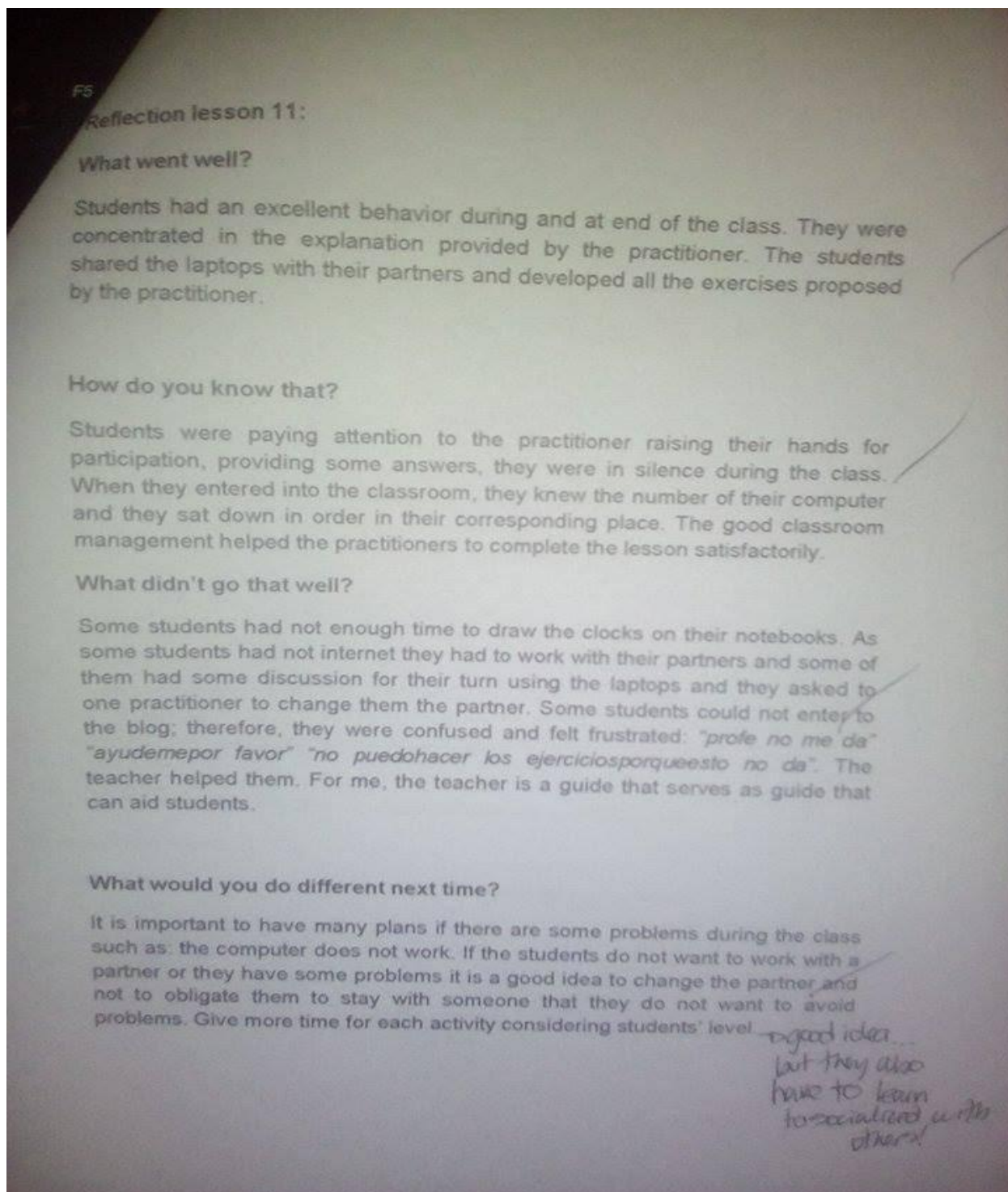


On the beside table there is a lamp and an alarm clock.

Over my desk there are many posters.

Eliana Flórez.

Appendix 2



Appendix 3

Reflective journal questions:

Teacher .:

Lesson plan #. - Implementation #.

Personal Journal: entry #.

Date of the implementation: 00/00/0000

First stage: Write, record

- Describe the situation (the course, the context).
- Who was involved with the situation?
- What did they have to do with the situation?

Second stage: Reflect, think about.

- What are your reactions?
- What are your feelings?
- What are the good and the bad aspects of the situation?
- What have you learned?

