

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



“THE MOST COMMON DEFICIENCIES THAT OBSTRUCT THE WRITING SKILLS OF COMPOSITION I STUDENTS OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT OF THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR IN THE SECOND SEMESTER OF THE YEAR 2012.”

AN UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH WORK WRITTEN BY:

RONALD ENRIQUE ALVARADO REINA
(AR04098)

RODOLFO MAURICIO CONTRERAS MENJIVAR
(CM04078)

NOELIA BEATRIZ ORELLANA PINEDA
(OP07005)

TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE IN:

“LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLÉS, OPCIÓN ENSEÑANZA”

NAME OF THE ADVISOR:

MSD. ROLANDO GUZMAN MARTÍNEZ

NAME OF THE UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PROCESS COORDINATOR:

LIC. Y MAT. EDGAR NICOLÁS AYALA

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21ST 2015.
MAIN CAMPUS, SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR, CENTRAL AMERICA.



UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
AUTHORITIES

ING. MARIO ROBERTO NIETO LOVO
President

MAESTRA ANA MARÍA GLOWER DE ALVARADO
Academic Vice President

MAESTRO OSCAR NOÉ NAVARRETE
Administrative Vice President

DRA. ANA LETICIA DE AMAYA
Main Secretary



SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
AUTHORITIES

LIC. JOSÉ RAYMUNDO CALDERÓN MORÁN
Dean

LICDA. NORMA CECILIA BLANDÓN DE CASTRO
Vice Dean

MAESTRO ALFONSO MEJÍA MORALES
Secretary of the School



FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT
AUTHORITIES

LIC. Y MAT. JOSÉ RICARDO GAMERO ORTIZ
Head of the Department

LIC. Y MAT. EDGAR NICOLAS AYALA
Undergraduate Degree Process Coordinator

MSD. Rolando Guzmán Martínez
Advisor

Abstract

This investigation was aimed to find out the most common deficiencies of Composition I students' English writing and consequently identify the weak points in the students' writings and then establish a prioritization of such in order to have a better knowledge on the right and precise course of action to be taken for further researchers. This study was carried out in the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador. The subjects of this study were a total of 21 students randomly chosen from four different groups of Composition I.

The data required for this study was gathered through four different instruments: two questionnaires to collect the points of view from teachers and students respectively. As well as a rubric to analyze students' compositions and a check list to keep records of the class observation. The results of the study suggested that there are three kinds of errors that outstand as the most common errors in the students' writings: Those related to Grammatical Deficiencies, those related to Coherence Deficiencies and finally those related to Mother Tongue Interference Deficiencies.

In conclusion, the thesis argues that writing in English is essential in students' process of learning a new language but that students should not be expected to be able to write good abstracts without assistance. This investigation hopes to offer all participants useful insights on writing in English, and thus, make a contribution to improving the general standard of students' compositions.

Acknowledgements

Though time for finishing this study was elongated farther beyond our powers by personal problems and unavoidable responsibilities, not a single half of a second was squandered.

I offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to my colleagues, whose time, patience, effort and support were poured into the crafting of this research.

R. Mauricio Contreras

...

I would never have been able to finish this project without the help, support and guidance of my friends, classmates and advisor.

Ronald E. Alvarado

...

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Prof. Rolando Guzman for his continuous support during this investigation, his patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. His guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. I would express a deep sense of gratitude to my dearest mom, who has always stood by me like a pillar in times of need and to whom I owe my life for her constant love, encouragement, moral support and blessings. Special thanks my brothers and sister who always strengthened my morale by standing by me in all situations.

Noelia B. Orellana

I
Introduction Chapter

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 1. | Overview of the Introduction Chapter | 1 |
| 1.1 | Background of the Study | 2 |
| 1.2 | Statement of the Problem | 3 |
| 1.3 | Purpose of the Study | 4 |
| 1.4 | Significance of the Study | 5 |
| 1.5 | Research Questions | 6 |
| 1.6 | Research Design | 7 |
| 1.7 | Asumptions Limitations and Delimitations | 8 |
| 1.7.1 | <i>Asumptions</i> | 8 |
| 1.7.2 | <i>Limitations</i> | 9 |
| 1.7.3 | <i>Delimitations</i> | 10 |
| 1.8 | Definition of Terms | 11 |

II
Literature Review Chapter

| | | |
|---------|--|----|
| 2. | Overview of the Literature Review | 15 |
| 2.1 | On the Literature Related to Accuracy | 16 |
| 2.1.1 | <i>Essential Linguistics</i> | 17 |
| 2.1.2 | <i>Relationship Among Grammatical Accuracy, Discourse Features and the Quality of Second Language Writing: The Case of Thai ESL Learners</i> | 17 |
| 2.1.3 | <i>Correctness and its Conceptions: The Meaning of Language for Basic Writers</i> | 18 |
| 2.1.4 | <i>Current Developments in Researchon the Teaching of Grammar</i> | 18 |
| 2.2 | On the Literature Related to Feedback | 20 |
| 2.2.1 | <i>Feedback on the Second Language Students' Writing</i> | 20 |
| 2.2.2 | <i>Written Feedback</i> | 21 |
| 2.2.3 | <i>Oral Feedback and Teacher Conferencing</i> | 25 |
| 2.2.4 | <i>Preparing Teachers to Respond to Student Writing</i> | 27 |
| 2.2.4.1 | <i>Approach</i> | 28 |
| 2.2.4.2 | <i>Response</i> | 29 |
| 2.2.4.3 | <i>Follow Up</i> | 31 |

III
Methodology Chapter

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 3. | Overview of the Methodology | 33 |
| 3.1 | Purpose of the Research | 34 |
| 3.2 | Research Method and Design Appropriateness | 34 |
| 3.3 | Research Questions | 36 |
| 3.4 | Population | 37 |
| 3.5 | The Sampling Frame | 38 |
| 3.6 | Informed Consent and Confidentiality | 40 |
| 3.7 | Data Collection Stage | 41 |
| 3.8 | Instrumentation | 42 |
| 3.8.1 | <i>Questionnaires</i> | 43 |
| 3.8.1 | <i>I Questionnaires Administered to Teachers</i> | 44 |
| 3.8.1 | <i>II Questionnaires Administered to the Students</i> | 45 |
| 3.8.2 | <i>Class Observation Rubric</i> | 45 |
| 3.8.3 | <i>Rubric for Evaluation of Students' Writings</i> | 46 |
| 3.9 | Validity | 47 |
| 3.10 | Reliability | 47 |
| 3.11 | Summary | 48 |

IV
Results Chapter

| | | |
|----------|--|-----|
| 4. | Overview of the Results Chapter | 50 |
| 4.1 | Descriptive Statistics | 50 |
| 4.2 | Statistical Analysis | 51 |
| 4.2.1 | <i>Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaires</i> | 51 |
| 4.2.2 | <i>Analysis of the Students' Questionnaires</i> | 57 |
| 4.2.3 | <i>Analysis of the Class Observation Data</i> | 67 |
| 4.2.4 | <i>Analysis of the Students' Compositions</i> | 98 |
| 4.2.5 | <i>General Representation of the Findings per Instrument</i> | 105 |
| 4.2.5 I | <i>Chart of Teachers' Questionnaires</i> | 105 |
| 4.2.5 II | <i>Chart of the Student' Questionnaires</i> | 107 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----|
| 4.2.5 III | <i>Chart of the Class Observation</i> | 109 |
| 4.2.5 IV | <i>Chart of the Students' Compositions</i> | 111 |
| 4.3 | Summary | 112 |
| 4.3.1 | <i>The Most Common Errors in Students' English Compositions</i> | 112 |
| 4.3.1 I | <i>According to Teachers' Questionnaires</i> | 112 |
| 4.3.1 II | <i>According to Students' Questionnaires</i> | 113 |
| 4.3.1 III | <i>Findings on the Class Observation</i> | 115 |
| 4.3.1 IV | <i>According to the Analysis of Students' Writings</i> | 116 |
| 4.3.2 | <i>General Representation of the Most Common Deficiencies</i> | 118 |

V
Conclusions Chapter

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----|
| 5. | Overview of the Conclusions Chapter | 119 |
| 5.1 | Research Question | 119 |
| 5.1.2 | <i>Deficiencies Related to Grammar</i> | 120 |
| 5.1.3 | <i>Deficiencies Related to Coherence</i> | 121 |
| 5.1.4 | <i>Deficiencies Related to Mother Tongue Interference</i> | 122 |
| 5.2 | Subsidiary Questions | 125 |
| 5.2.1 | <i>What are the Most Common Errors in Students' English Composition</i> | 125 |
| 5.2.1 I | <i>Paragraph Construction</i> | 125 |
| 5.2.1 II | <i>Amount of Information</i> | 126 |
| 5.2.1 III | <i>Quality of Information</i> | 126 |
| 5.2.1 IV | <i>Mechanics</i> | 126 |
| 5.2.1 V | <i>Mother Tongue Interference Related Mistakes</i> | 126 |
| 5.3 | Prioritization of the Most Common Errors in Students' English Composition | 127 |
| 5.4 | Overall Perspectives on the Students' English Composition | 127 |
| 5.4.1 | <i>Teachers' Perspective on their Students' English Composition</i> | 128 |
| 5.4.2 | <i>Students' Perspective on their own English Composition</i> | 129 |

| | | | |
|-------|--|---|-----|
| 5.4.3 | <i>Instruction Received by the Students in their Composition Classes</i> | | 130 |
| 5.4.4 | <i>Feedback Received by the Students in their Composition Classes</i> | | 130 |
| 5.5 | Recommendations | | 131 |
| 5.5.1 | <i>Recommendations for Teachers</i> | | 131 |
| 5.5.2 | <i>Recommendations for Students</i> | | 132 |
| 5.5.3 | <i>Recommendations for Future Researchers</i> | | 133 |
| 5.5.4 | <i>Recommendations for the Foreign Language Department</i> | | 134 |
| 6. | Annexes | | 135 |
| 6.1 | Appendix A | Teachers' Questionnaires | 135 |
| 6.2 | Appendix B | Students' Questionnaires | 137 |
| 6.3 | Appendix C | Class Observation Instrument | 140 |
| 6.7 | Appendix D | Rubric for the Evaluation of Writing | 143 |
| 7. | References | | 144 |

1. Introduction Chapter

Writing in a second language is in reality a more complex matter than just simply speaking a language. However, people do learn to write when they are studying in a second language and thus get themselves into a certain kind preparation for it. Therefore, for many learners and teachers, it might as well be said, the purpose of writing in a second language has been reduced to catch grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

Therefore, writing has for years relied heavily on the teaching of grammar and practicing translation as a response to the traditional Grammar translation method (GTM). This sort of manipulation of language forms might have been called by many “writing.” As for this, there is one fact: the purpose of writing is to communicate; someone is to see the message and to decode it, so whatever the purpose of the writing of such message is, fulfills a purpose as well. Writing, as a form of language, is used for communication and to transmit a message.

The fact of embellishing such message and the correctness and appropriateness of language itself is not the reason for writing. Plainly, people write so that the reader or readers get the message and do something about it. It is that something that the reader is expected to do or feel or think the whole reason for writing. The way the message arrives is not as important as the fact that it arrives where it is meant to, for the reason it is meant to. Nonetheless, whatever the reason why people seem to focus more on form rather than meaning, they are still not creating meaning, as they are not focusing on the real purpose of writing, but manipulating the forms of their message; intelligibility of the message and proficiency in the language is at risk here. Thus, by focusing on form, students do not create meaning but simply manipulate such forms. Likewise, there may be more factors that hold back the students’ composition in English and this

research is designed to accomplish understanding of such factors, which obstruct or hinder the students' English composition development.

1.1 Background of the study

As for what can be said about the previous researches on writing, understanding its complexity begins with being aware of what it is involved in second language writing. In the last years, writing was the most ignored of the language skills. Not long ago, second language acquisition theorist Stephen Krashen claimed that "studies of second language writing are sadly lacking" (1984:41). At the TESOL conventions of the latest 1970s for example there were less than half a dozen presentations of writing listed on the program each year (Second language writing; Barbara Kroll). However, in the last few years an increase of professional concern has emerged and has most manifested at the annual TESOL. There has been a variety of studies each of them focused in different aspects of writing. Many of these studies have to do with teachers' response to students writing and students processing of feedback, writing assessment, the influence of mother tongue in students composing process, teachers' instruction, etc.

The aforesaid aspects indeed influence students' English writing development in students from El Salvador as well. Unfortunately as it is, there have been no studies about English writing development in the foreign language department of the University of El Salvador. Given that writing is not a straightforward plan-outline-write process that many believe it to be (Taylor, 1981) but it means conveying messages, expressing ideas, and thinking, the current study aimed to rather than specifically addressing one factor, to seek for the potential factors that keep students from developing their English composing. Through an awareness of the contributions of this study teachers can work to shape curriculum design and to improve their teacher decisions. Also, this research attempted to provide students and teachers in the Foreign Language

Department, with a set of directions for future growth of knowledge in the field by provided basis for further investigations.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Consequently, as the lack of any investigation in the field of writing lies still in the instruction of English in the Foreign Language Department, the main purpose of this research was to find out the most common deficiencies of Composition I students' English writing and then establish a prioritization of such in order to settle this investigation as basis for further studies on the field. In the light of this necessity, the findings of the common errors students make in their composition would be a start point. With proper understanding on the weak points in students' writing, some action can be made to address the necessities in order to improve. How to work on the improvement of such needs comes after the understanding of the needs per se. What the needs are tells of how to tackle and improve. Once the comprehension on what way the students should take to avoid committing the common mistakes is clear, then the possible solutions are to be addressed. As the common errors are distinguished, the reasons why they hinder the students' writing are next. So, the research is not only filling a gap of knowledge in the field but is also opening a new path for further investigation. The research opens paths to new and diverse options of investigation in the field of writing and composition of the foreign language in the department.

In regard of the scope of the study, it is a research carried out in the University of El Salvador, Department of Foreign Languages and it involved students that were going through composition I courses of the second semester of the year 2012. During the study the information needed was gathered by means of observation of the classes, students' composition papers, and

through surveys as well, to the students as well as to the teachers involved. As the investigation was devised as internal to the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, the students from the composition courses in the major were targeted and the teachers in charge of such courses as well. Therefore, the current study employed a Qualitative Research to extract significant data that only students and teachers were able to provide since this research method is highly based on social behavior and it largely fulfills the purpose of the study with relation to the individuals being investigated. Moreover, the researchers adopted this method for its basic aim which is to understand, describe and interpret social phenomena as perceived by individuals, groups and cultures (Holloway, 2009).

1.3 Purpose of the study

Given that there are no records of previous investigations about English Composition in the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, this investigation was aimed to find out the most common deficiencies of Composition I students' English writing. Consequently, it is primordial to first identify the weak points in the students' writings and then establish a prioritization of such in order to have a better knowledge on the right and precise course of action to be taken for further researchers.

In short, given the lack of investigation in the Foreign Language Department, the contributions of this study are a broad base of knowledge on the students' deficiencies by knowing the most common deficiencies of Composition I students' English writing. Therefore, this study may as well serve as a strong foundation upon which more knowledge could be gathered in order to do something to improve the students' English writing, whether this be done

by helping as a basis for further investigations on the field or taken into account directly by the teachers in charge of the composition subjects.

Due to the lack of previous research regarding the students' writings in such department, it is necessary to elucidate the basis of the current investigation so that it can provide a better understanding concerning the constituents that prevent students from giving a well-structured and properly coherent written product. Thence, it is urgent to cite the errors that play a crucial role in student's composition. These errors, as suggested, have become the foe of those from Spanish speaking countries who seek to master the writing skills in English.

As for these common errors, we can rank the ones that mostly influence or affect the students' writing in terms of form and meaning; clarifying the hierarchy of common errors to be aimed at in future research. Forthwith and regarding the form, there are those errors such as grammatical errors, punctuation errors, as well as spelling and syntax errors. Amongst the ones concerning meaning we could name: errors related to coherence, cohesion, unity, structure and the organization of the ideas. However, from all of the cited drawbacks above, which are the most common errors in students writing? This is the main concern of this study.

1.4 Significance of the study

The importance of this study is that it was an in-depth original investigation about writing. There is no doubt that writing has been for years one of the most forgotten skills in the foreign language department of the University of El Salvador. Thus; the research drew its power from the fact that it was the first study about English composition in the FLD. Therefore, researchers were positive that not only teachers but also students can get various benefits from the finding that this investigation produced.

For instance, the study of the factors that obstruct students English composition development in the foreign language department was a contribution that can certainly help teachers to have a deeper understanding of the elements that interfere in their students' writing development. Through an awareness of these factors teachers can improve or adapt their curriculum to best address their students' needs. Besides that; this research enables students to examine their study methods and data from different viewpoints to ensure a development in their writing skills by providing a reference or guide of factors that may obstruct their writing development.

Besides that, given that this research was not limited to a particular factor obstructing students' writing development it was the one initial step to conduct future studies. The findings of the investigation were meant to be the basis for future researches that may be carried out in the FLD in regards of writing development. Therefore, this investigation clearly represents a significant opportunity for students and teachers to address the outcomes of the study in depth. The benefits that this investigation has brought to the FLD will go beyond the results of this study, indeed.

1.5 Research questions

The writing process is not a simple procedure for it demands some sort of devotion to both reading and writing as well. They are strongly linked for one is the pillar that holds the other. This, as has happened to many writing beginners, is only one of the factors that can hinder someone who attempts to become a writer or simply wants to get a high grade in a composition class. Therefore, when it comes to writing, it is necessary to take into consideration some important factors interfere in the process of mastering writing. In this study, the researchers

attempted to give answer to some questions that were the basis for data collection and that were tackled based on the needs of investigation of the factors that obstruct students' writing development. With the contributions of this study to the foreign language department, researchers pretended to give answers to the following questions:

1.5.1 Main research question:

What are the most common deficiencies that obstruct the writing skills of Composition I students?

1.5.2 Subsidiary Questions:

- a) What are the most common errors in students' English composition?
- b) What is the students' perspective on their English composition skills?
- c) What is the point of view of the teachers on the students writing deficiencies?
- d) What is the instruction received by the students in their composition classes?
- e) What kinds of feedback do the students receive to improve their writing?

1.6 Research design

A qualitative method design was employed to give answer to the research question set out previously. The researchers adopted this method since "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." Denzin and Lincoln (1994). Therefore, qualitative research is precisely interested in finding out what individual's know or believe and it largely fulfills the purpose of the study and the questions being investigated.

To carry out this investigation, researchers made use of three different instruments with a unique goal. The data was gathered by means of students' pieces of writing, observation of

classes and surveys. This last type of instrument was applied to gather information not only from the 21 students that were randomly chosen from the Composition I courses as the sampling of the study but also from the four teachers participated in the study.