Third stage: Analyze, explain, gain insight

- What was really going on?
- What sense can you make of the situation?

Forth stage: Conclusions

- What can be concluded in a general and specific sense from this situation/experience and the analyses you have undertaken?

Fifth stage: Personal action plan

- What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time?
- What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learned?

Appendix 4

Dialogue journals' rules

- We will write the dialogue journal once a week for 3 months.
- The dialogue journal will include questions and comments related to your entries
- You will write in your dialogue journal for the last 10-15 minutes of every lesson.
- Sometimes, grammar will not be corrected.
- Use a different color to make your entry.
- Respect your partners' comments.
- Take care of you and your partner's dialogue journals

Reglas para usar los dialogue journals

- Vamos a escribir el diario una vez por semana durante 3 meses.
- Los diarios incluirán preguntas y comentarios relacionados con los comentarios escritos por usted.
- Usted tendrá que escribir en su diario durante los últimos 10-15 minutos de cada lección.
- A veces, no se corregirá la gramática.
- Utilice un color diferente para hacer su entrada.
- Respete los comentarios de sus compañeros.
- Tener cuidado con su diario y el de sus compañeros.

Taken and modified from:
http://is.muni.cz/th/264962/pedf_b/Using_Dialogue_Journals_with_Young_EFL_Learners.pdf

Appendix 5

Traits Rubric for K–2

Traits Rubric for Ideas: K–2						
Key question: Does the writer engage the reader with fresh information or perspective on a focused topic?						
Not Proficient			Proficient			
1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional	
Does not communicate an idea through writing, drawing, or dictation	Attempts to present the idea, but it is vague and there is no support through writing or drawing, or support offered is not connected	Conveys the idea in writing in a general way (e.g., through a sentence), but support is lacking or not convincing	Presents a simple idea (e.g., a story, information, or opinion) with some details in writing	Conveys a rich, clear main idea (e.g., tells a story, provides information, or offers an opinion) using multiple sentences with supporting details	Conveys a clear, focused, and well-developed idea (e.g., through a story, information, or opinion) in writing that is fresh or original	
A . M a I n i d e a	Uses scribbles or shapes that imitate letters; may write letters randomly; may dictate	Uses some recognizable letters or words; may include line forms that imitate text; drawing (if present) may be labeled but may not	Tries to convey a simple experience or information about a topic using words, but meaning is not entirely clear; drawing (if present) may relate to writing	Conveys a clear idea (e.g., through a story, information, or opinion); drawing (if present) is appropriate to the topic	Conveys a focused main idea; drawing (if present) supports idea	Presents a focused, complete, and fresh or original idea; drawing (if present) enhances focus

ideas or labels for pictures	relate to writing				
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Traits Rubric for Organization: K–2						
Key question: Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make them easier to understand?						
Not Proficient			Proficient			
1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional	
	Has no obvious structure or organization	Appears to attempt a structure in writing or drawing, but it is incomplete or confusing	Begins developing a structure, but it is basic or confusing in places	Demonstrates a basic structure in writing that supports ideas; includes transitions in the structure	Uses a structure that flows well, with varied transitions and sound sequencing	Provides a structure that highlights the message, with rich and varied transitions and sequencing that enhances meaning
A . B e gi n ni n g, m id dl e, a n	Has no sense of beginning, middle, or end; drawings may appear random and/or disconnected	Shows a beginning sense of structure in writing or drawing, but it is incomplete or out of order	Begins developing a structure though organization is hard to follow; experiments with a beginning (e.g., “Once upon a time”) and/or a middle; includes no clear ending except possibly	Includes a beginning, middle, and end, though they may not flow together smoothly or be entirely clear	Has a beginning, middle, and end that work together to communicate consistently; includes lead and concluding sentences	Has an inviting beginning, a middle with appropriate details, and a developed ending that is effective, interesting, or thoughtful