1.7 Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The researcher's assumptions, the limitations of the study, the scope of the study, and the researcher's delimitations on the study are discussed in the following sections. These sections tackle the facts assumed to be true, but which are not actually verified, potential weaknesses of the research and its bounds.

1.7.1 Assumptions

The fundamental assumptions to this inquiry were related to the data, which was to be collected from the students and the teachers in the Foreign Language Department. First, it was assumed that whenever the students were handed the questionnaires they would answer nothing but the truth. Because of this, confidentiality about the matter was clearly explained before administrating the questionnaires. Besides, there is the matter of the information collected from the teachers in relation to their opinions about the influential aspects concerning the factors obstructing the development of their students' English composition. It is assumed that whatever knowledge the instructors seem to possess regarding the evolution of their students' composition, it will have a similar or familiar pattern amongst the teachers interviewed and that it will be of the utmost help with the investigation. Moreover, the sample that was taken is also assumed to be the appropriate and a good representative of the population. Of the same type, the assumption that concerns the data collected on the students' writings. It was assumed, as well, that the

students' composition, their writings, would have a pattern of similitude between them and that the common errors would be found without any further difficulties.

1.7.2 Limitations

As for the limitations, it can be said that indeed, collecting the data was the most difficult task during this investigation. To start with, composition classes in the Foreign Language Department were not the best example of class environment; the students were given the task of writing and were assigned specific schedules to meet up with the instructors at their offices. Obviously, handing in the questionnaires to the students was not an easy task and required much more time and effort than previously estimated.

Furthermore, the researchers' schedules were also a major issue. It was due to their working schedules that finding the time was also a major limitation. Because of this, finding the time to meet up and carry on with the research was proving most difficult. At several times the researchers found themselves in a difficult time trying to coincide in hour and minute and day, so that they could continue with their work.

Besides this, there was also the inconvenient related to the students and the questionnaires. Starting from the fact that they were never together in a classroom environment, it can truly be said that it was becoming a major issue. As if that was not enough a holdback, once they could be found, the students took so long time to answer the questionnaires; the waiting time was certainly elongated. On top of that, there was also the limitation concerning the reticence of an instructor who was not willing to help with the questionnaires. As for the ones who did help, their work overload was proving to be also a problem; for they had little time to help the researchers carry out the investigation.

1.7.3 Delimitations

This research was carried out in order to contribute to the English instruction in the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador. Amongst all of the areas in which the researchers might have been of help, the choice was related to the writing skills. In order to have communication, people use two kinds of discourse output macro skills: speaking and writing. Speaking comes first and it is acquired; writing comes afterwards and has to be taught and learned. However, there are some differences between them that were considered by the researchers before making any choice. Amongst these differences, and of great importance, is the fact that writing could actually be pretty well edited; before and during the process of writing, a person has the power of time and of error correction before showing his or her words to the reader. In accordance with a section of the module eleven of a trainee book of a course in language teaching “A written text is usually organized and carefully formulated, since its composer has time and opportunity to edit it before making it available for reading. A speaker is improvising as he or she speaks: ongoing alterations, in the shape of glosses, self-corrections and so on produce an apparently disorganized ‘stream-of-consciousness’ kind of discourse. Thus a written text conforms more to conventional rules of grammar, and its vocabulary is more precise and formal.” Cambridge University Press – A course of language teaching: trainee book. Thus, developing writing skills in composition is truly very important in the development of communicative competence.

In this respect, there are no previous investigations in the department regarding the English composition development of the students. In the light of the scarce knowledge regarding the English composition of the students and their progress, this research was intended as help, as a contribution in the finding knowledge pertaining to the students’ composition and their

development. As a contribution, this investigation may serve as a foundation for further investigations in the field of English composition and that which obstructs its development in the students of the department. In this regard, finding out what are the basic and most common errors in the students' composition is crucial to try to find a way to overcome them.

Regarding the participants in the study, the aimed participants were Salvadoran students enrolled in the major of teaching English in the University of El Salvador. Since Spanish is the mother tongue, this study could be applicable to Latin-American students of English as a foreign language.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1. *ACTFL Proficiency guidelines:* The acronym ACTFL stands for the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. In 1986, the ACTFL created some guidelines that represent a hierarchy of global characterizations of integrated performance in the macro-skills. Each describes a particular range of ability, and each one is the sum of the previous levels.

“The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are a description of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. For each skill, these guidelines identify five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. Retrieved July 26, 2012, from: <http://actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org/>

1. *Communicative Competence & English Proficiency:*

Brief history of the definition: Communicative Competence is but what the two words out of which the term was coined actually mean. According to Bagaric (2007) the term communicative competence is comprised of two words, the combination of which means competence to communicate. The central word in the syntagm is the word competence. Therefore, it defines the actual competence or capacity to communicate.

Hymes' definition in 1972 was believed to be a broader and more realistic notion of competence because it defined it as not only an inherent grammatical competence but also as the ability to use it in a variety of communicative situations, taking into account the sociolinguistic perspective.

Furthermore, Canale and Swain (1980) and Swain (1983) understood communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication. According to them, there are three types of knowledge of underlying grammatical principles, knowledge of how to use language in a social context in order to fulfill communicative functions and knowledge of how to combine utterances and communicative functions with respect of discourse principles.

2. *EFL/ESL:* EFL stands for English as a foreign language and ESL for English as a second language.

3. *Macro-Skills:* What is now referred to as a macro skill is nothing but simply a language skill. The language abilities or skills are four, two are the input skills: Listening and Reading, and the other two are the output skills: speaking and writing. Taking into

account these skills, the ACTFL established guidelines, a description, of what can be done with the language in terms of such skills or abilities in real world situations, in a non-rehearsed context. ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012. In *home-pdf format download link*. Retrieved July 26, 2012, from: <http://actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org/>

4. *Stephen Krashen's Theory of Acquisition*: Stephen Krashen stated that “Language *acquisition* is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language natural communication in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.” Krashen, (1981). Thus, there is a difference between learning consciously a language and acquiring it unconsciously. “Acquirers need not have a conscious awareness of the "rules" they possess, and may self-correct only on the basis of a "feel" for grammaticality.” Krashen (1981). Therefore, Acquisition of a language can be seen in a person who has competence or proficiency in a language but is not aware of the rules and the grammaticality aspects of it that come with the conscious learning of such language.
5. *TESOL*: This acronym stands for "Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages," as used in English as a second language or foreign language.
6. *Writing Skills*: Troyka (1987:3-4) states that writing is a way of communicating a message to a reader for a purpose. The purposes of writing are to express one's self, to provide information for one's reader, to persuade one's reader, and to create a literary work. The term of skill is defined

as an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skills). Concisely, writing skill is the ability to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings to other people in written symbols to make other people or readers understand the ideas conveyed.

7. *Writing process:* According to Jacob et all (1981), writing is the ability of students in mastery five competence of writing such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use (grammar) and mechanics. Scott and Vitale (2003) define writing process as a process of developing a document using techniques which include five commonly referenced stages – prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.
8. *Deficiencies:* Characteristic or condition that fails to meet a standard, or is not in compliance with a requirement or specification. It is also define as the lack or shortage, especially of something essential in students' compositions.

2. Literature Review

Students of English as a foreign language strive to develop a good level of proficiency. Not only it is important to actually speak English but it is also necessary to understand the spoken words in reply: so, conversations are born and communication in the second language truly happens. However, audible communication is not the only form of communication that exists; it is the fastest way, perhaps, for a person to communicate his or her necessities, feelings and troubles. Therefore, everybody speaks; everybody can talk. Admittedly, it is the audible communication that comes first, for we must learn to utter words first and then to go through more complex forms of communication just as we first need to crawl to go through more complex manners of moving ourselves from one point to another.

Despite the importance of the spoken language, it is the written language that this research is concerned to and to all the relevance in understanding it in order to attain higher levels of proficiency in English. For certain, in countries where English is not spoken officially, the usage of the language is limited; people use the language to operate computers and other kinds of equipment like machinery; people use it to search for information in the internet, to close businesses abroad, or just for entertainment; to become optimum users of the leading-edge technology, English is more than a necessity. So, what seems to be the real use of English is to understand contents and not to interact in an audible manner. Most curiously, people actually studying the language in different places seem to tend to think more on developing their speaking skills instead of thinking about developing their reading and writing skills.

Of course, speaking and listening are important, but writing and reading are just as important as they are, though the latter came afterwards. As stated by Suratno (2005), “The more readers

read, the more they get from it, it increases the knowledge that finally brings to the increase of intelligence.” Thus, reading and writing skills are truly important and should be exploited in order to gain proficiency; however, there are certain downsides when it comes to reading and writing in the EFL instruction in countries where English is not really spoken: people who worry about accuracy and correctness and therefore focus on form rather than paying attention to the substantiality of the message, people having problems regarding feedback from their teachers, people with issues related to the reading-writing connection, and people having problems related to the communicative competence development; for such reasons, writing development is being crippled in non-English-speaking countries such as El Salvador.

2.1 On the literature related to accuracy and correctness

Currently in El Salvador, the writing ability has been somehow overlooked in a vast number of institutions where English is currently taught as a foreign language. It might be that its relevance in the foreign language learning process lacks strength. In fact, some might say its importance has been reduced to something like a mechanical process in which grammar aspects of the language seem to play a more significant role when it comes to achieving writing success. In addition to this, students may limit or accommodate their writing to a simple paper where what is more important is that every single sentence is properly written no matter how senseless the whole text might be.

2.1.1 *Essential Linguistics*

To start with, the manner in which Freeman, D & Freeman, Y (2004) contributed to this investigation is in the clarifying major concepts related to the developing of writing skills, as stated therein: that written language develops best when students focus on the message, not on the form. Therefore, what is clarified by this is the fact that substantiality in meaning should be the goal when it comes to developing writing skills. Besides this, they also stated that a teacher should provide many opportunities for students to produce and share their writings. Now, the sharing of the writings is also important and it is something that all students of English should go through in every institution. However, when students focus on the form rather than focusing on meaning, students might not be glad to share their writings with their classmates lest their classmates should laugh at their spelling or grammar mistakes that in certitude are not as important as what they are arguing in the text.

2.1.2 *Relationships among grammatical accuracy, discourse features and the quality of second language writing: the case of Thai EFL learners.*

In Pongsiriwet, C (2001), it is clearly stated that the point of the study was to understand if there was an underlying relationship between the scores on grammatical accuracy and the discourse features of writing. In this study, it is also clarified that grammatical accuracy was not the only thing that was assessed in the evaluation of the writing quality. The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant correlation between grammatical accuracy and cohesion but a statistically significant correlation between grammatical accuracy and coherence.

2.1.3 *Correctness and its Conceptions: The meaning of language form for basic writers*

Newman, M (1996) has also served as part of the theoretical foundations for this research. It is discussed the origin of the conception of correctness when it comes to writing. The discussion goes towards some basic questions about writing and what we think about it: what makes language correct or lacking in correctness? How do writers achieve it? Why does it matter so much to so many people? Thanks to the writing-process oriented approaches that emerged, misconceptions started to be clarified. Generally, this essay discussed how people thought about errors as some bad habits that should be stamped out; however, its importance was beginning to be clearer thanks to some Chomskian views of language acquisition, according to Newman. The notion that errors are developmentally necessary for students was discussed and in the essay the students' errors are viewed as stages of learning rather than failure to learn. So, it became apparent that correct grammar was only a part, a component, of the larger construct of good writing.

2.1.4 *Current developments in research on the teaching of grammar*

Other theoretical source that has served as foundation for this investigation is related to the current developments in the research on the teachings of grammar. Nassaji, H & Fotos, S (2004) have discussed some issues regarding the teaching of grammar and whether it is good to focus instruction on it or not. They have briefly reviewed the major developments on the teaching of grammar over the past few decades. Amongst some arguments against the teaching of grammar, it has been claimed that language should be acquired through natural exposure, not through formal learning. It was believed that formal grammar instruction would deliver only declarative knowledge of structures, not the procedural ability to use forms correctly. Because some studies

in the acquisition of English morphology supported this position on the basis that speakers of different L1 languages learned English morphemes in a similar order, this position was supported as well. In the reverse direction, four main reasons why the instruction of grammar is supported are also discussed. First, 1980's hypothesis that language can be learned without some degree of consciousness is problematic; some conscious attention to form, "noticing," is necessary in SLA. Second, the evidence that L2 learners pass through developmental sequences is a good reason for the renewed interest in grammar instruction. If certain developmental sequences are fixed and cannot be altered by grammar instruction, others can benefit from it every time they are taught. What is argued here is that it is possible to favorably influence the sequences of development if the grammar teaching coincides with the learner's readiness to go to the next developmental stage of linguistic proficiency. The third reason is related to the communicative language teaching. It is discussed that there is a large quantity of researches pointing to the inadequacies of teaching approaches where the focus is on meaning-focused communication and grammar is not addressed; if learners are to attain higher levels of accuracy, then some type of focus on grammatical form is needed. Fourth, grammatical instruction has a significant effect on the attainment of accuracy. It is also suggested that while instructed language learning may not have major effects on sequences of acquisition, it has facilitative effects on both the rate and the ultimate level of L2 acquisition.

In conclusion, grammar instruction is necessary in order for the learners to obtain higher levels of proficiency in the target language. However, how such instruction should be delivered is what makes the difference. If the form is presented in communicative contexts designed to promote the consciousness of meaning, the processing of the form would occur over time.

2.2 On the literature related to feedback

In the writing process, revision and feedback may be used as a way of improving the writing development. Whenever the learners write a text they would go to their teachers in order to spot the flaws in their composition and strike them so that the piece of writing was improved as well as their writing skills. However, to some people, revision might have been misunderstood as a means of correcting surface mistakes without even trying to develop and refine the content. This raises questions regarding the feedback given by the teachers as what should be reviewed and how it should be done. Therefore, literature concerning how the feedback is being given and how it should be given is of relevance for the purposes of this investigation.

2.2.1 *Feedback on the second language students' writing.*

First, a study named “Feedback on the second language students’ writing” carried out by Hyland, K and Hyland, F, in the year 2006 is a great foundation of knowledge for this research. It reveals information on several studies carried out in the field. Its review on the several investigations done certainly proved more than helpful for this investigation. In this study, they tackle the whole matter related to the teachers’ written feedback, and some issues related to oral feedback are also a strong basis.

Hyland, K; Hyland, F (2006) gave great insight into the history of the research done in the field of writing and its written feedback. Their paper is filled with knowledge about the several investigations done and it is a very detailed description on how the research on feedback has been developing. They focused their paper on the role of feedback on L2 students’ writing instruction and also discussed some current issues related to the teachers’ feedback. The review and discussion on some investigations on the field of ESL/EFL feedback are to be reviewed in

the following respects: the teachers' response to feedback, the teachers' stances and feedback practices, the students' views on the teachers' feedback and the teachers' feedback impact on their students' writings.

2.2.2 *Written Feedback*

The knowledge contained within the "written feedback" part is just as important for the purpose of this research as the part concerning the oral feedback. As for the teachers' response to feedback, one line of argumentation claims that such feedback is discouraging and generally fails to produce improvements in the students writing; it was then discussed how the responsibility of the teacher should be to change the students attitudes towards their expectations on the teachers' feedback: the given name is "correction-free approach." On the other hand, the fact that in a research, Master (1995) found that corrective feedback was effective when combined with classroom discussions. Furthermore, more discussion about how positive effects for rewriting from feedback on both grammar and content was reviewed. Also, discussions on the studies that have looked beyond the immediate corrections in a draft have noted improvements in students' language accuracy (Polio et al. 1998; F. Hyland 2003; Chandler 2003). Accordingly, Ferris (2006), statistically demonstrated that students made reduction in the total number of errors over a semester in five major grammar categories with particular reduction in verb and lexical errors. However, it is also important to keep in mind that correction and its effectiveness must be seen in the context of a student's evolution of the overall text construction, Yakes & Kenkels (2002).

All the same, it is important to highlight that it is also discussed the fact that many studies of feedback on error have ignored how language acquisition occurs, even though the influence of such on the learner's long term writing development fits closely with the second language

acquisition research. Therefore, it cannot be expected that a target form will be acquired as soon as it has been checked by the teacher. And so, feedback alone does not improve language accuracy but is certainly important. There is also discussion on the type of feedback to be delivered. Direct feedback, for instance, is where the teacher makes an explicit correction with indirect forms by underlining or circling, etc. However, students response to feedback while indirect error feedback may encourage the student to self-edit their texts; it must be noted that students with lower proficiency might be unable to identify and correct errors, Ferris & Hedgcock (2005).

Apparently, as stated by Hyland, K; Hyland, F (2006), the findings on feedback type have been conflicting largely due to the widely varying student population types of writing and feedback practices examined and the research designs employed. For instance, Lalande (1982) reported a reduction in the students errors with indirect feedback whereas Robb (1986) discovered minimal long-term gains in accuracy compared with direct feedback practices. In contrast, in a study of about 5,000 teacher comments, Ferris (2006) discovered that students used direct feedback more consistently and effectively than the other indirect types.

As for the teachers' stances and feedback practices, it is also discussed how the teacher take towards students' texts and the relation they build with their learners when the feedback is given. There has been discussion on the fact that the process approaches mandate that teachers should comment on ideas in earlier drafts and on grammar in later ones, Zamel (1985). Furthermore, it is also taken into account the dichotomy of content-form and is argued that because meaning is only realized through language, the whole dichotomy is false, K. Hyland (2003); Ferris & Hedgcock (2005). Besides this, it is said as well that research has shown that varying this recommended 'meaning before form' pattern makes little difference to the quality of final

products, Ashwell (2000). Of course, it is remarked how teachers don't pretend only to respond to grammar or content but have other purposes. There is also taken into account the various commenting strategies that vary according to the type of text assigned, the point of the semester in which feedback is given, and the proficiency of the student.

It is also discussed in this paper that what is important is the interactivity between the teacher and the students when the feedback is given. It is noted how studies have shown that the feedback is not simply a reference lacking solidity to the texts of the students but an interactive part of the learning, which helps to create a productive interpersonal relationship between the teacher and individual students, K. Hyland & F. Hyland (2006). As one example, reference is made to a study in which cover sheets, questionnaires, and written autobiographies were the mechanisms used. During this study, teachers were able to discern the preferences of the students' feedback to make a better and more effective commentary in the students' revisions, K. Hyland & F. Hyland (2006b). What was discovered was that teachers do not simply mark a text but used the knowledge about the students that they collected with the aforesaid mechanisms to contextualize the writing, the strengths and weaknesses of the individual students and the explicit requests for particular kind of help. This demonstrates that the feedback given by the teacher is not disembodied at all but falls into a context created for what they will remark, making use of the knowledge of the writer; the creation of such interpersonal link is beyond only writing words in a paper. Besides, there is also discussion on how the teacher-learner relationship is now being more and more taken into account when it comes to feedback; it is being remarked how the kind of language that the teacher is to use when he is to deliver feedback to the student is very relevant to the learning process.