d e n d			“The End”			
B. T r a n s i t i o n s	Does not demonstrate ability to order or group words and/or drawings	Attempts to group like words and/or drawings; may attempt limited transitions	Includes limited transitions but relies primarily on simple words (e.g., so, and, then); drawing (if present) may attempt to link ideas	Uses often predictable transitions (e.g., linking and temporal words); drawing (if present) may link ideas	Uses frequently varied transitions to connect main ideas and details; drawing (if present) builds connections	Connects ideas in logical, interesting ways with a variety of transitions; drawing (if present) elaborates connections
C. S e q u e n c i n g	Shows no sense of sequencing in writing or drawing	Has sequencing that seems random in writing and/or drawing	Includes attempts at sequencing in writing and/or drawing that are confusing or seem out of order	Uses logical sequencing that can be followed by reader in writing; drawing (if present) may also reflect logical sequencing or placement	Uses logical sequencing that can be followed by reader in writing; drawing (if present) may also reflect logical sequencing or placement	Uses organizational structure and sequencing to enhance or extend meaning and clarify main idea; drawing (if present) enhances meaning
Traits Rubric for Voice: K–2						
Key question: Does the reader clearly hear this writer speaking in the piece?						
Not Proficient			Proficient			
1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional	
Does not suggest feeling,	Has limited clues to feeling/mood	Expresses predictable feeling/mood	Begins to show individual	Includes individual or unique	Engages reader fully and reflects the	

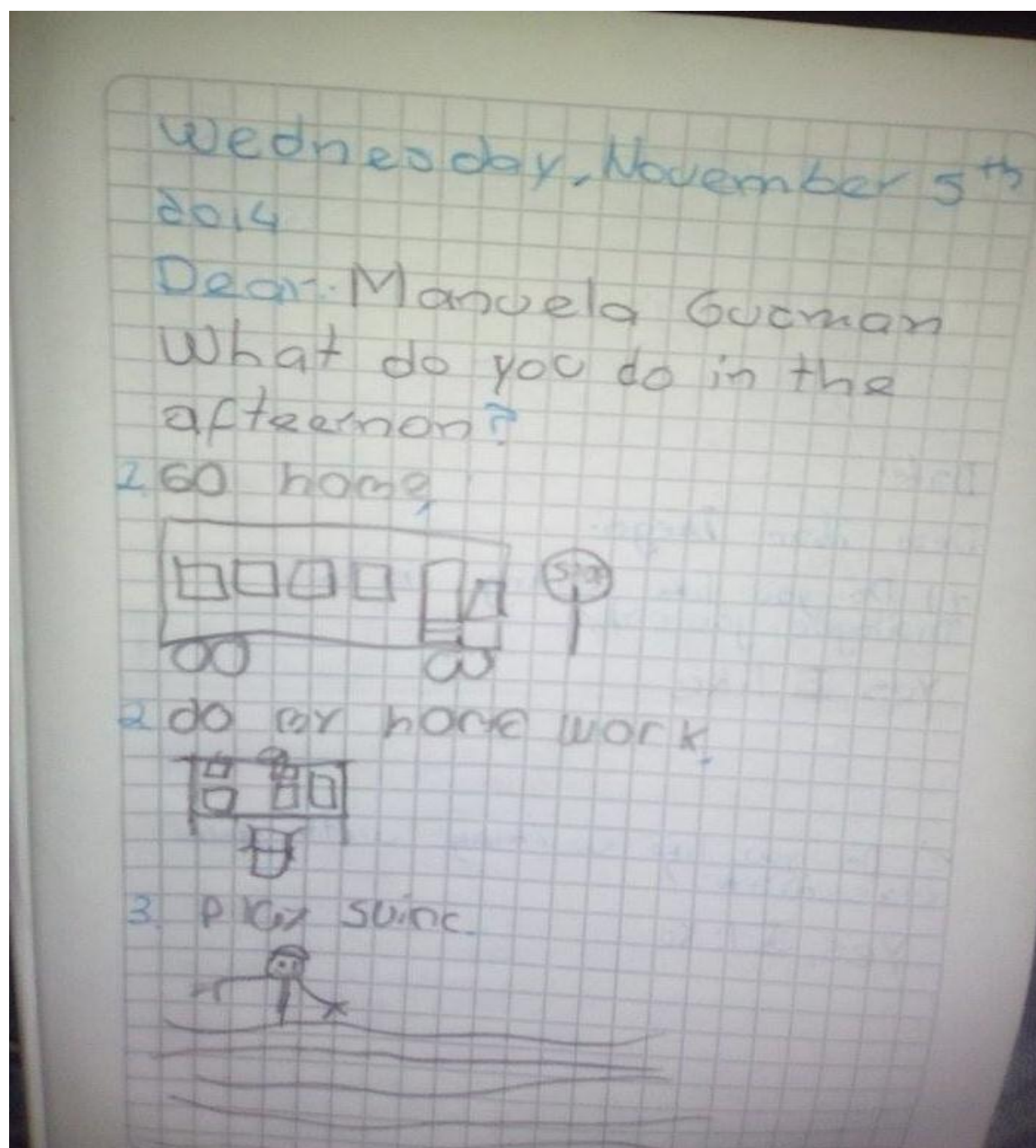
	mood, or awareness of audience through writing or drawing	in writing or drawing; contains few, if any, individual qualities and has limited audience awareness	in writing and/or drawing; makes some attempt to connect with the reader	expression in writing, including some awareness of the reader	expression; connects with reader	writer's unique personality
A F e l i n g s/ m o o d	Expresses little or no feeling/mood	Offers hints of feeling/ mood through words, phrases, and/or drawing, but is not clear	Expresses predictable feelings or personal opinions in writing and/ or drawing, though may be repetitious	Conveys identifiable feelings or personal opinions in writing; drawing (if present) may support feelings or opinions	Features writing that is individual and expressive; drawing (if present) highlights individuality	Uses writing intentionally to display a variety of emotions; drawing (if present) enhances emotional appeal
C. E n g a g e m e n t/ a	Has unclear response to task in writing or drawing; shows no audience awareness in writing and/or drawing	Treats topic generically in writing or drawing; audience awareness appears unclear or accidental in writing and/or drawing	Attempts to connect with reader but is unsuccessful; may express a general awareness that writing/ drawing will be seen by someone else	Connects with reader in some places; conveys awareness of reader; drawing (if present) supports connection	Connects with reader in an engaging treatment of topic; drawing (if present) enhances connection and/or engagement	Creates close connection with reader, demonstrating unique perspective on topic; shows a clear sense of audience throughout; drawing (if present)