As for the students' view on the teachers' feedback, one of the things clarified primordially is that ESL students value the teacher written feedback and rate it more highly than other ways of doing it like peer and oral feedback (Radecki & Swales 1988; Leki 1991; Enginarlar 1993; Saito 1994; Ferris 1995; Zhang 1995). In relation to the form-content debate, it seems that good news is arising from these studies reviewed in this paper: for instance, it seems that students are not only taking into account the teachers' feedback but that they as well have their own perspectives on the matter. Even though some surveys demonstrate that the learners want their instructors to highlight their grammatical errors, some indicate that they as well desire to be given feedback on the content and ideas in their writings, Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994, 1996).

As for the teachers' feedback impact on their students' writings, it is reviewed as well the issue on how the students may ignore or misuse or misunderstand their teachers' commentaries, (Ferris 1995; Conrad & Goldstein 1999) or that they do understand the problems pointed out but are not capable of coming up with a revision (Ferris 1997; Conrad & Goldstein 1999). Furthermore, there is the issue of the students' response to feedback; whether the students improve their writing in their revisions as a response to feedback. Besides this, it is claimed that research into feedback has largely been non-contextual and non-social, focused largely on texts and conducted within a linear model of teacher respond and student revise (Goldstein, 2001). Therefore, it is stated that much of the research on error correction reflects only experimental or analytical research techniques which ignore the realities of the classroom and the preferences of the students, (e.g. Frantzen 1995; Polio et al. 1998; Ferris & Roberts 2001; Chandler 2003). Thus, such approaches cannot depict the impact which institutional and personal contexts and wider classrooms have in the manner in which such feedback is being delivered, comprehended and negotiated between the participants; however, the socio-cultural perspectives on learning see

the understanding and knowledge as edified by interactive processes (Riazi 1997; Murphy 2000; Goldstein 2006; Villamil & de Guerrero 2006). Referring to context, it is claimed to be a combination of factors which are related to the program, the writing and institution program, as well as those that the learners and instructors bring to interaction. (F. Hyland 1998, 2000a; K. Hyland & F. Hyland 2006b). Goldstein (2004, 2005).

However, there have been some attempts to link the aspects of the feedback given by the teachers with the students' revision. Looking at 110 first and second drafts of papers by ESL tertiary students, Ferris (1997), discovered that three quarters of the substantive teacher comments on the drafts were used by the students and they tended to improve the papers. In this respect, researches have tried to find out what kinds of comments are most effective. There is a suggestion that text-specific commentary is most likely to encourage revision Hedgcock (2005). Also, they make the point that marginal comments are more immediate; that the students find them more quickly and can locate the problem and revise appropriately when end comments can be more useful when it comes to writing development because they summarize the major issues. It is considered as well that marginal comments are considered more motivating in respect of showing that the reader is actively engaged with the writer's text (Goldstein 2004).

2.2.3 Oral Feedback and teacher conferencing

Oral interaction is known generally to have an important role in the planning, writing and revision stages of composition in the L1 contexts (Bruffee 1984); however, for the L2 learners, this is still unclear. Therefore discussion on the effectiveness of oral feedback is also reviewed in this section of the paper.

As for the effectiveness of oral feedback, several issues are still just partly answered, especially what has to do with its effectiveness when it comes to improving the students' writing. When it comes to oral feedback, whatever it is that comes to people's minds is that the teacher or instructor would certainly have something to say to his or her students in order for them to get better and improve in the quality of their writing. However, teachers' oral feedback goes beyond that concept. However, negotiation is something that is generally not thought about when the concept of oral feedback pops out in one's mind. For instance, it has been remarked that some L2 learners have some cultural or social inhibitions related to engaging informally with authority figures such as their teachers; this leads the learners to the passive action of unreflectively accepting every single suggestion given by the teacher without even questioning if that is correct or appropriate for them and their writing (Goldstein & Conrad 1990). They also found out that only the learners who negotiated meaning successfully could make a better revision to their writings. Therefore, negotiation becomes a certainly essential part of the oral feedback. In this instance, Williams (2004), found out that when tutor suggestions were explicit and students actively participated, negotiated and wrote down their plans during the session with the tutors, there was indeed a greater uptake of tutor advice. Williams also noted that this negotiation was especially important when it comes to higher level text-based revisions. Interestingly, Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) examined four teachers' writing tutorings with a weaker and a more capable student, linking the topics discussed in the tutoring to student revision of their drafts. What they found out was that more capable students were all more secure and confident and often used the teachers' suggestions just as a starting point for their own changes; however, the weaker students tended to follow the advices given without much reflection and with no

initiative of their own. Thus, their conclusion was that with less able students, the danger that the tutoring would involve more appropriation rather than intervention is great.

As it is, the concept of teachers' oral feedback now widens and is a very strong and steady foundation, a theoretical basis, for the analysis of students' writings. The concept of negotiation and the students' responses to the teachers' feedback and oral tutoring sessions is clarified and with the greatest certitude, taken into account.

2.2.4 Preparing teachers to respond to student writing

This article, concerning how a teacher should respond to their students' writings, certainly is a foundation of knowledge for the researchers and serves as a strong basis for the current research by helping the researchers to build up criteria on how the teachers should take preparations for receiving their students' writings and how to respond to it in a more effective way.

This article is divided into three sections that were taken into account as guidelines when it comes to the process of teaching writing and responding to the students' writing outcome. The three sections are: Approach, Response and Follow Up.

Now, "Preparing teachers to respond to student writing" is an article of the Journal of Second Language Writing of the California State University, issued in the year 2007. This article deals with the difficulty of the challenging aspects that the writing instructor faces at his or her job. The author describes her approach to training instructors in a MA TESOL seminar using the "approach/response/follow-up" outline found in Ferris, D and Hedgcock, J (2005). In the following paragraphs, the whole article is dissected.

Before starting the specific issues or suggestions, the author claims to start with a reflection. It does seem quite useful in the sense that it makes the author students feel relaxed and encouraged to make suggestions, comments or questions, taking away the fear to ask or participate. During the reflection, the author states that they should feel free to ask If she misses something or does not go thoroughly as needed.

2.2.4.1 Approach

To begin with, to address properly the first principle, a mixture of teacher feedback that could come in the form of handwritten feedback, oral feedback, peer review, and guided self-evaluation should be taken into account. Interestingly, the author explains that this mixture must come with the principle that teachers do not have to tackle every problem they spot in a student paper since it makes the teacher go head-on to fatigue, turning them into “a composition slave” (Hairston 1986).

In reference to peer response and self-evaluation, the author cited a study in which the findings lead to the understanding that even the students who just rewrote or self-edited their texts without any input from anyone had improved their final texts at least in some aspects (Fathman and Whalley 1990; Ferris and Roberts 2001). Now, taking into account the peer response, the author also stated that to write for different audiences and readers must be valued; also, that the fact of receiving praise or suggestions from classmates differs substantially from the ones receiving tutoring only from authority figures.

Besides, the author remarks that the notion of an ideal text is something which the teachers should get rid of. Admittedly, as the author states it, the most important end-product is the

learners' progress and the increasing awareness of and skill in the usage of strategies to compose, revise and edit their own words.

Adjacent to it, there is also discussion on the teacher "appropriation" of student works. The author agrees with Reid's (1994) thesis that some teachers abandon their students by denying any constructive criticism for fear of falling into appropriation.

Equally, there is discussion on the issue of the balance between encouragement and constructive criticism and the need to think of feedback as an ongoing conversation with the student. As for the encouragement, the author goes on discussing how the L2 students are not as touchy or sensitive as the L1 students when it comes to their compositions. Therefore, teachers should not be as afraid to traumatize their students or offend them as if they were L1 students. That the teachers should strive to identify and articulate what the learner has done well was also given value by the author.

Finally in the discussion of the approach, it is clearly stated how every student is an individual and that the feedback to students must be personalized and tailored thinking about the student as a person.

2.2.4.2 Response

When it comes to the response, Ferris, D and Hedgcock, J (2005), clearly state with their outline for preparing teachers to teach writing that the philosophy mentioned in the section above should be always behind every single thing they do in their feedback. She also includes a selective approach to feedback. An example of this might be a teacher telling the students that he or she will only focus on the four most significant feedback points in their papers; an approach in which students do peer review or guided self-evaluation before the teacher provides feedback is also

very useful. As a justification for this, the first reason might be a practical one: teachers would overwhelm themselves and their students with an excessive amount of commentary or correction. Besides, this selectivity reminds the teachers that the long-term goal of progress and the increase of autonomy is more important than the immediate goal of fixing a text.

Next, where to begin? It is important to know how to prioritize in order to be selective. To start with, teachers should get the course rubric or grading criteria if it exists. Teachers should inform the students of the criteria before so that it will allow him or her to help them progress since the very beginning.

Furthermore, the specifications of the particular task or text type should be taken into account. In other words, the issues the teacher should address will depend on the nature of the task.

Moreover, according to the approach/response/follow-up” outline found in Ferris, D and Hedgcock, J (2005) teachers should know each student and tailor feedback that meets with the exact needs of everyone. This means that every teacher should be responsible of getting to know their students. What do they write about? How do they do it? What are some characteristics always present in their writings? What are their weaknesses and strengths?

Now, after the discussion on the general approach and some specific tools for identifying what feedback should be delivered, the mechanics of providing effective and clear commentary are discussed. Positively, the use of indirect questions instead of imperative sentences like: “better give an example!” is more effective. The way a student would feel reading “can you give an example here?” could make the difference. Besides, it is very good that the teacher seems to be conversing with the student on the margins.

In this article, “Preparing teachers to respond to student writing”, issued in the year 2007 in the Journal of Second Language Writing of the California State University, clearly explains that an authentic essay from a L2 student is ideal to teach other student teachers in order to analyze it in groups. Among the questions to be analyzed there can be mentioned: what observations do you have about the first and second drafts? Now look at the teacher’s feedback, what observations can you make? To what extent do you think that the teacher’s comments were helpful to the text? Would you have done anything different, should you be this pupil’s teacher?

2.2.4.3 Follow up

According to the approach/response/follow-up” outline found in Ferris, D and Hedgcock, J (2005) described in the article, “Preparing teachers to respond to student writing”, what the instructor of the student teachers did with their students, the pre-service teachers, was to talk about how they would or should aid their own pupils to use commentary effectively and hold them accountable for doing so. This suggestions include practical tips such as giving the students time and space in class to read the teachers notes and ask questions, ask students to provide a “revise-and-resubmit” cover memo with their next draft with specification on how did they incorporate the feedback received or why they have chosen not to (Ferris, 1995, 2003; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005).

Second, the author went through a discussion with her students about qualitative and quantitative ways to evaluate their own commentary and its effectiveness. She used a commentary analysis scheme developed for a research project (Ferris, Pezone, Tade & Tinti, 1997) and asked them to classify the comments they made.

Third, the author explained how the student teachers were required to complete a response-and-revision project with a L2 student writer whom they were actually tutoring in three different ways: “traditional” handwritten commentary, a face to face conference, and an e-mail feedback using the “comments” function found in Microsoft Word. Then they were to collect the students’ revisions written after students had received their feedback.

Finally, they were to write a short essay in which they were to compare and contrast the three commentary approaches and discuss what worked best for them and their tutees and why.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses and explains the methodological approach employed to conduct this study. A qualitative method design is proposed to give answer to the research questions set out in previous chapters. In addition, an overview of the method design is provided which includes an outline of the techniques and instruments used, namely; personal interviews and observation. Because of the importance of the validity and reliability of method used the justification of the design of the instruments is provided. Subsequently, specific data collection processes and methods used for data analysis are explained. Moreover, clarification of the possible ethical issues in qualitative research is given. In addition, because in the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, certainly, there are no investigations about writing, and therefore, this research would be pioneer in the gaining of insights on the factors which obstruct the students' English composition and its development in the major. This research will help in the understanding of the factors that hinder students from developing their writing skills, which is their English composition.

Moreover, this chapter includes a review on the research method and design. A discussion of the problem under investigation and the purpose of the study are also seen in this section. Furthermore, the type of research design is justified in this section as well as its appropriateness for the desire outcomes. Moreover, the population is also discussed, as well as a detailed description of the sampling frame. Besides that, information on the consent and confidentiality of the procedures taken during the research is also in discussion in this chapter as well. In addition, the collected data and input procedures are also described, as well as the instrumentation is described and justified. Of course, validity and reliability issues are also

discussed in chapter three; the reliability criteria and the reliability of the research instruments are in discussion. Lastly, there is the data analysis to be discussed; a detailed analysis plan is to be described as well as why it was appropriate.

3.1 Purpose of the Research

This investigation was meant to find out the most common deficiencies in Composition I students' English writings. Through awareness of the contributions of this study, teachers can work to check curriculum design and even considerate some teaching decisions. Besides, based on the reality of the students going through the composition courses, some new directions can be taken in order to improve the students' development of writing skills as the teachers create and innovate. Not only finding out the more common and basic errors in the students' writing is important, but also to establish a hierarchy of such common deficiencies in order to lay a basis upon which further investigation on the field could be carried out.

3.2 Research Method and Design Appropriateness

In this study, the qualitative research method is used as to identify the factors that obstruct students' English writing development. The researchers adopted this method since "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." Denzin and Lincoln (1994). Therefore, qualitative research is precisely interested in finding out what individuals know or believe and it largely fulfills the purpose of the study and the questions being investigated. In addition, the researcher employed this method to obtain richly detailed

information from the respondents due to the fact that qualitative approach generates verbal and personalized information rather than numerical values (Polgar & Thomas, 1995).

Besides, qualitative method was identified as the most appropriate since it is more open to changes and refinement of the research ideas as the study moves on. Moreover, its focus is to get to the bottom of the phenomenon rather than to manipulate the scenario as in experimental research; and it evokes a feeling of realistic setting which cannot be obtained from statistical data gathered through quantitative means. Another advantage is that qualitative methods give a great importance to validity, by getting at how people really behave and what people actually mean when they describe their experiences.

Aside from these advantages, the researcher opted for qualitative data gathering tools as some previous researches find it attractive as they enable researchers to achieve unforeseen results. For instance, Patton (1987) notes that interviews “reveal the respondents' levels of emotion, the way in which they have organized the world, their thoughts about what it is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions. The task for the qualitative evaluator is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their point of view about a specific phenomenon.”

In summary, Qualitative Research Method was identified as the most adequate for the present study as it attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations (Kvale, 1999). Besides, through the use of tools such as personal interviews and observation researchers perfectly match the subjects being studied. On top, the tools used to gather the information, supplement each other as for the importance of validity and reliability.

3.3 Research Questions

The writing process is not a simple procedure for it demands some sort of devotion to both reading and writing as well. They are strongly linked for one is the pillar that holds the other. This, as has happened to many writing beginners, is only one of the factors that can hinder someone who attempts to become a writer or simply wants to get a high grade in a composition class. Therefore, when it comes to writing, it is necessary to take into consideration some important factors interfere in the process of mastering the writing art. In this study, the researchers attempted to give answer to the main research question: What factors obstruct composition student's English writing development? This, with the help of some subsidiary questions that were the basis for data collection and that were tackled based on the needs of investigation of the factors that obstruct students' writing development. Thus, with the contributions of this study to the foreign language department, researchers pretended to give answers to the following questions:

Main Research Question:

What are the most common deficiencies that obstruct the writing skills of Composition I students?

Subsidiary Questions:

- a. What are the most common errors in students' English composition?
- b. What is the students' perspective on their English composition skills?
- c. What is the point of view of the teachers on the students writing deficiencies?
- d. What is the instruction received by the students in their composition classes?
- e. What kinds of feedback do the students receive to improve their writing?

3.4 Population

The following section is especially addressed to delineate the population chosen to accomplish this investigation. In this manner, it is pretended to depict some particular characteristics of the grouping as a whole. To begin with, it is necessary to bring the two targets of the research: The students and the teachers.

The students:

Since this work was intended to find and draw the most common errors in the students' writing; it was necessary to find class groups that could suit the researchers' needs. In doing so, composition I groups from the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador were the most comely to look into due to their particular connection with the investigators' work. Thus, there were four class groups summing up 105 masculine and feminine students whose ages range between 18 and 40 years old as a total of the population taking Composition I.

The teachers:

Teachers significantly played a great role in the realization of this work. They, as the students, were part of this investigation being the smallest but equally important in this study. As there were four groups, the teachers' population was exactly the same. There were a total of one masculine and three feminine teachers whose ages oscillate between 30 and 45 years old. It was essential to study the instruction part due to it is something that, as the learning process, cannot stand alone when it comes to writing teaching.

3.5 The Sampling Frame

This subdivision of the investigation is to depict how the sample was skimmed off. First, it was required to establish what kind of research this work would be and in doing so, it was found that composition errors are something that cannot be merely measured in terms of numbers but by means of quality. Writing is a time-consuming skill and it also requires intellectual work which is thereafter turned into words and phrases whose aim is to express the writer's ideas to convey a coherent message. Subsequently, writing and its relatives cannot be qualified using a quantitative approach. Then, it was necessary to determine what class groups would be the objects of the study. Due to their linkage with this investigation and being the starting point of the writing process, English composition I groups, instructors of those groups and attending students were admittedly the most fitting elements to carry out this research. Those students met undoubtedly the required characteristics and would facilitate answers to the main question of this research. As mentioned above, English composition I is the initiation of the mastering of writing in the Foreign Language Department and the most elementary processes are supposedly taught in those courses. In this manner, it was anticipated to encounter very basic errors in the students' composition and so it would provide tools to set up the investigators' work. Having all of this understood, the next step would be the sampling.

In the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, there were four class groups summing up 105 students taking the subject of Composition I. As for the sampling process, according to Sampieri (2006), since the qualitative researcher does not try to generalize the results of the study to a broader population, sample size is not important from a probabilistic perspective, therefore a non-probability sampling perspective was undertaken; but there are three

factors the qualitative researcher takes into account to determine the sample size: operative capacity, understanding of the phenomena and the nature of the phenomena under analysis.

The first one is related to the number of cases that the researcher is actually capable of handling. According to the time available for carrying out the investigation and the number of students in the population, twenty percent of them per each group were the maximum number the researchers could handle within the period at hand for the investigation. However, the researchers' capacity for handling the number of students was not the only option for establishing sample size.

The second one has to do with the understanding of the phenomena because what is important to the researcher is to have enough number of participants to clearly understand what is happening. Therefore, having deep enough understanding should enough to take into account for determining the sample size. In this research, knowledge gained on the errors of the students in their composition was clear enough with the twenty percent of the students per each group.

The third factor taken into account is what lies in relation with time. This is an important factor that determines how much information the researcher is actually able to gather from the participants. In this research, as much information was gathered as time allowed the researchers. Now, taking into account the first and second factors, the twenty percent of the population per Composition I group was established as the sample for the investigation.

So, in the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, there were four groups, these summing up to 105 students taking the subject of Composition I. Finally, because analyzing the whole population was not feasible for the researchers, calculation of an acceptable sample size was required. Ellen Taylor-Powell (Program Development and Evaluation, Sampling, 1988) claims that in a group of 100 students a 20% of the group will be a fair

representation for a sampling. Therefore, the maximum range of confidence level that the researchers allowed was of 20%, which led to the final sample size of 21 students from the four groups. The calculation was done using the software from the website “www.thesurveysystem.com”. What this means is that the range of the confidence level is of twenty percent, which should be bear in mind while considering the findings of the research.

Consequently, there were a total of 21 students as the entire sample. The extraction of the sample was broken down as suggested: The first one was teacher Ricardo Garay’s course with a total of 29 students. From the 29 students, 6 were selected. Second, Teacher Gilma Zepeda’s group with a total of 31 students were proposed in the research with 7 students from the total of 31. The next group, teacher Lilian Olivares’ group, with a total of 15 students; therefore, from the total of 15, 2 students were scrutinized. In addition, teacher Ephigenia Marengo’s group with a group of 30 students listed in the course, from which 6 students were required to be studied.

3.6 Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Participants, students and teachers, were of great relevance and they all willingly cooperated during the realization of this study and as it was only fair, they were also informed on all the procedures related to this quest for knowledge. First of all, participants were informed they were part of a research study on finding errors in their compositions; second, they were explained about the current investigation was carried out with the purpose of, first, finding, describing and classifying the composition errors and serving as foundation for further research on the field of writing. Third, they were notified that their participation may last the whole semester they were attending to Composition I due to a series of studies and observation procedures the researchers’ would carry out. The following step would consist of providing the

participant with all the information regarding all the processes concerning this investigation such as surveys, questionnaires. Besides, they were indicated that their work would be treated discretely so their privacy would not be risked and comfort and agreement were manifested among the participants. In addition, it was suggested that carrying out this investigation would be of great help for further generations because writing has been for some time overlooked and with this work, something can be done to overcome this situation.

The participants were explained in detail about the managing of the records to use during the research; confidentiality was a clear goal concerning the handling of any information received by the students that made up the sample. The extent to which the confidentiality was being taken into account was clearly stated before collecting any data. Before collecting any data, the students were clearly and properly informed that their participation in the investigation was completely voluntary, and that, if wanted, they could suspend their part in the investigation at any point without the fear to any penalty. Thus, participants were given phone numbers, e-mail addresses and any other kind of information that could serve as a means of contacting the people in charge of the investigation so that answers or comments could be reported.

3.7 Data collection stage

Researchers decided to use a variety of complementary research instruments which were largely based on questionnaires, observations and examination of students' compositions as evidence, with some qualitative research to gather background evidence of teachers' experience and attitudes, and students' attitude towards the writing process in order to set the scene. These instruments are described as follows:

Questionnaires were administered not only to teachers but also to the students involved in the investigation. These questionnaires were designed to identify the factors that obstruct students' English writing development in composition I, courses in the Foreign Language Department as well as to get an insight into the fields of instruction, feedback, students' motivation and attitude towards learning, and the mother tongue interference. These questionnaires were administered at the end of the semester in order to give the participants the opportunity to get the perception of the evolution of their writing development.

Besides that, students' compositions played an important role to determine the common mistakes that they make when they write. These pieces of writing were also meant to help researchers identify the different stages of writing development that students go through based on the feedback provided. These compositions were gathered at the end of the course with the help of the individuals involved in the investigation.

In addition, Observation presented a great opportunity to see real-life classroom environment. Therefore, researchers carried out some class observation which was highly challenging but of great help to get information on different fields such as: instruction, feedback, students' motivation or attitude towards learning and mother tongue interference.

3.8 Instrumentation

In order to gather the necessary information to carry out this research, four different instruments were applied. All these instruments complemented each other and shared the unique purpose of gathering as much information as possible to achieve an understanding of the students' deficiencies in their English writing. With the aid of the outcome of this research,

future researchers might get even greater insights into the students' composition in the Foreign Language Department.

These data gathering instruments are described as follows:

1. Questionnaire to the teachers (Appendix A, p135)
2. Questionnaire to the students (Appendix B, p137)
3. Class Observation Rubric (Appendix C, p140)
4. Rubric for the evaluation of the students' writings (Appendix D, p143)

3.8.1 Questionnaires:

The main “instruments” used to collect the data were questionnaires. The researchers found attractive to use questionnaires because of their efficiency in terms of avoiding bias, saving researchers' time, focusing researchers' efforts. By administering questionnaires to a group of teachers or students, researchers could collect a huge amount of information in a timely manner which would have been time consuming if they had opted for an oral interview. On top of that, the use of questionnaires is meant to make the analysis of data a fast and straightforward process, especially by applying some modern computer software. Thus, researchers found them more objective and less time consuming than oral interviews.

These questionnaires were designed to “gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions”, (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.83) and were administered to both teachers and students. The rubrics for the questionnaires were meant to get information on different aspects that were involved in the writing process in the Foreign Language Department such as: Instruction, feedback, students' motivation or attitude towards learning and mother tongue interference. The goal was to get as much knowledge about the

participants' points of view as possible. Thusly, this was carried out to help researchers have a data basis on the point of view of the students and teachers that could be used in further studies to link the deficiencies that were to be found in this research with the probable factors that gave them birth.

3.8.1 I Questionnaire administered to the teachers:

(See Appendix A, p135)

The questionnaires administered to teachers were based on ten open-ended questions which were meant to get teachers' self-perception of their efforts when trying to help students to attain knowledge. As well as to gather teachers' points of view in regards of specific fields of investigation, such as: Instruction, feedback, students' motivation and attitude towards learning, and mother tongue interference.

In regards of instruction, teachers were asked:

- If their students were fully informed and aware of the objectives of each lesson and activity.
- To create a list of some of the common instructional techniques (Discussions, demonstrations, lectures, dissension, etc.) that they were more likely to apply in the classroom.
- About the preparation of the classes.

About feedback, teachers were requested to explain their main focus when grading students' compositions (Content, grammar errors, coherence, cohesion, etc.). Besides, since research in L1 and L2 student writing has suggested that teacher response to student

compositions is most effective when it is given on preliminary rather than final drafts of student essays (Freedman, 1987; Krashen, 1984), teachers were asked to create a detailed list of the different ways in which they would provide feedback to students. In regards of students' motivation and attitude towards learning, teachers were required to describe the strategies they would carry out to keep your students motivated and involve in the classroom activities, and their efforts to create an adequate classroom atmosphere, through previous class preparation.

3.8.1 II Questionnaire administered to the students:

(See Appendix B, p137)

The questionnaires administered to students were meant to get students' perceptions into the fields of instruction, feedback provided, motivation and attitude towards learning. Such questionnaires were divided into three sections in order to obtain the most complete and accurate information possible. The first and second sections were focused on motivation and attitude towards learning respectively, whereas the third section was created to collect students' perceptions of feedback provided and instruction. Together the questions sum up fifteen open-ended and close-ended questions that gather students' points of view of their own efforts to develop their writing.

3.8.2 Class Observation Rubric

(See Appendix C, 140)

Ethnography generates or builds theories of cultures or explanations of how people think, believe, and behave that are situated in local time and space (Dr Simone Krüger, 2008). Therefore, it assumes that we must first discover what people actually do before we can give

interpretations to the information gathered through any other instrument based on our personal opinions, professional or academic experience. Therefore, through observation researchers learned from what they saw and what they heard during the class while learning the meaning that people attribute to what they did. Researchers used rigorous research methods and data collection techniques to avoid bias and ensure accuracy of data.

Thus, a rubric was created to record specific information about what was going on in the classrooms. Observing classes had several purposes, including giving the researchers the ability to describe instructional practices, evaluate inequities that exist for a specific student or group of students, mother tongue interference, and describe the feedback provided during the class, etc. Therefore, the rubrics for observation were divided into four main areas: Instruction, Motivation, or students' attitude towards learning, feedback and Mother tongue interference. With the knowledge on the facts related to the instruction in the composition classes and the feedback given then, a data basis was to be created in order to be used for further research in order to establish a relationship between the instruction and feedback and the deficiencies in the students' English composition that were to be found in this current research.

3.8.3 Rubric for the evaluation of the students' writings

(See Appendix D, p143)

Finally, there is the rubric used to evaluate the students' composition in English. The main purpose of this rubric was to spot the errors in the composition in order to have a clearer understanding on the actual errors in the students' writings. Once with the understanding of the errors at hand, the writings were to be analyzed and the common errors could be finally identified.

The importance of this rubric lies in the classification of the errors in terms of those related to form and those related to meaning. On one hand, and amongst the errors which fall into the form related mistakes group, the following could be regarded: grammatical errors, misspelling, punctuation mistakes, syntactical arrangement of words, and the like. On the other hand, amongst the errors related to the meaning, the following could be noted: errors related to the cohesion, coherence, ideas organization and the substantiality of the message being delivered.

3.9 Validity

Validity of the research design as whole is important to evaluate the worth of the investigation. Given that the essence of the validity of instruments and tools is the degree to which they measured what is intended to be measured (Brown, 2001) the instruments were checked carefully so that they measure what they were intended to measure, in the case of the questionnaires clear and specific questions were asked, and fixed and standardized. The validity of the instruments was the confirmation of the correctness of the study design. Testing and reviewing the instruments enabled researchers to make modifications to the instrument based on the aims of the investigation to assure that the instrument was clear and unambiguous.

3.10 Reliability

Reliability depends essentially on explicitly describing observational procedures. To avoid any sort of misleading results Weiss (1994, p. 212) suggests that when we can guard against bias in the interview by establishing a research partner-ship in which the respondent understands that what we need is a full and accurate report, by obtaining detailed, and fashioning

a substantive frame for our study that effectively captures the complexities of whatever it is we are studying. Given that protecting against bias in the data collection instruments is a primary threat to reliability; researchers reduced any possibility of impartial judgments by testing and revising the instruments. Therefore; the rubrics for class observation as well as questionnaires were consistent and meant to gather the same information in all the given class scenarios.

3.11 SUMMARY

The aim of this investigation was to find out the most common deficiencies of Composition I students' English writing. Consequently, it is primordial to first identify the weak points in the students' writings and then establish a prioritization of such in order to have a better knowledge on the right and precise course of action to be taken for further researchers.

Being this a qualitative, descriptive research, the information required was not of the sort of numbers; thusly, the pre-eminent fashion to gather such data was through a qualitative research method. The use of tools such as personal interviews, questionnaires and the analyzing of students' writings allowed a proper approach to the subjects being studied. Taking into account the validity and reliability of the research design and the instrumentation, the utilized tools supplemented each other. As for the population, the first factor depicted here was to draw some peculiar features such as age, genre, and ethnicity. The population consisted of one-hundred five students and four teachers between 18 to 40 years old, and 30 to 45 of Salvadoran citizenship. And as for the sampling, there were four class groups of Composition I from which 20% was extracted from each to make a total sampling of 31 students and four teachers as well.

All of the participants, students and teachers, were informed on all the procedures related. To begin with, they were properly informed of their participation on the research. They were also explained about the instrumentation and how the surveys and questionnaires would be handed to them. Besides, privacy and discretion processes were completely clarified. As for the managing of the information, they were also notified about the policies of confidentiality and discretion taken into account during the research before the collection of the data. Every single person in the population and the sample was aware that they were just volunteers and that they could suspend their part in the investigation without any penalty, should they want to avoid partaking. Finally, the participants were given means of communication with the researchers in order to answer any questions regarding their part in the investigation; clarification of the study and the confidentiality policies were of the utmost importance during the research.

4. RESULTS CHAPTER

4. Overview of the chapter

This chapter, initially assess the descriptive statistics to establish the basic characteristics of the investigation. It also presents the findings of the data collection and analysis to give answer to the main question that drove this research: “What are the factors that interfere in the students’ composition development?” Moreover, the findings are discussed in five sections: 1) Analysis of teachers’ questionnaires, 2) Analysis of students’ questionnaires, 3) The results of class observation, 4) Analysis of students’ compositions, and 5) General Representation of the Findings per Instrument. This is followed by a critical discussion of the findings and their linkages to the existing literature in order to serve as the foundation upon which more knowledge can be edified in order to help with the development of the English composition.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

As noted in the previous chapter, in the FLD, there were four class groups summing up 105 students taking the subject of Composition I but the group of students that participated in this investigation makes up a total of 21 students which were broken down as suggested: The first one was teacher Ricardo Garay’s course with a total of 29 students from them, 6 were selected. From Teacher Gilma Zepeda’s group 7 students were selected from a total of 31. The next group, teacher Lilian Olivares’ group from which 2 out of 15 students were scrutinized. In addition, teacher Ephigenia Marengo’s group with a group of 30 students listed in the course, from which 6 students were required to be studied.

4.2 Statistical Analysis

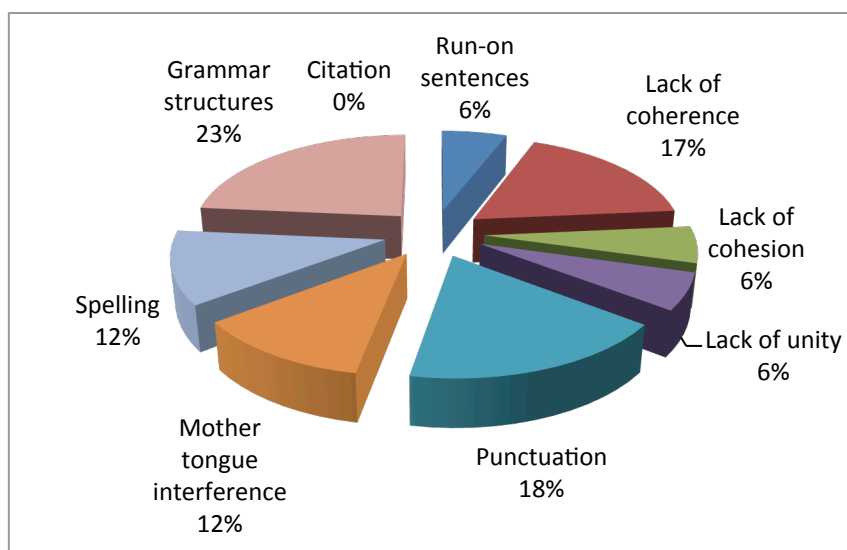
This section of the research is devoted to setting out the results through five sections.

4.2.1 Analysis of the teachers' questionnaires

A) Teachers were administered a questionnaire based on ten items. A brief analysis of each item and its respective graphic is provided below.

Q1: List the 5 most common errors that you think most of your students make whenever they are asked to write in English (being 1 the most common).

Figure 4.2.11

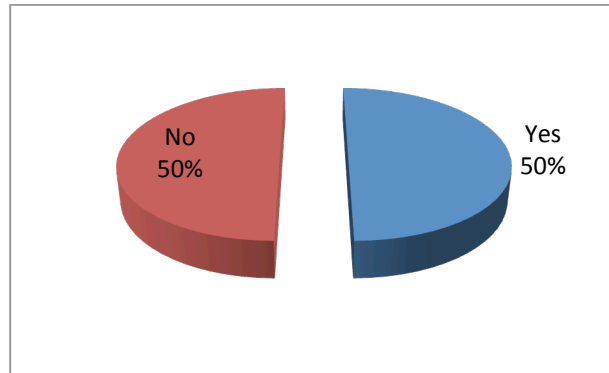


The graphic above shows the percentages of the most common errors that teachers think most of their students make when they are asked to write in English. This also contains ten items representing the ten questions passed to the teachers. Different trends can be seen but there is a clear tendency to agree that most of students make mistakes in grammatical structures which represents the **23%** of the results, also punctuation depicting **18%**; lack of coherence showing 17% of the total and finally, mother tongue interference and spelling with 12% each. Being the least common errors: run-on sentences and lack of cohesion, both with **6%** of the total of the responses.

B) The following graphics shows that 50% of the teachers who were interviewed agreed that Mother Tongue Interference is affecting or even interfering with students' English writing development, whereas the other 50% claimed that MTI was not affecting students' compositions.

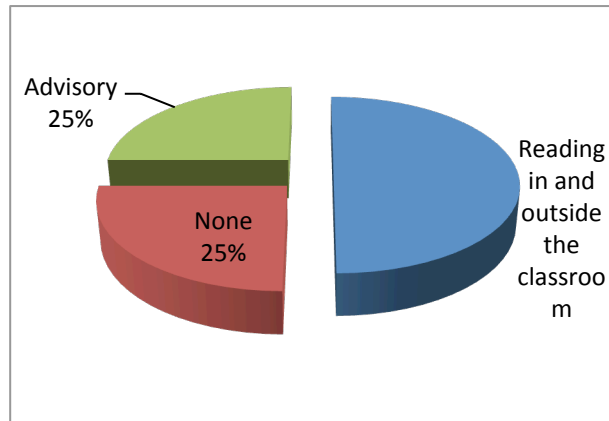
Q2: Do you think that your mother, Spanish, is actually affecting or even interfering with students' English writing development?

Figure 4.2.1 II



Q2: How?

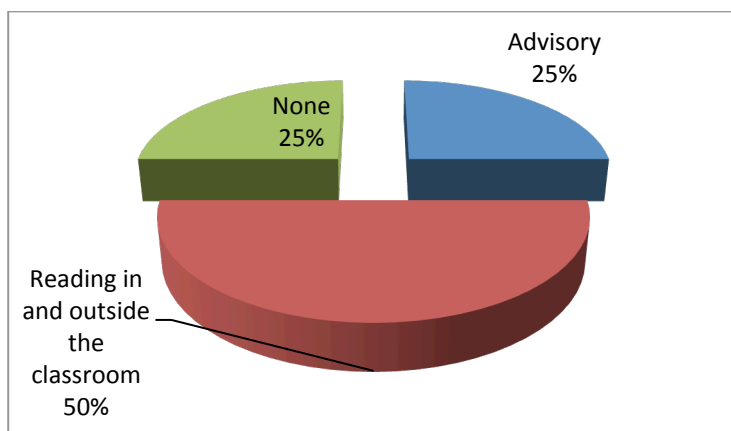
Figure 4.2.1 III



C) This next graphic represents some of the things that teachers do to deal with Mother Tongue Interference. Being: *advisory, reading in and outside the classroom and none*, some of the answers provided by the four teachers enrolled in the investigation. The numbers represent a sharp inclination for “Reading in and outside the classroom” as one of the most effective methods to deal with MTI, given that it represents the **50%** of the responses. Besides that, only 1 teacher, who represents the **25%**, claimed that Advisory is a good way to address the issue. Only one teacher (**25%**) expressed that there is no need to do anything to deal with MTI.