u d l e n c e a w a r e n e s s						supports perspective
Traits Rubric for Word Choice: K–2						
Key question: Does the author’s choice of words convey precise and compelling meaning and/or create a vivid picture for the reader?						
Not Proficient			Proficient			
1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional	
Makes inconsistent letter shapes; includes imitative writing or does not write at all	Begins to include a few words, but word choice is difficult to decode; vocabulary may rely on environmental print	Conveys topic through word groups and phrases with possible help from drawing; vocabulary is limited to known, safe words and may be repetitious	Uses words that stand on their own to convey message; uses basic vocabulary correctly; may attempt a few creative word choices	Has precise and/or vivid word choice; shows vocabulary is expanding through variety of words	Uses words that reflect thorough and deep understanding of topic and appeal fully to senses; includes colorful words and phrasing showing wide vocabulary	
A Uses	Uses some	Includes	Uses favorite	Uses everyday	Uses precise,	

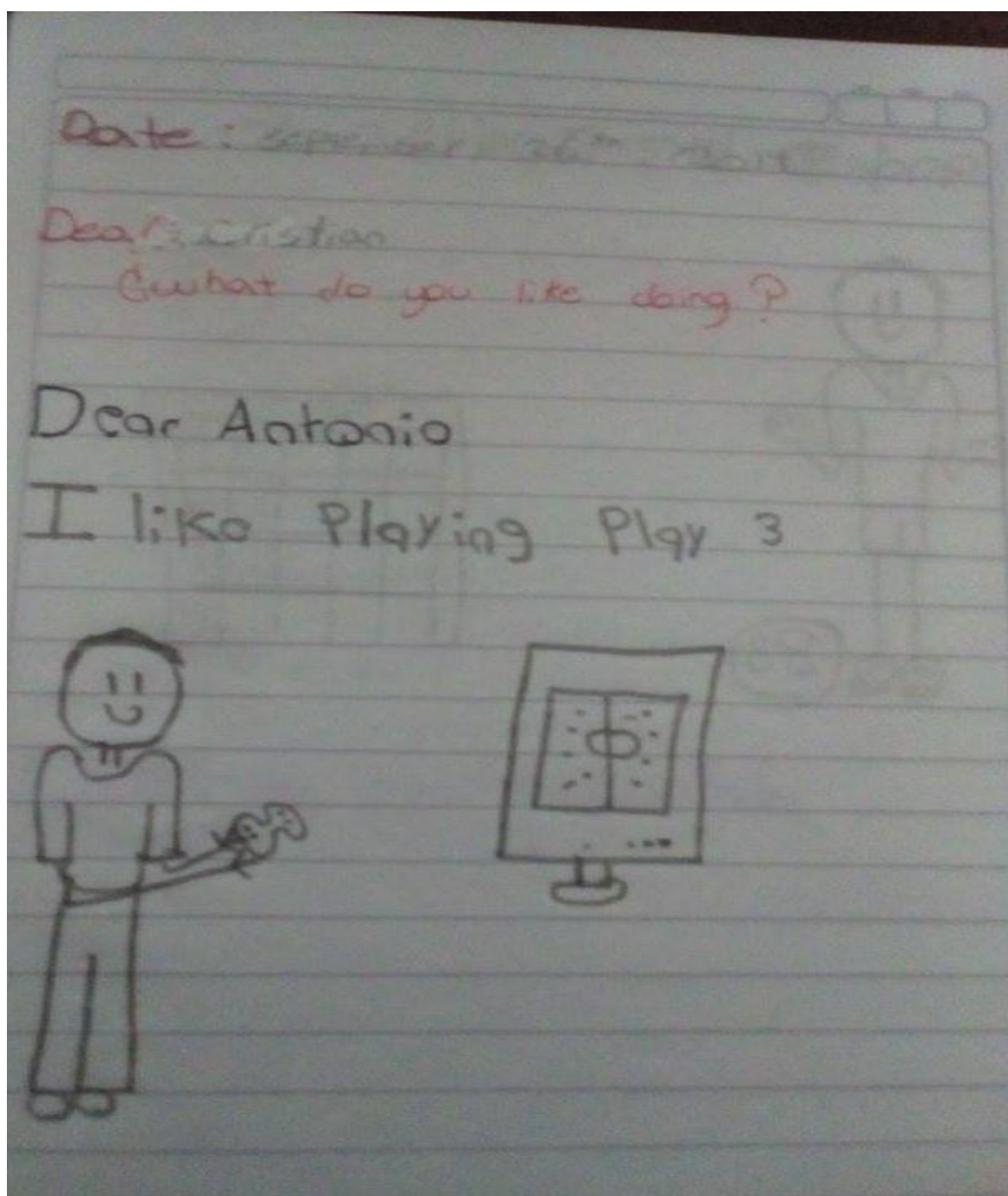
. W o r d m e a n i n g	drawings to stand in for words and phrases; writes letters inconsistently and in strings	decodable and simple, recognizable words; may attempt phrases and/or word patterns	general or ordinary words, sometimes incorrectly; may attempt new or challenging words but they may not fit the message	and/or safe words correctly; experiments with more sophisticated words with some success	words well; often employs more precise and accurate words to create variety	accurate, fresh, or creative words and phrases throughout writing; demonstrates variety in word choice					
Traits Rubric for Sentence Fluency: K–2											
Key question: Does the author control sentences so the piece flows smoothly when read aloud?											