Q3: List some of the things that you do to deal with Mother Tongue Interference.

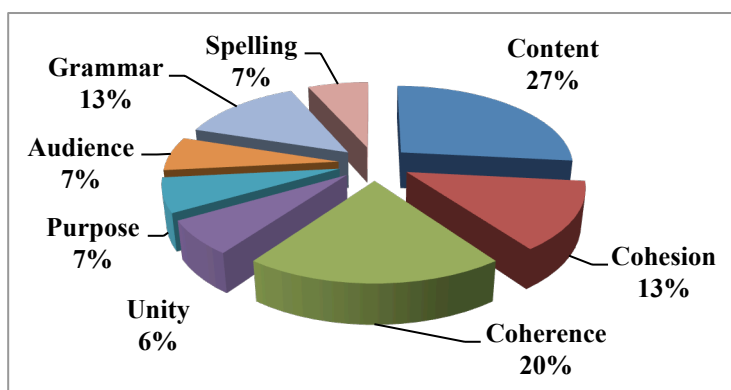
Figure 4.2.1 III



D) The graphic below shows the percentages of teachers' main focus of correction when it comes to grade students' compositions. It clearly shows that the main focus of attention is Content being this one the 27% of the total of responses, followed by Coherence and Cohesion with 20% and 13% respectively. The other 40% is divided into: Audience, Purpose, Grammar, Spelling and Unity with 6% each one.

Q4: What is the main focus of correction when grading students' composition papers (grammar, content, coherence, cohesion, etc)?

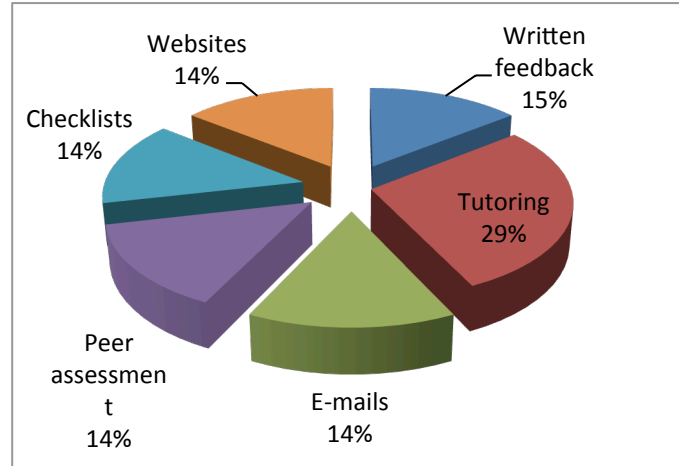
Figure 4.2.1 IV



E) The following depiction represents the different ways through which teachers normally give feedback to students. Tutoring is by far the most common way in which teachers provide feedback to students accounting the biggest percentage (**29%**) followed by written feedback which represents **15%** of the responses. Websites and checklist, peer assessment and e-mails show small percentages of **14%** each.

Q5: List the ways in which you give feedback to students.

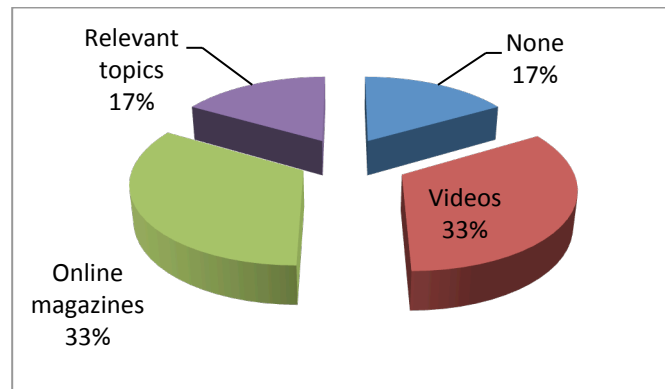
Figure 4.2.1 V



F) This chart represents the three responses that teachers provided when they were asked about the strategies that they carry out to keep their students motivated: videos, online magazines, relevant topics and none. The chart shows that videos and online magazines share the same percentages (**33% each**) which together represent the biggest percentage of the responses. Only one teacher suggested making good use of relevant topics as a way to keep students motivated that represents the **17%** of the total. However, one of the teachers (**17%**) stated that no strategies to keep students motivated were applied in his classes.

Q6: Which strategies do you carry out to keep your students motivated (List some of them)

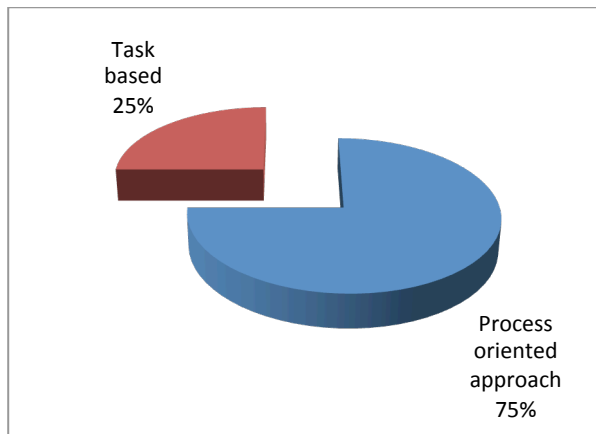
Figure 4.2.1 VI



G) The chart below shows the different writing approaches that teachers in the FLD apply in their classrooms. Three out of four teachers answered that they used a “Processed oriented approach”, which represents the 75% percent of the responses. It shows an additional result of 25%, which represents one teacher who applies the task based approach.

Q7: Which writing approach do you use/apply in your classroom?

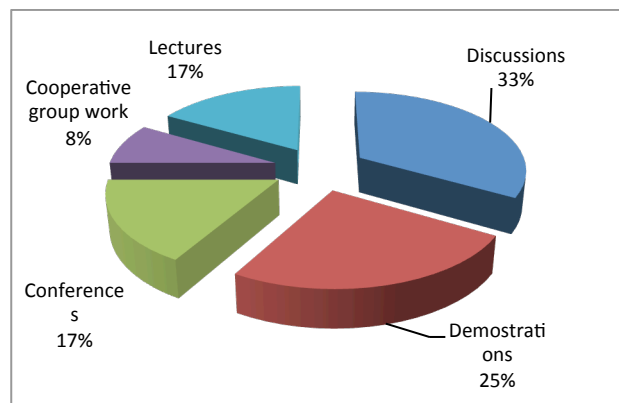
Figure 4.2.1 VII



H) The percentages of the following chart are divided into five instructional techniques that teachers claimed they have used during their classes. Being discussions the most used with the 33% of the responses, followed by demonstrations which are the 25% of the total. Conferences and lectures both sum up 34% with 17% each one. It shows an additional technique “Cooperative group work” which represents the last 8% that makes the total of the results.

Q8: List some of the instructional techniques (discussion, demonstrations, lectures, dissension, etc) that you use during the class.

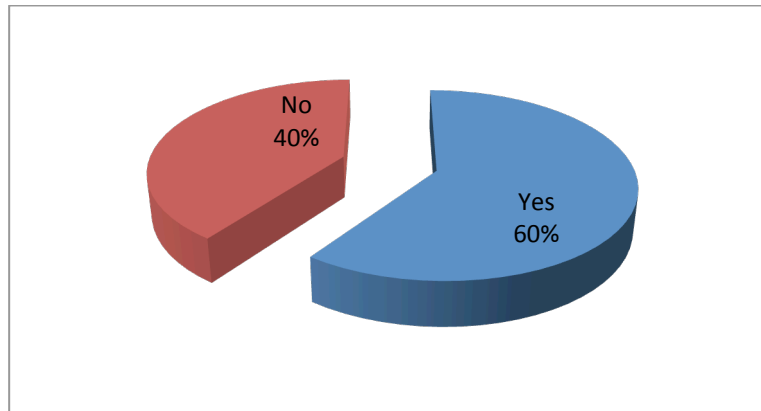
Figure 4.2.1 VIII



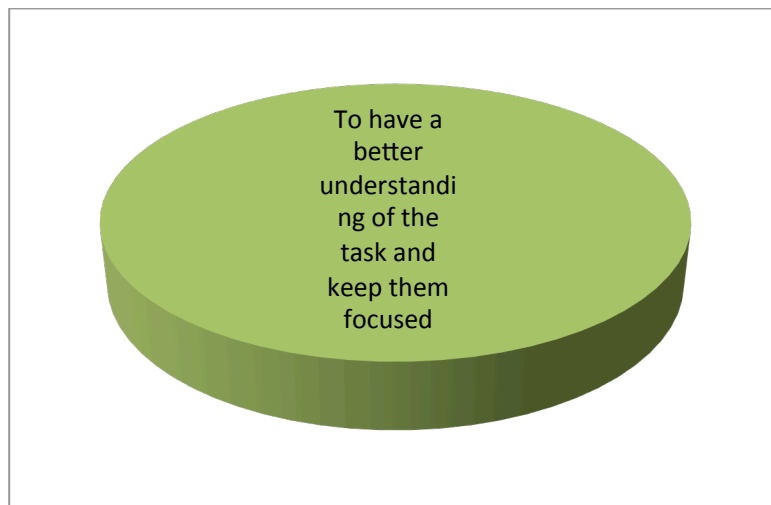
I) According to the chart below, there is a high tendency to recommend specific formats, templates frameworks, or models to write, which represents the **60%** of the total. Whereas the other **40%** claimed that they do not recommend specific formats to write.

Q9: Do you recommend specific formats to write?

Figure 4.2.1 IX



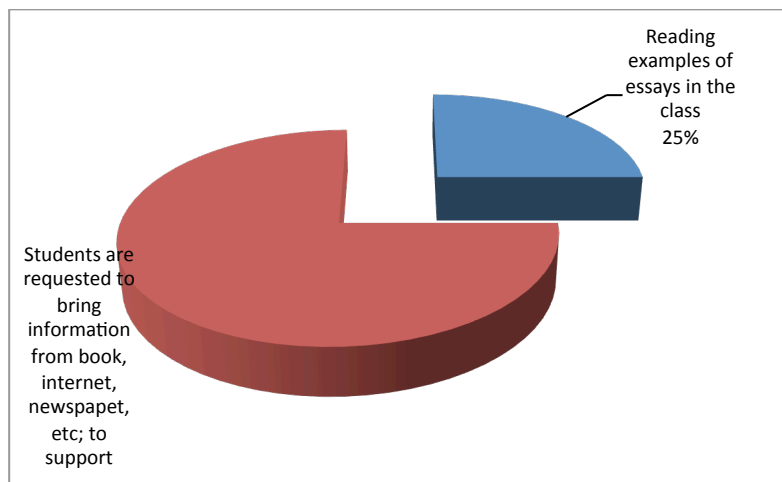
A hundred percent of the teachers agreed that giving specific formats to write helps students to have a better understanding of the task and keep them focused.



J) Mostly, teachers are prepared with books, information from internet, newspapers and the like to integrate in the classroom. Only a small 25% goes to the reading of examples of essays in the class.

Q10: What do you integrate reading within the writing class?

Figure 4.2.1 X



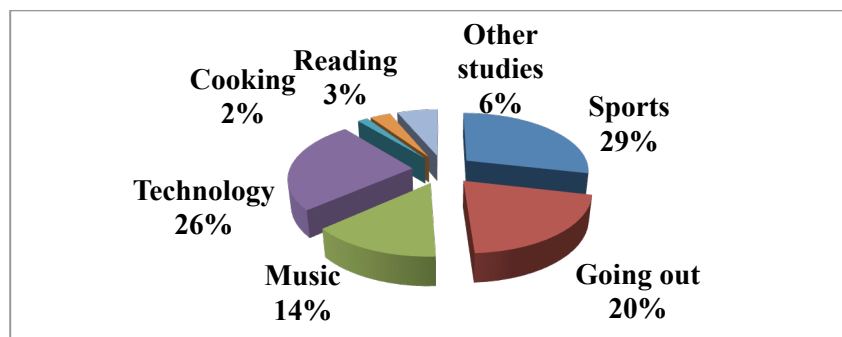
4.2.2 Analysis of students' questionnaires

Students were administered a questionnaire of a total of fifteen items. This questionnaire was divided into three different parts. Bellow you find the graphics for each of the items and a brief analysis for each of them.

-PART I-

1. Mention three of your hobbies

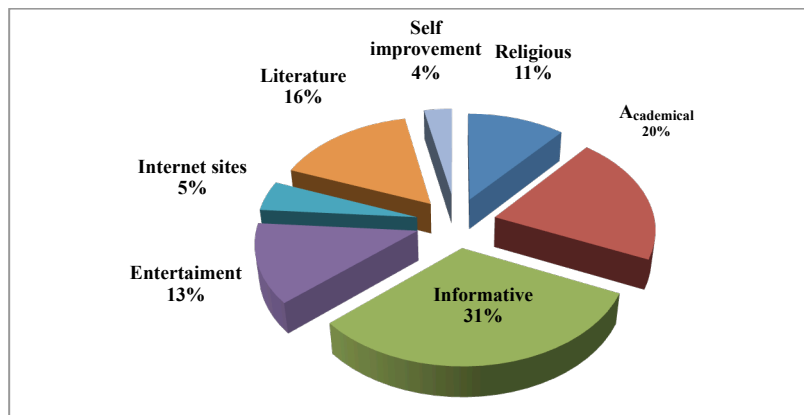
Figure 4.2.2 I



Students' hobbies are classified into seven categories. The majority of students spend their leisure time engaged in activities related to the world of sports (29%) which would suggest that many of the young people are somewhat fit for sports. Following, with a 26 %, students spend their leisure time engaged in activities related to the world of technology. Besides, the tendency of students going out for coffee, food or entertainment (20%) is also a big number. As for those students whose hobbies are listening to music or playing a musical instrument are classified into the "music" category with a 14%. People classified into the "other studies" (6%) category are those who are going through studies such as languages studies, arts studies or other academical studies. Lastly, reading, with only a 3% of the students and cooking as well a minute number with only a two percent of the students.

2. What are the three types of things that you mostly read?

Figure 4.2.2 II

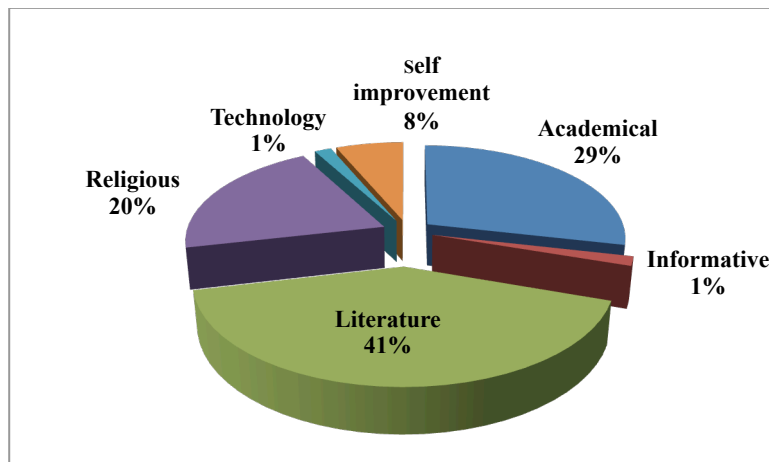


In the graphic, the "informative" category represents the amount of people reading informative texts. As for the "academical" category, essays, ESL/EFL books and magazines, biographical material and class material, amongst others related to this field are counted. Furthermore, those classified as "entertainment", represent the literature that serves the purpose of entertainment only. The ones classified as "literature" are: novels, drama, short-stories and poetry. Moreover, in the "religious" category, texts with religious purposes are counted. So, as the graphic suggests, most of students reading tendency goes for the kind of literature that keeps them informed, having a 31%

as depicted in the graphic. That is to say that they opt to read the informative kind, whereas that literature that can significantly lend their thinking (poetry, drama, shorts stories, etc.) is not given the importance or seriousness that it deserves as the graphic suggests with a 16%, for they probably read it only when it is required as a homework or assignment.

3. What are your three favorite books?

Figure 4.2.2 III

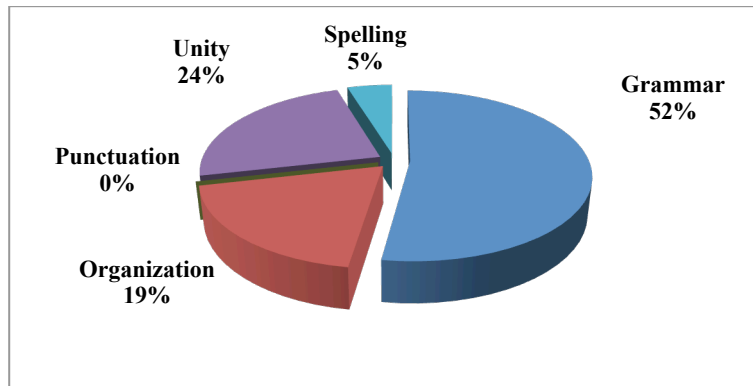


According to the graphic, when it comes to mentioning the most preferred books, the tendency goes for those books that belong to the literature genre, showing a 41% in the graphic above. In other words, students' book preferences are poetry, short stories, novels etc. This means that if they were to pick books, those related to self – improvement, technology or information would not be the ones that meet students' expectations as seen in the graphic. Clearly, these categories propose a just a small proportion (self – improvement with 8%, technology with 1% and informative with only 1%) compared to literature one.

PART II

4. Based on your personal experience, please, organize the following common errors in writing from 1 to 5:

Figure 4.2.2 IV

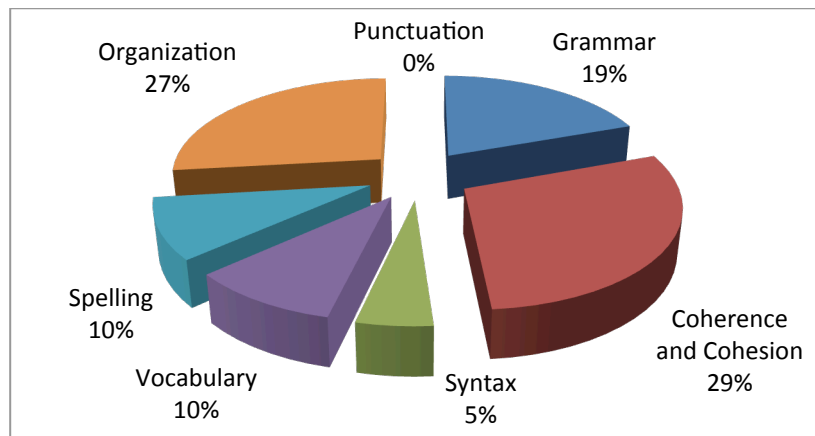


This graphic clearly explains the students' prioritization of the factors which, in their opinion, hinder their English composition. Whatever the students' beliefs of what might have been causing them trouble whenever writing in English have been separated into these four categories: Organization, Grammar, Unity and Punctuation, as shown above but grammar and organization errors are the ones that cause them more trouble when it comes to writing in English.