Not Proficient			Proficient								
1	Beginning	2	Emerging	3	Developing	4	Capable	5	Experienced	6	Exceptional
	Has no sentences or sentence parts (e.g., uses disconnected words)	Includes part of a sentence that is decodable (e.g., “Cus it is clu”); writing contains no sense of rhythm	Contains most of a single, decodable sentence (e.g., “Like bunnebecuzthe rrireeFas”); begins sentences in the same way, with choppy rhythm	Correctly uses simple sentence patterns but with little variety; may have mechanical rhythm	Employs multiple sentence patterns, including a variety of sentence beginnings; has rhythm that is fluid and easy to read aloud	Uses a variety of sentences that flow smoothly and are enjoyable to read aloud; includes sentence phrasing (e.g., dialogue, questions) to enhance meaning					
A S e n	Shows writing that mimics letters and	Has short, phrase-like sentences, some of which are decodable	Uses simple sentences, usually correctly	Uses simple sentences correctly; may experiment with varied	Conveys simple and varied sentences effectively	Uses correct sentence structure that is varied throughout					

t e n c e S tr u ct u r e	words; may string marks or letters across the page, moving left to right			sentence patterns		writing; is frequently creative
C. C o n n e ct in g	Is apparent that any transition words are accidental choices among other random words	May include some simple transitions (e.g., and, but) in partial sentences	Includes a few simple transitions that serve as links between phrases (e.g., and, then); has some repetition	Uses simple transitional words and/or phrases appropriately	Uses transitional words and/or phrases to improve readability	Uses varied transitional words and/or phrases smoothly and effectively to enhance rhythm and readability of writing

Appendix 6



Appendix 7



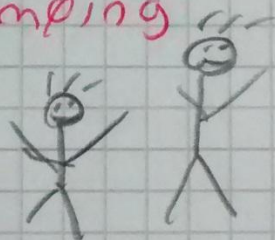
Dear Juan Pablo

What do you like doing?