Clearly depicted, according to their own beliefs, students of the Composition I classes, responded that Grammar (52%) is what represents the greatest level of difficulty when writing, followed by unity (24%) and organization (19%).

5. What is the most difficult thing for you when you write in English?

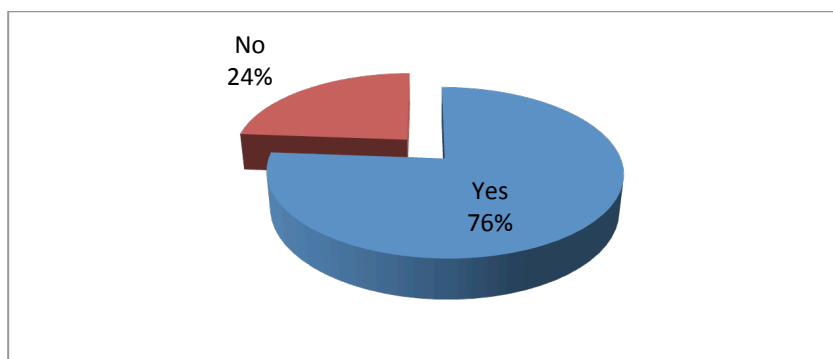
Figure 4.2.2 V



Whatever the students' errors are, they are classified into these six categories: Coherence and Cohesion, Syntax, Grammar, Vocabulary, Spelling, Organization and Punctuation. According to their opinions, they are classified into these depending on the nature of their response. However, it is evident that the most difficult things for students to write in English are the coherence and cohesion and organizational parts of the English writing showing a considerable 29% each, whereas punctuation elements seem not to cause them great trouble suggesting a 0%.

6. Do you think that your mother language, Spanish, is actually affecting or even interfering with your English writing development?

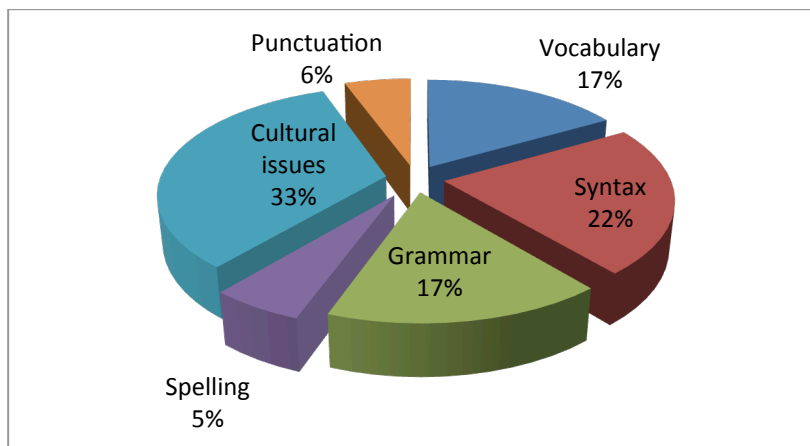
Figure 4.2.2 VI



Certainly, Spanish is a significant factor that is clearly present when it comes to writing in English as exposed in the graphic. Students answered accordingly to their own experiences in the field of writing in English. As the graphic bespeaks, Spanish does interfere when they write in English proposing a 76% in the graphic. In this manner, it affects significantly their writing competence.

7. Do you think that your mother language, Spanish, is actually affecting or even interfering with your English writing development? If “YES”, how?

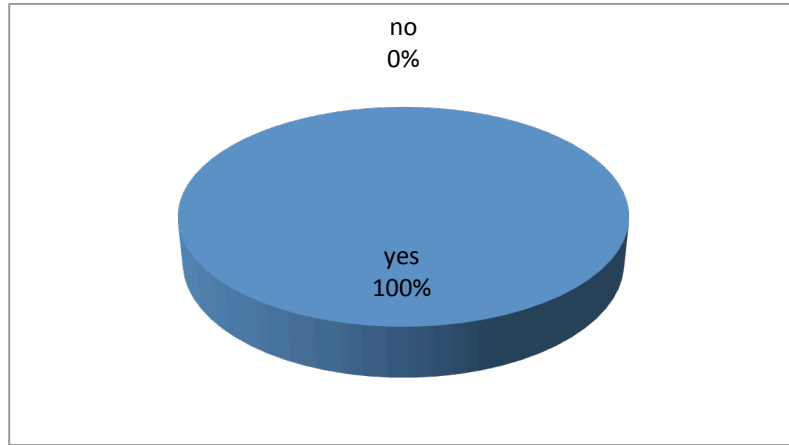
Figure 4.2.2 VII



There are several factors that definitely interfere with the students' composition in English. Spanish, as pointed out in the previous graphic, can affect in different aspects of the students' writing in English. These aspects or deficiencies are sorted out in the following order of percentage: Cultural issues 33%, Syntax 22%, Grammar and Vocabulary 17%, Punctuation 6%, and lastly, Spelling 5%.

8. Have you learned some writing techniques?

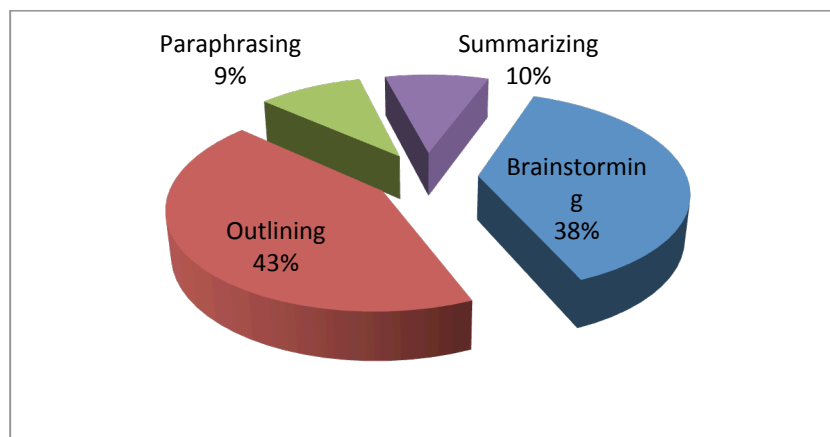
Figure 4.2.2 VIII



As shown, the percentage of students who have learned some writing techniques is the complete amount of the students that participated in the research, that is to say that all the sample of students learned at least one writing technique.

9. Which writing techniques have you learned in the Composition Class?

Figure 4.2.2 IX

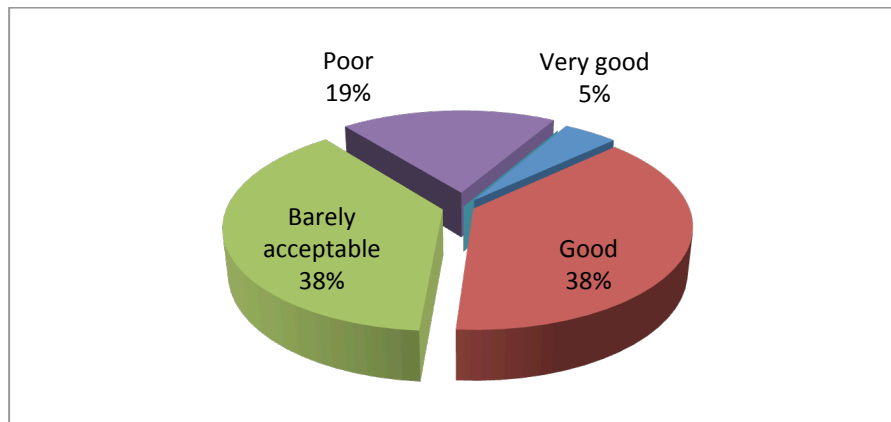


Represented in the graphic, the writing techniques that the students claim to have learned in the composition class are clearly seen. It appears to be that outlining (43%) and brainstorming (38%) were those writing techniques with more emphasis that students learned during the course and just a few of the population claim to have learned how to summarize or paraphrase a text.

PART III

10. How do you rate the instruction provided in your composition class?

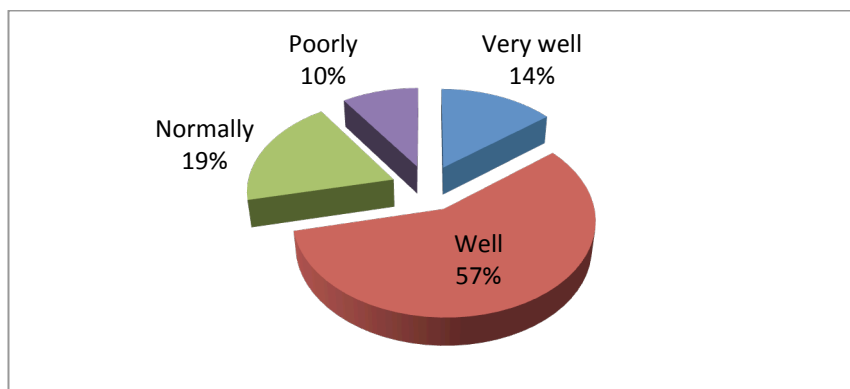
Figure 4.2.2 X



According to the students, the ratings they consider fair concerning the instruction which they received during the Composition class: Very good, Good, Barely Acceptable, Poor and Very poor, respectively. A 38% of the population agreed that the instruction received during their composition classes was good while other 38% stated that it was barely acceptable. Just a 5% of the opinions considered the instruction received very well, while 19% considers it poor, and nobody considers it totally very poor.

11. How do you consider you have developed your writing skills since you are attending the composition classes?

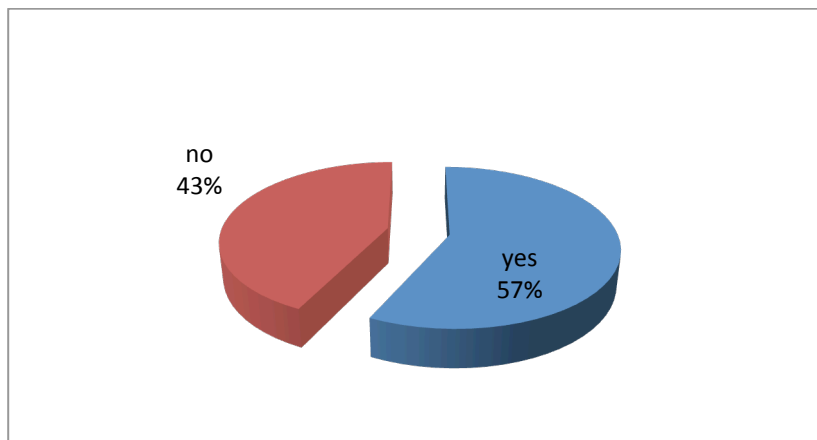
Figure 4.2.2 XI



Depicting the students 'writing skills development according to the students' opinions; this graphic also shows the classification into four respects: Very well, Well, Normally, Poorly and Very poorly. Most of the opinions seem to be comfortable with their performance along the course, showing a 57% that considered that their performance was well, a 19% of the students who described it as normal, a 14d% claimed that it was very well and just a 10% said that it was poor.

12. When it comes to clarifying your doubts about composition, is the feedback provided satisfying enough? Why?

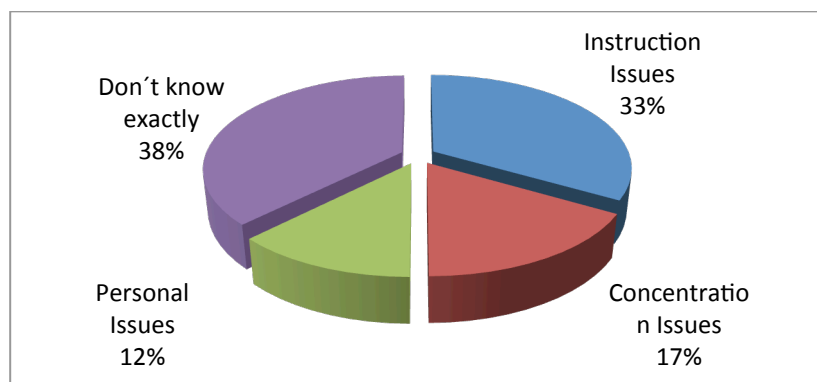
Figure 4.2.2 XII



In this graphic, the amount of the students who are satisfied with their feedback and the amount of those who are not satisfied is clearly depicted being a 58% of the population satisfied with the feedback provided by the teachers. On the other side, a 42% of the opinions were not satisfied with it accordingly to the graphic.

13. When it comes to clarifying your doubts about composition, is the feedback provided satisfying enough? Why?

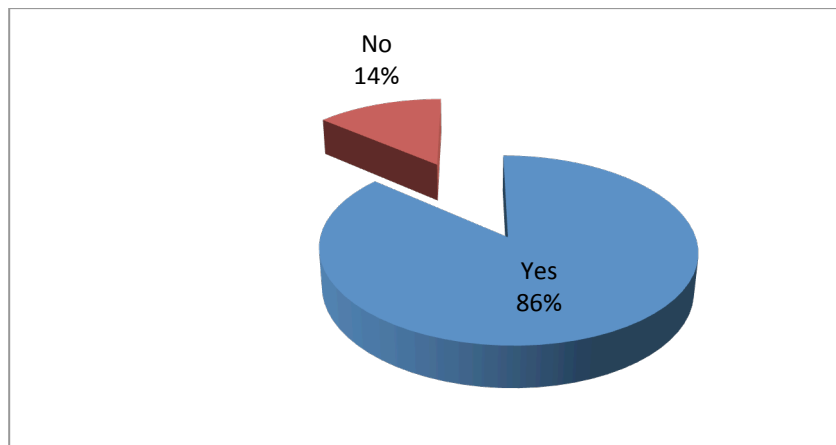
Figure 4.2.2 XIII



Concerning the percentage of students who do not feel satisfied with their feedback in the Composition class, this graphic shows the classification into four major respects: Instruction Issues, Concentration Issues, Personal Issues and Don't know exactly. There were a 38% of students who claimed to be dissatisfied with their feedback but were unable to clearly explain the reasons for their dissatisfaction. Besides, a 33% of them claimed not to have received clear instructions about what to do or probably the instructions were not so easy to understand. In addition, there was a 17% of the opinions that stated that the teachers needed to be more specific with the feedback, because of that, they had concentration problems and a 12% said that due to personal issues, the feedback they got did not meet their expectations.

14. Have you been instructed in how to use description?

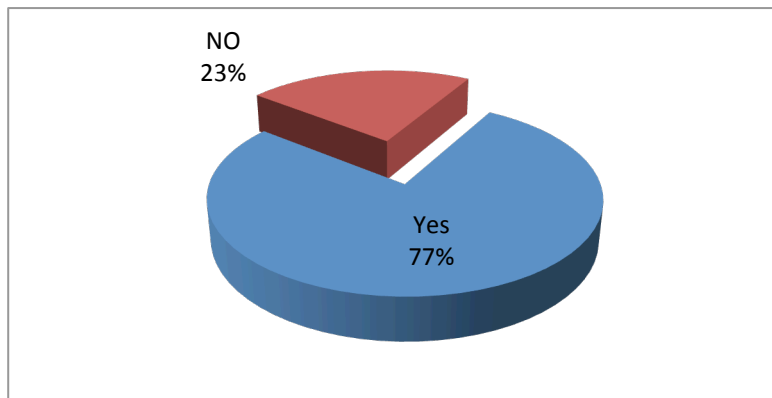
Figure 4.2.2 XIV



These graphic shows that a 86% of students claimed to have been instructed in the use of description whereas a 14% claim to have been taught how to use it.

15. Have you been instructed in how to use narration?

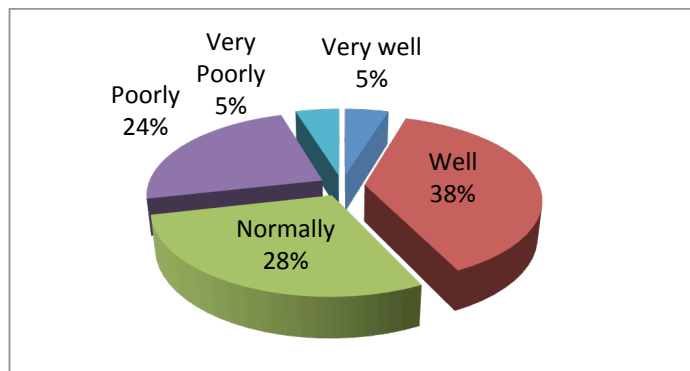
Figure 4.2.2 XV



As in the previous graphic, here it is shown the percentage of students who claim to have been instructed in the use of narration. A 77% of the total amount stated that they were inducted the use of narration when writing.

16. How well do you think you could use description in your composition?

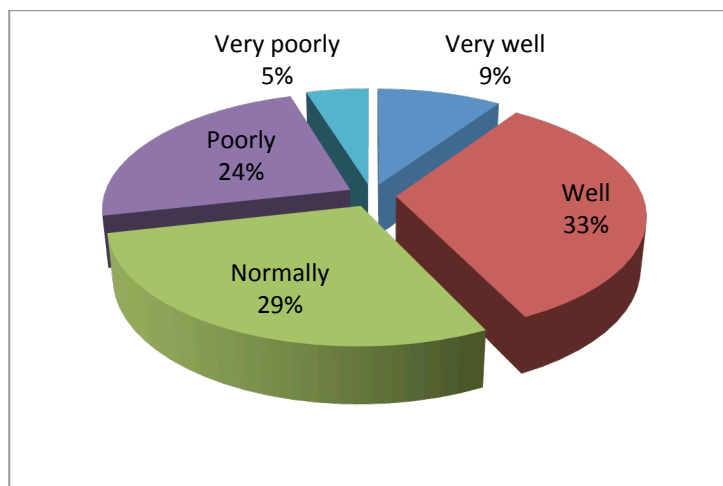
Figure 4.2.2 XVI



This graphic depicts how the students consider they can make use of description, whether they claimed to have been taught in its use or not. As the graphic suggests, the 38% regards their use of description as “well,” a 28% thinks they use it “normally,” a 24% says they did it “poorly,” another 5% as “very well” and finally another 5% reckons it as “very poorly.”

17. How well do you think you could use narration in your composition?

Figure 4.2.2 XVII

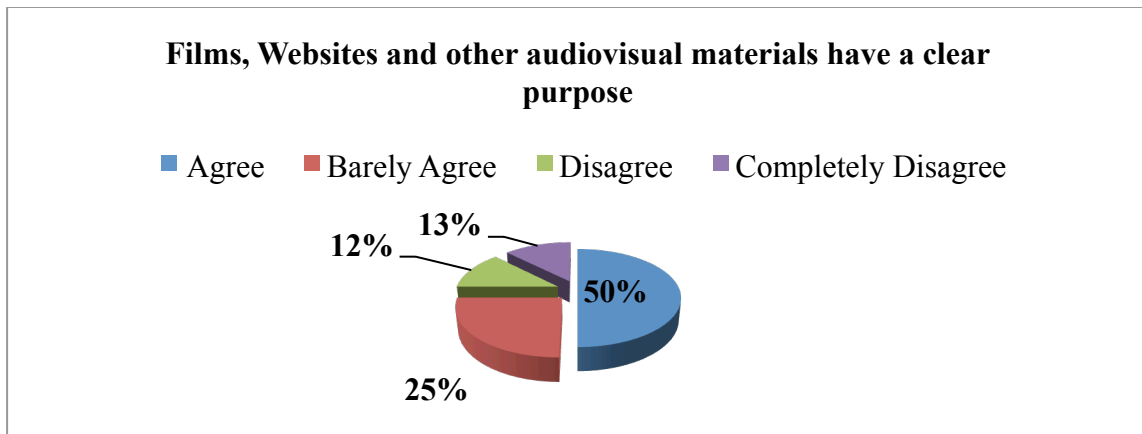


This graphic depicts how the students consider they can make use of narration, whether they claimed to have been taught in its use or not. As the graphic suggests, the 33% regards their use of narration as “well,” a 29% thinks they use it “normally,” a 24% says they did it “poorly,” another 9% as “very well” and finally just a 5% reckons it as “very poorly.”

4.2.3 Analysis of the Class Observation Data

The following graphics represent the data found through the use of the instrument related to the observation of the Composition I classes. The instrument was segmented in four parts: I- Instruction, II- Feedback, III- Motivation and IV- Mother Tongue Interference. The class observation lasted twenty four hours, each composition course was observed during 6 hours. Bellow each figure; there is a chart that represents the number of hours in which each aspect was observed.

Part I –INSTRUCTION-
Figure 4.2.3 I



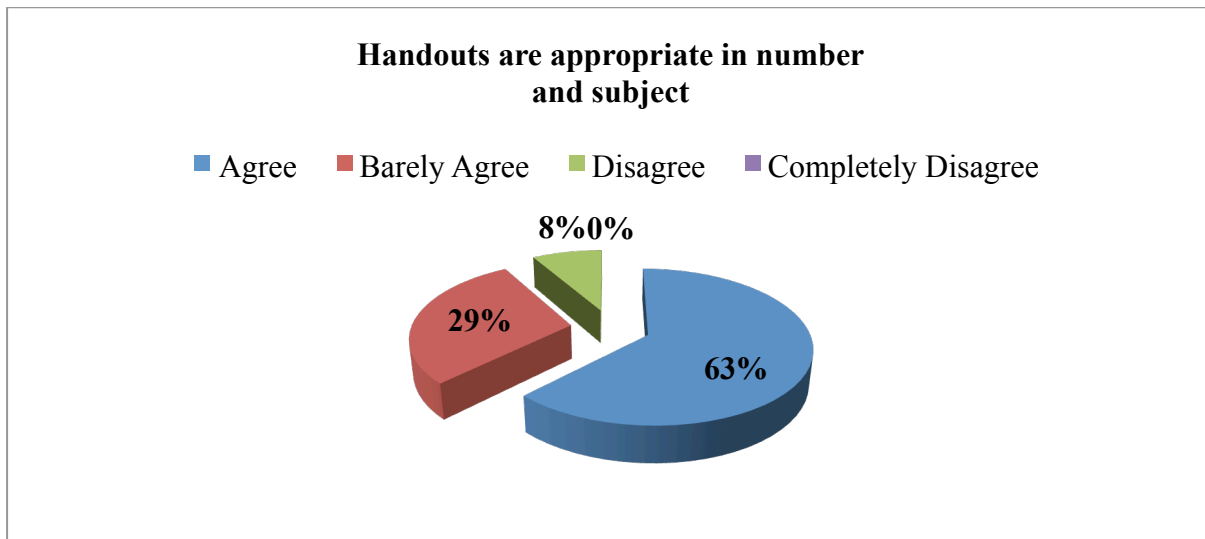
| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|----------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Films, Websites and other audiovisual materials have a clear purpose | 12 hours | 6 hours | 3 hours | 3 hours |

The current graphic displays that websites and other audiovisual materials have had a clear purpose in the composition classes. At least in a fifty percent of the times, they have had a very

clear purpose that everybody could see and understand. As far as the material is concerned, the teachers of the courses have done a good job in their usage.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 II

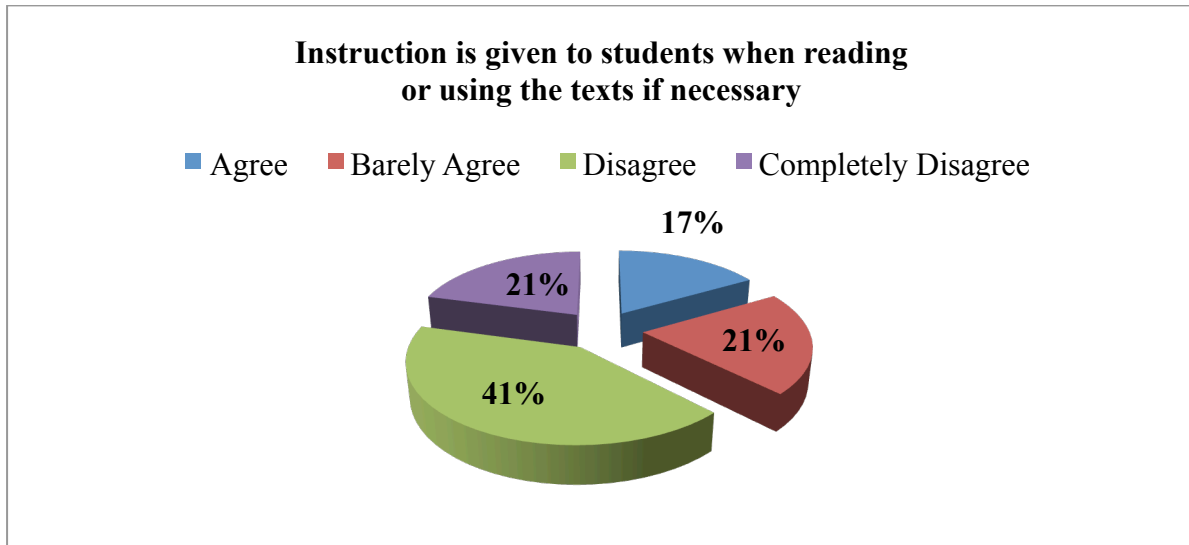


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|----------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 2. Handouts are appropriate in number and subject. | 15 hours | 7 hours | 2 hours | - |

This graphic shows the appropriateness in number and subject of the material being used in the classes. In a 63 percent, the material used was perfectly embedded into the topic being studied in the classes. With just a small 8 percent in disagree, it could be said that the teachers in the different groups of English Composition have been doing a very good job when it comes to the delivering of material for the classes.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 III

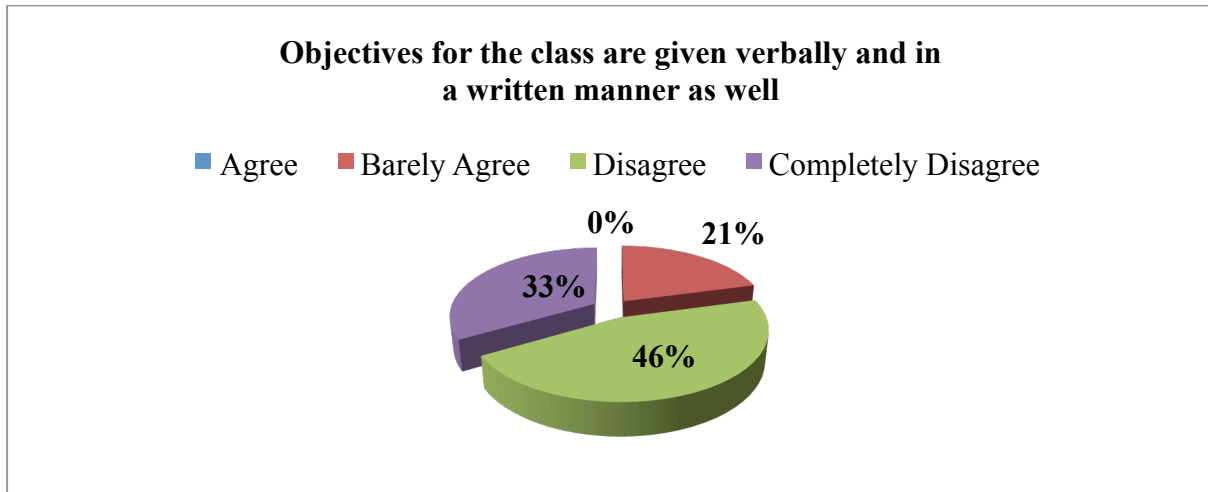


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 3. Instruction is given to students when reading or using the texts if necessary. | 4 hours | 5 hours | 10 hours | 5 Hours |

Clearly, as shown here, a larger percentage, 43%, goes to the “disagree” option. Just a small percentage, 17 % is backing up the giving of proper instructions and specifications of texts and readings in the classes. However, this does not mean that the teachers skipped the giving of specifications and instructions of the text but that teachers did it in a quick fashion letting openings in their explanations for misunderstandings.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 IV

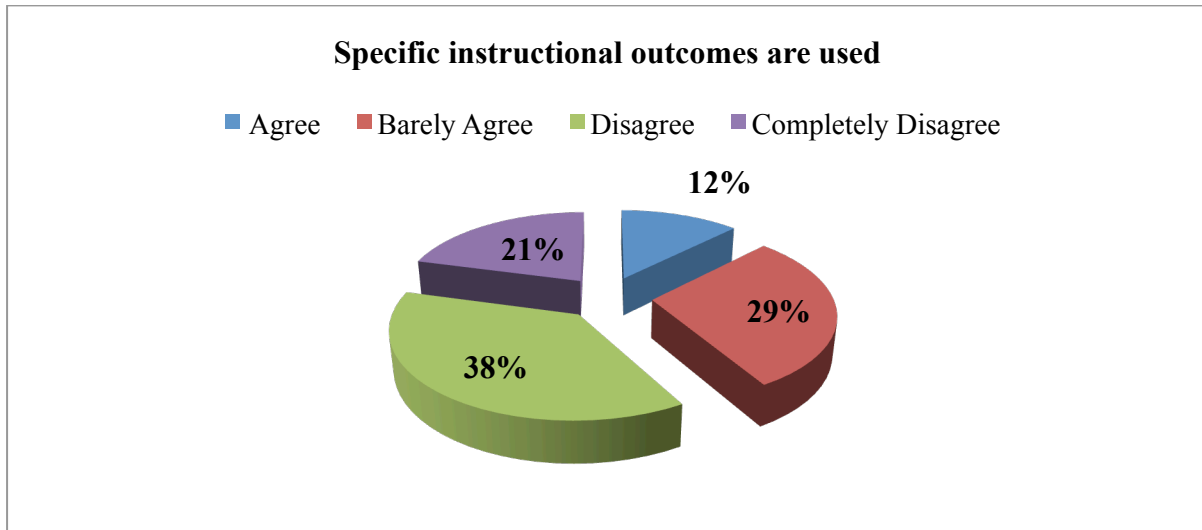


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 4. Objectives for the class are given verbally and in a written manner as well. | - | 5 hours | 11 hours | 8 Hours |

As shown in this graphic, the majority, 46%, corresponds to the “disagree” option when it comes to the teachers giving the objectives for the class in both, oral and written manner. Besides, a “33” corresponds to “completely disagree” option. Not even a quarter corresponds to the “barely disagree” option. This is meaning that teachers should clarify before the class begins whether orally or verbally, the objectives for the class, so that the students know what they are supposed to attain throughout the class and the course.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 V

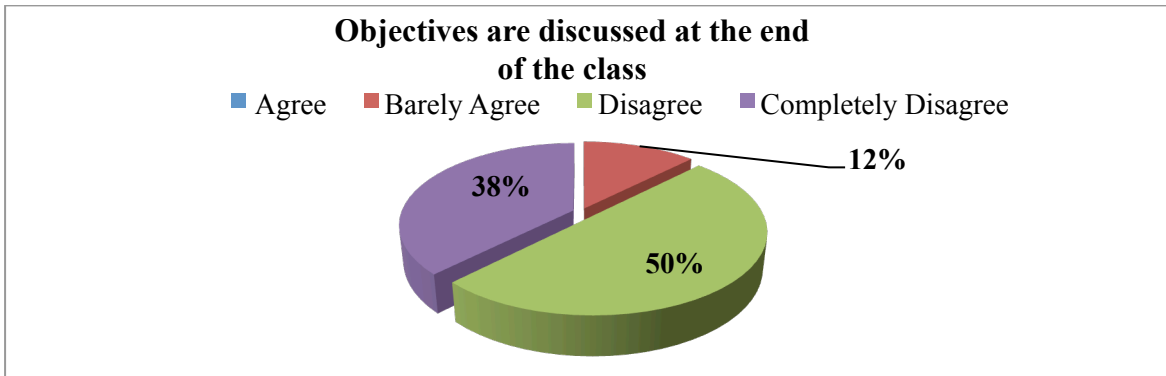


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 5. Specific instructional outcomes are used. | 3 hours | 7 hours | 9 hours | 5 Hours |

Concerning instructional outcomes, mostly, the teachers do not clarify whether they use instructional outcomes for the students or not. Again, in a 38%, teachers do not even mention specific instructional outcomes for their teachings. Teachers should make their students know before the instruction is given what are the specific outcomes, that is to say, what the students will end up learning.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 VI

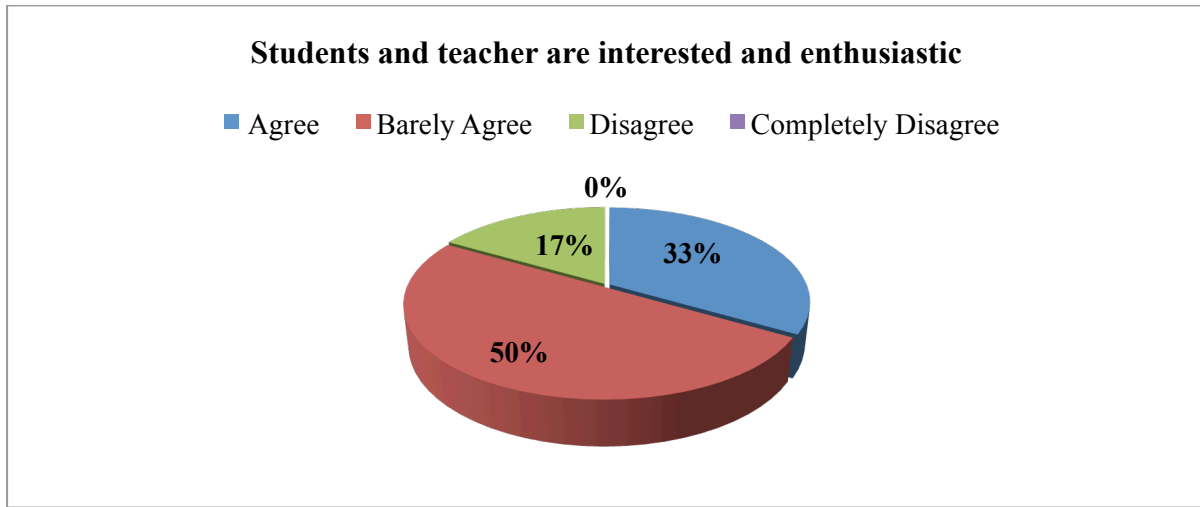


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 6. Objectives are discussed at the end of the class. | - | 3 hours | 12 hours | 9 Hours |

The current numbers in the graphic show that only a small 12% corresponds to the “barely agree” percentage. In the other hand, a big 38% corresponds to the “completely disagree”, clarifying that teachers do not discuss objectives at all at the end of the class. Fifty percent goes to the “disagree” percentage. This means that teachers should be aware of the necessity of clarifying to the students what are the objectives for the classes and the whole course.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 VII



| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 7. Students and teacher are interested and enthusiastic. | 8 hours | 12 hours | 4 hours | - |

When it comes to enthusiasm, this graphic shows that there is a 0% corresponding to the “agree” percentage; however, a significant 50% goes to the “barely agree”. This, meaning that even though the class is not characteristically described by the people’s enthusiasm, it cannot be denied that, to some extent, there is interest and enthusiasm there. The “completely disagree” percentage is blank and only a small 17% corresponds to the “disagree” percentage. This means that even though the students are not completely motivated by enthusiasm, still, this could not be a cause that cripples their writing. However, interest and enthusiasm could improve.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 VIII

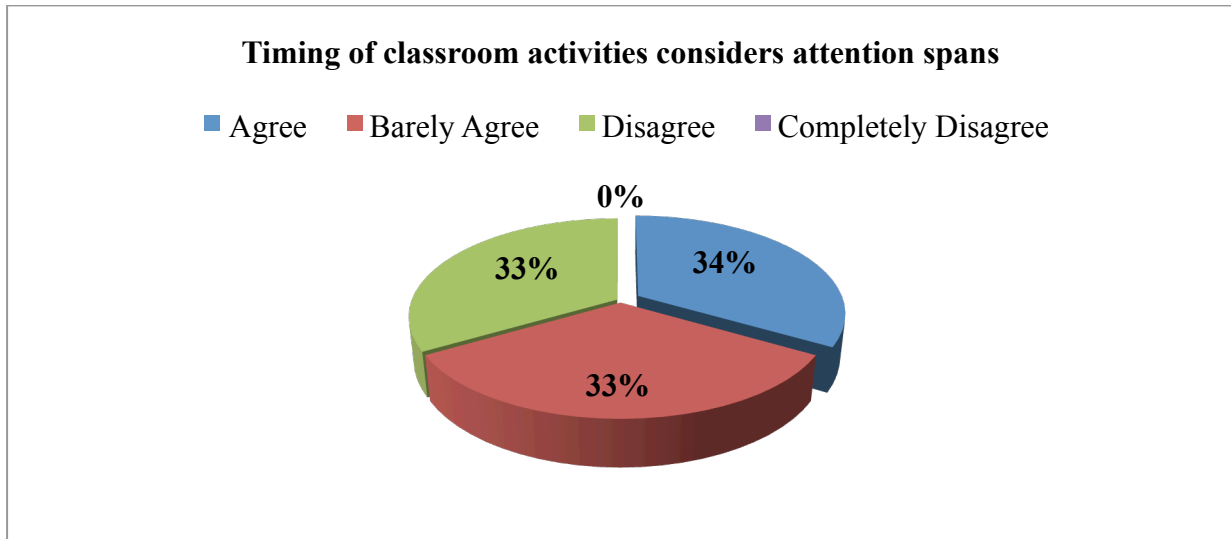


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---------------------------------|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 8. Humor is used appropriately. | 9 hours | 12 hours | 3 hours | - |