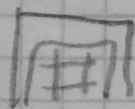
Dear Manuel

Jump - play soccer - ride a bike -
fly a kite - swim.

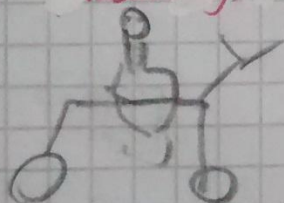
- I like jumping



- I like playing soccer



- I like riding a bike



Appendix 8


Date: Today is ^{wednesday} october 1st 2014

My Full Name is David Andres ^{perro dog}
Last name?


1. My favorite...

What is your favorite color?	my favorite color es Blu
What is your favorite cartoon character/ TV series?	my favorite serie es cumbia ninja hache
What is your favorite fruit?	my favorite fruta es la fresa
What is your favorite movie?	my movie favorita es rapido y furiosos 6
What is your favorite animal?	my animal favorito es el perro
What is your favorite food?	my food favorito es la costilla a la BBQ


2. What do you prefer? Make a circle around the image.




LISTENING TO MUSIC



TALKING WITH FRIENDS



READING BOOKS



WRITING LETTERS

3. What activities do you like doing?

I like to listen to music

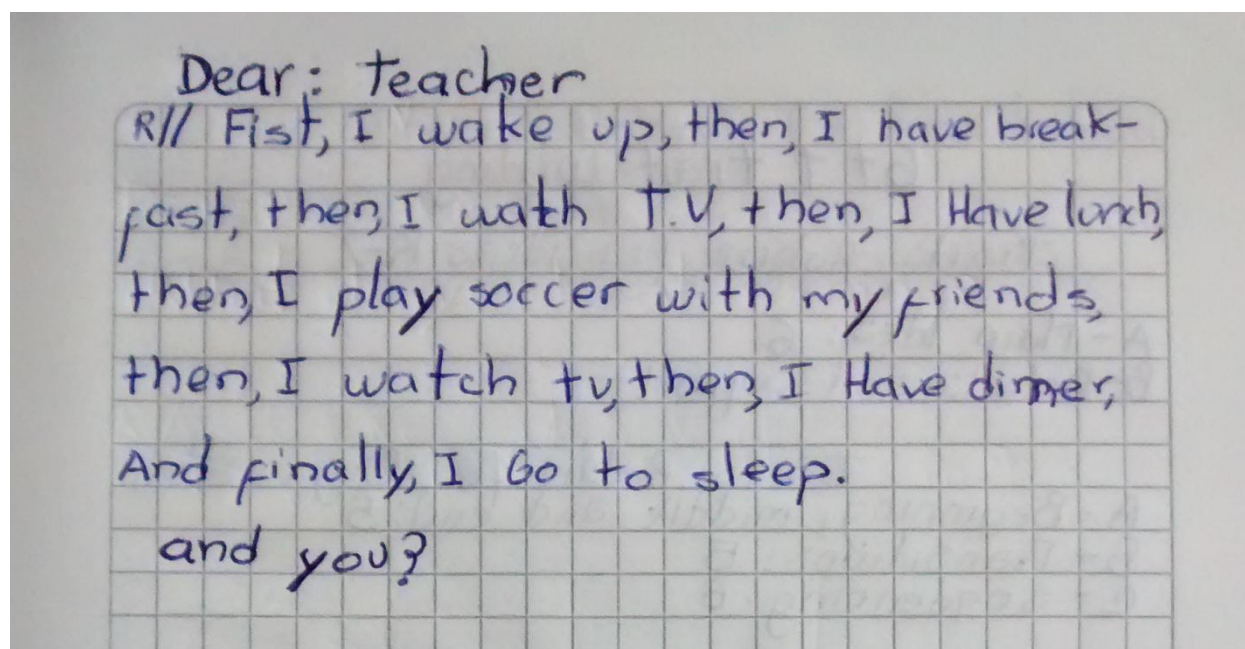
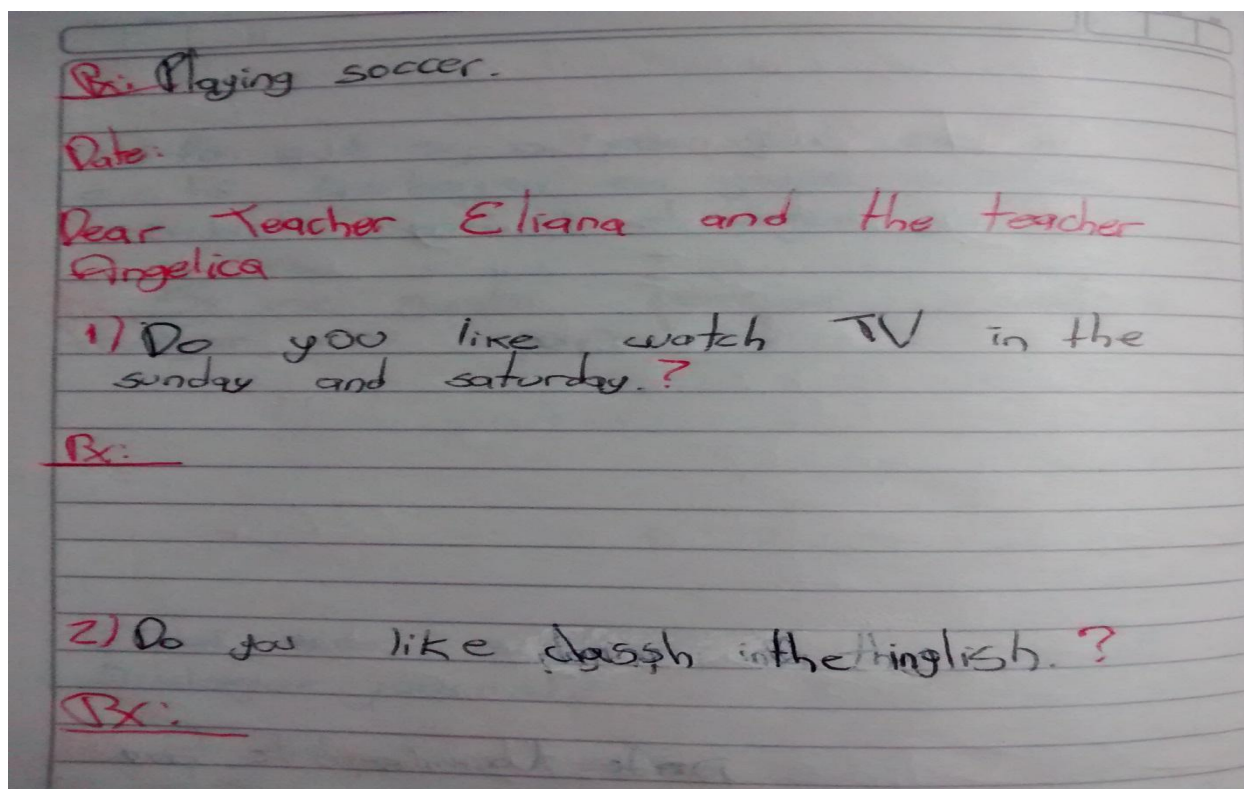
1) My favorite color is ^{the} Blue

2) My favorite serie is cumbia ninja

3) My favorite fruit is the strawberry

4) My favorite movie is the rapido y furiosos

Appendix 9



where are the corrections?

wednesday November
the 27th 2014

Date: ~~November~~ Cristian David Londono

what do you do in the morning?

In the morning, I always wake
up at five o'clock. Next, I always
take a shower at half past six.
Next, I get dressed at six o'clock

Cristian David

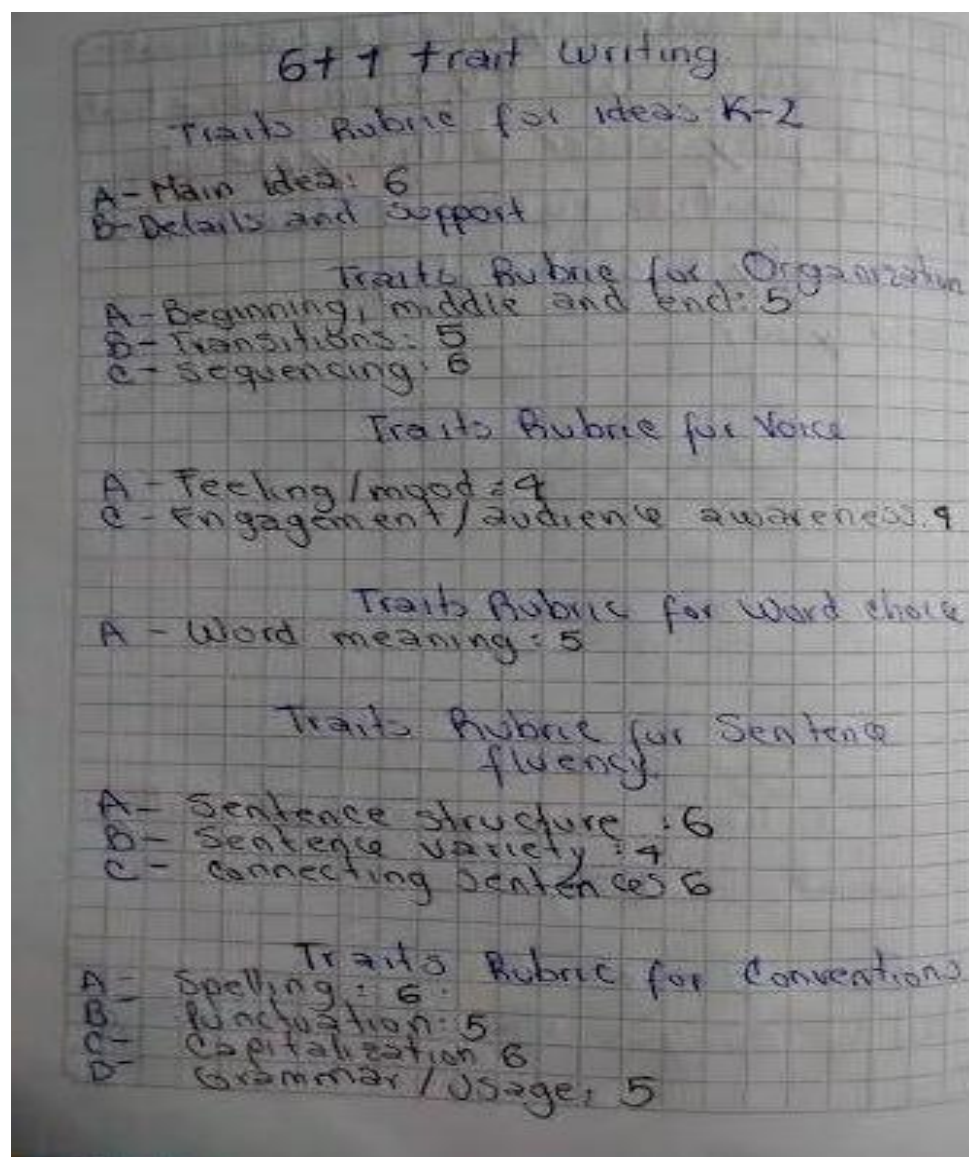
Date:

Dear Gallego:

1) Do you like writing in the Dialogue
journal? yes I like

~~At night, I never do my homework.~~
 No viembre 5 2074
 Dones ~~some~~ ~~some~~
 number = some 20 / some
 what do to do at night?
 At night, I never do my homework,
 Next, I usually eat meat of pig at
 seven o'clock pm, next, I sometimes
 listen to music at eight o'clock,
 next, I take a shower, next, I brush
 my teeth at nine o'clock, and
 finally, I go to sleep at half past at
 nine.

Appendix 10



Appendix 11

my classmates

③ ¿Por qué sí, o por qué no te gustó trabajar en grupo cuando trabajaste con el dialogue journal?

R// sí me gustó porque todos dábamos ideas para responder con nuestros trabajos.

④ ¿Qué crees que aprendiste con los dialogue journals?

R// Creo que aprendía a escribirle una carta a alguien, y a responder las cartas.

Dear Gómez

What do you do on a Saturday?

2) Do you like working with your classmates?

Yes I like

3) ¿Por qué sí, o por qué no te gustó trabajar en grupo cuando escribiste en el dialogue journal? Sí me gusta

porque es que el inglés en

esta vida es lo más más

más importante y a mí me va
muy bien en inglés

4) ¿Qué crees que aprendiste con el Dialogue Journal? aprendí a dialogar

Así a mandar cartas en

inglés

3. Por qué si, o por qué no te gusta trabajar en grupo cuando escribiste en el dialogue journal?

Si me gusta trabajar en grupo con los dialogue journal.

4) Qué crees que aprendiste con el dialogue journal?

que nos podemos comunicar mas fácil.

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