In reference to the usage of humor in the class environment, the result is not bad at all. Fifty percent corresponds to the positive use of humor in the class, which is always good. 37 percent, however, correspond to the very good use of humor in the classes, which is very good. Only a small 3% for the “disagree” depicts that humor is definitely not one of the causes that affect the students composition in English.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 IX

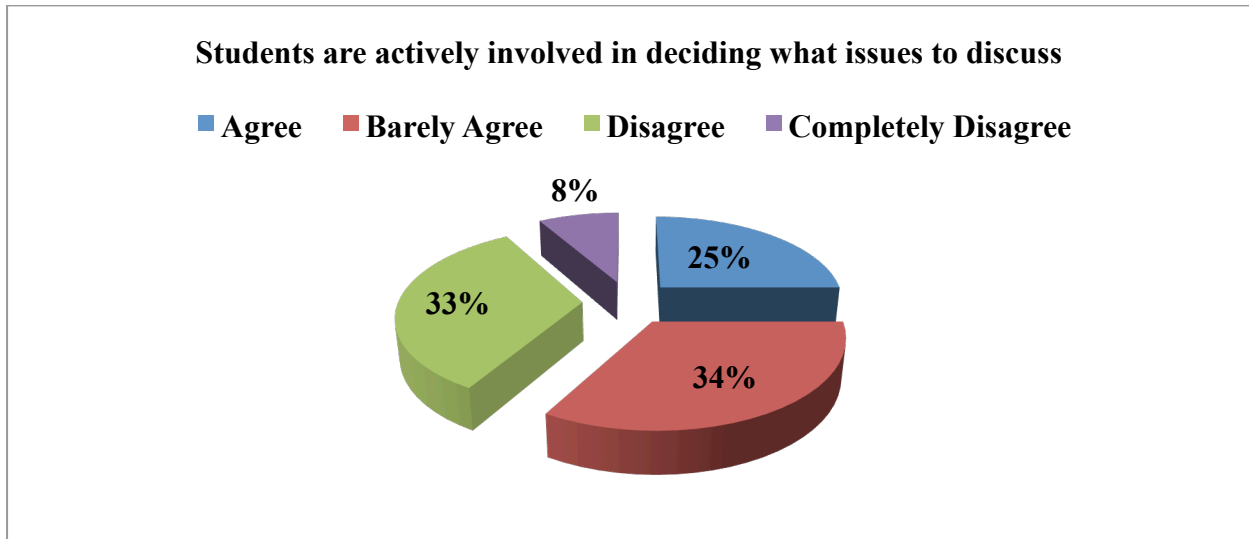


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 9. Timing of classroom activities considers attention spans. | 8 hours | 8 hours | 8 hours | - |

The current numbers in the graphic show the details related to the classroom activities and the attention spans taken into account for the students to engage on them during class time. Taking into account all the groups, the final numbers are close to each other: 33% for both “disagree” and “barely” agree percentages and one 34% for the “agree percentage.” What this means is that the teachers should take into account other ways in which to improve the timing of their activities in order for the students to get better learning. 33% for “disagree” is a quite high number and should be reduced.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 X

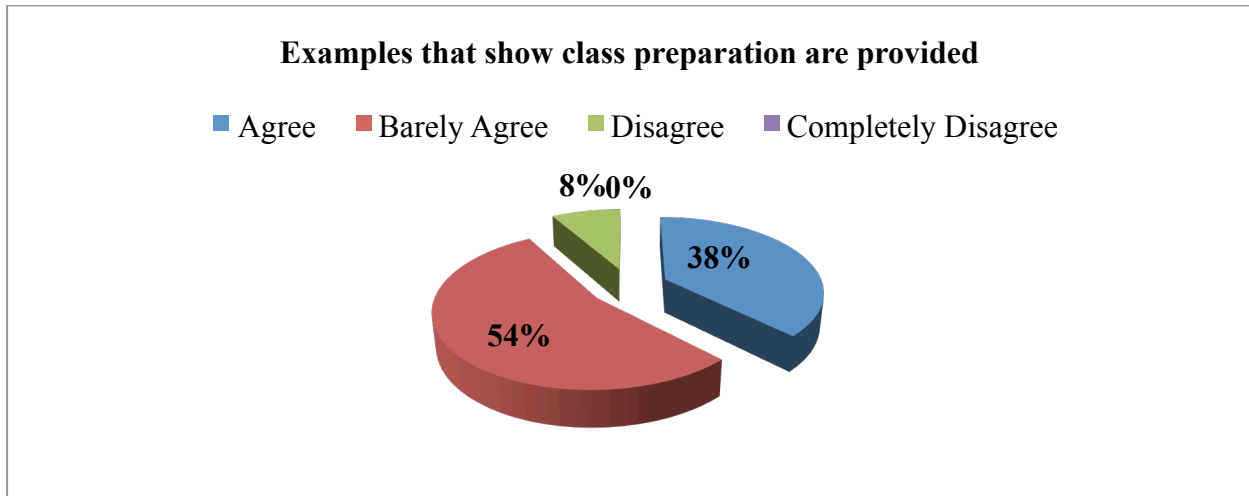


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 10. Students are actively involved in deciding what issues to discuss. | 6 hours | 8 hours | 8 hours | 2 Hours |

In reference to the usage of humor in the class environment, the result is not bad at all. Fifty percent corresponds to the positive use of humor in the class, which is always good. 37 percent, however, correspond to the very good use of humor in the classes, which is very good. Only a small 3% for the “disagree” depicts that humor is definitely not one of the causes that affect the students composition in English.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 XI

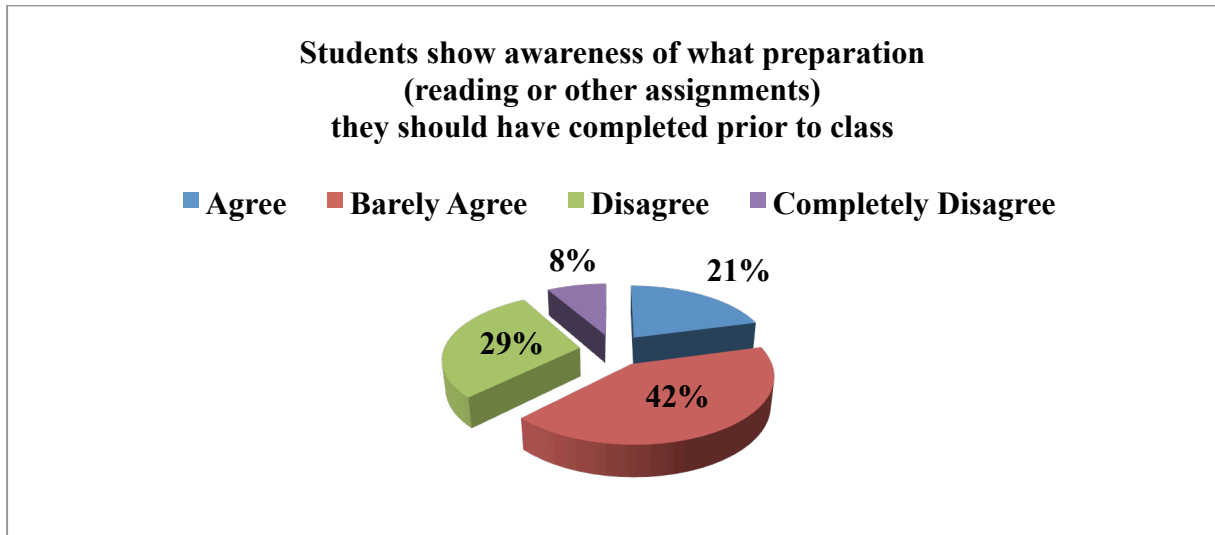


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 11. Examples that show class preparation are provided. | 9 hours | 13 hours | 2 hours | - |

In this graphic is seen the percentages in relation to examples provided that show class preparation. Only a small 8% is corresponding to the “disagree” percentage, whereas 38% goes for the “agree” classification. However, 54% corresponds to the “barely agree” classification. This means that even when examples that show class preparation are shown, the kind of preparation could be better demonstrated to the class or improved.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 XII

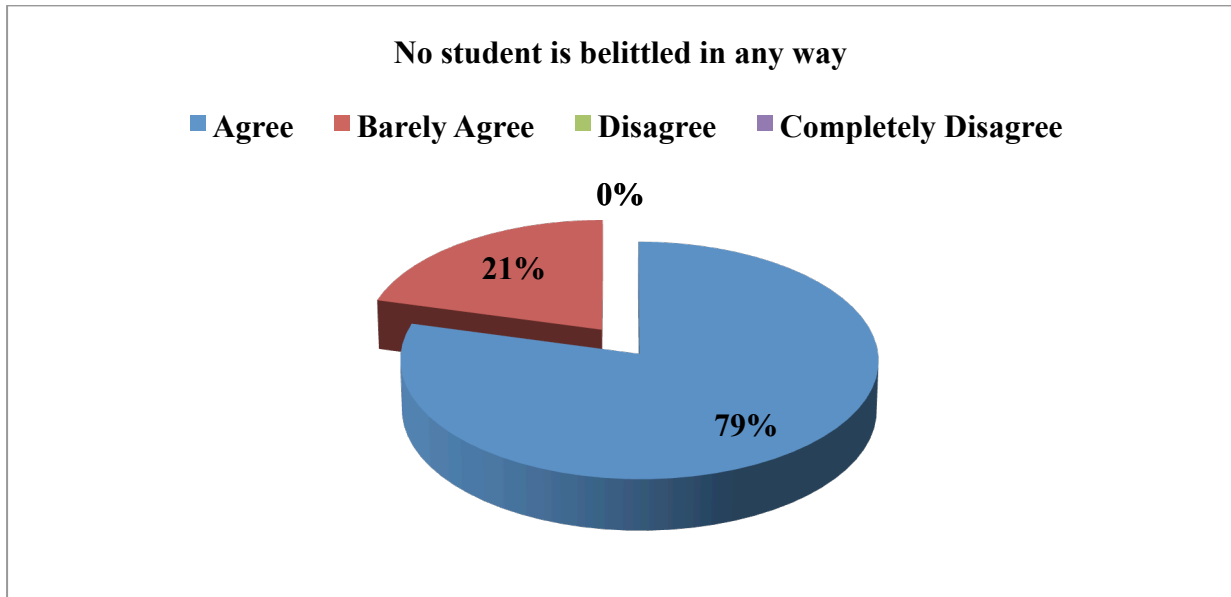


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 12. Students show awareness of what preparation (reading or other assignments) they should have completed prior to class. | 5 hours | 10 hours | 7 hours | 2 Hours |

The current graphic demonstrate the percentages related to the students showing awareness of their preparation prior to classes. A small percentage, 8%, corresponds to the students not making any preparations before classes. 21% goes for the students who appropriately prepare before class. However 29% of the students do not prepare for classes appropriately enough and the ones doing it barely do it. This means that the 42% of the students who prepare themselves for the class should improve and join the 21% of the ones who do it efficiently. Students' responsibility might be one factor crippling their own progression in their English writing.

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

Figure 4.2.3 XIII

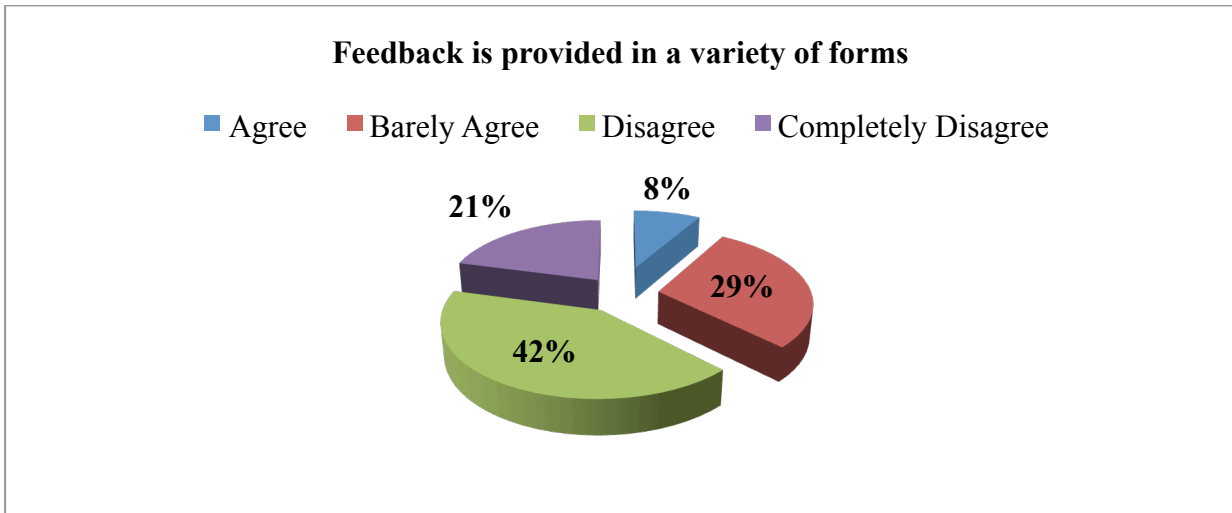


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 13. No student is belittled in any way. | 19 hours | 5 hours | - | - |

As shown in the graphic, a big 79% corresponds to the “agree” percentages related to the students belittling in the classes. 21% corresponds to the “barely agree” section and therefore, 0% goes for the belittling of the students in the class. Therefore, the students are treated properly in the classes and this is not an option to consider regarding the factors that might affect the students’ English composition.

Part II -FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XIV

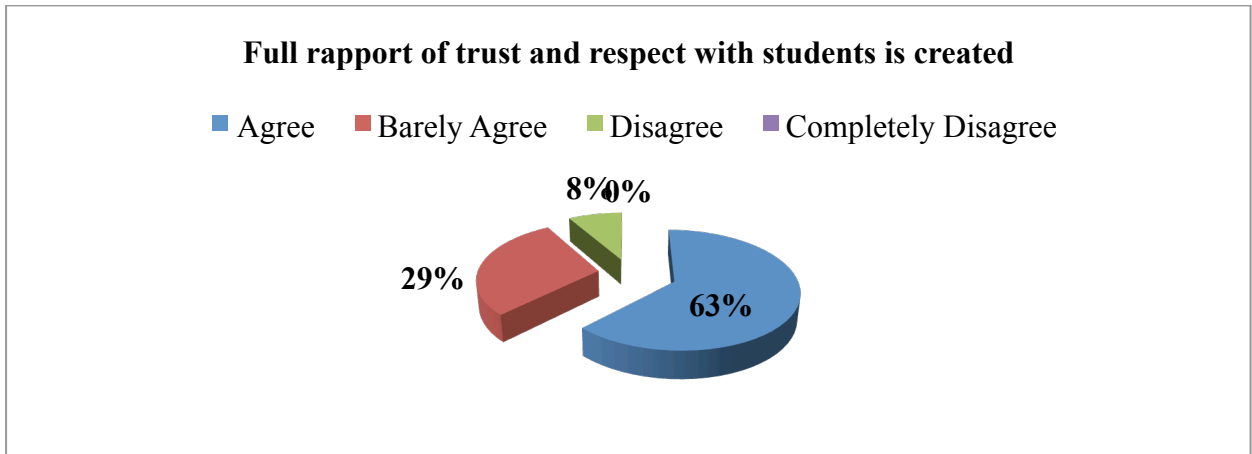


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Feedback is provided in a variety of forms. | 2 hours | 7 hours | 10 hours | 5 Hours |

As shown in the graphic, a 42% corresponds to category of “disagree” that is to say that the feedback is not provided in a variety of forms, whereas an 8% belongs to the section of “agree” that suggest the teachers should implement new ways to give feedback to their students.

Part II-FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XV

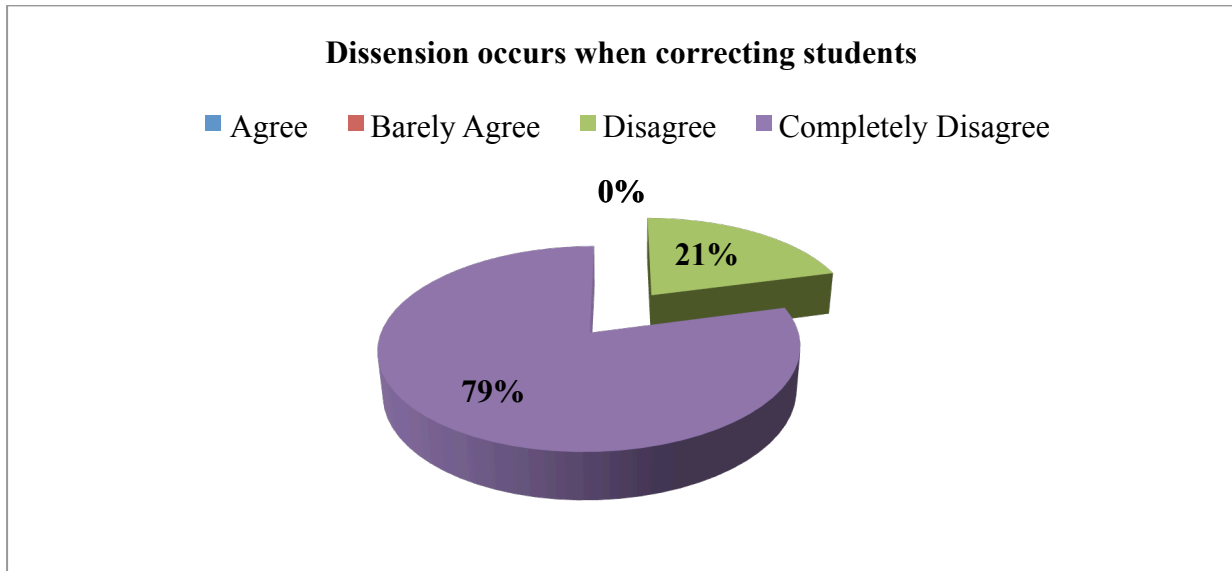


| Item | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|----------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 2. Full rapport of trust and respect with students is created. | 15 hours | 7 hours | 2 hours | - |

Clearly, in this graphic it is indicated the level of agreement or disagreement on how a relationship of trust and respect was created by the teachers with respect to their students along the course. The 63% fit into the “agree” category that suggests the atmosphere respect to the aspects mentioned before is acceptable and only an 8% goes for the “disagree” section which leads to the conclusion that the environment in the classrooms was satisfactory.

Part II-FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XVI

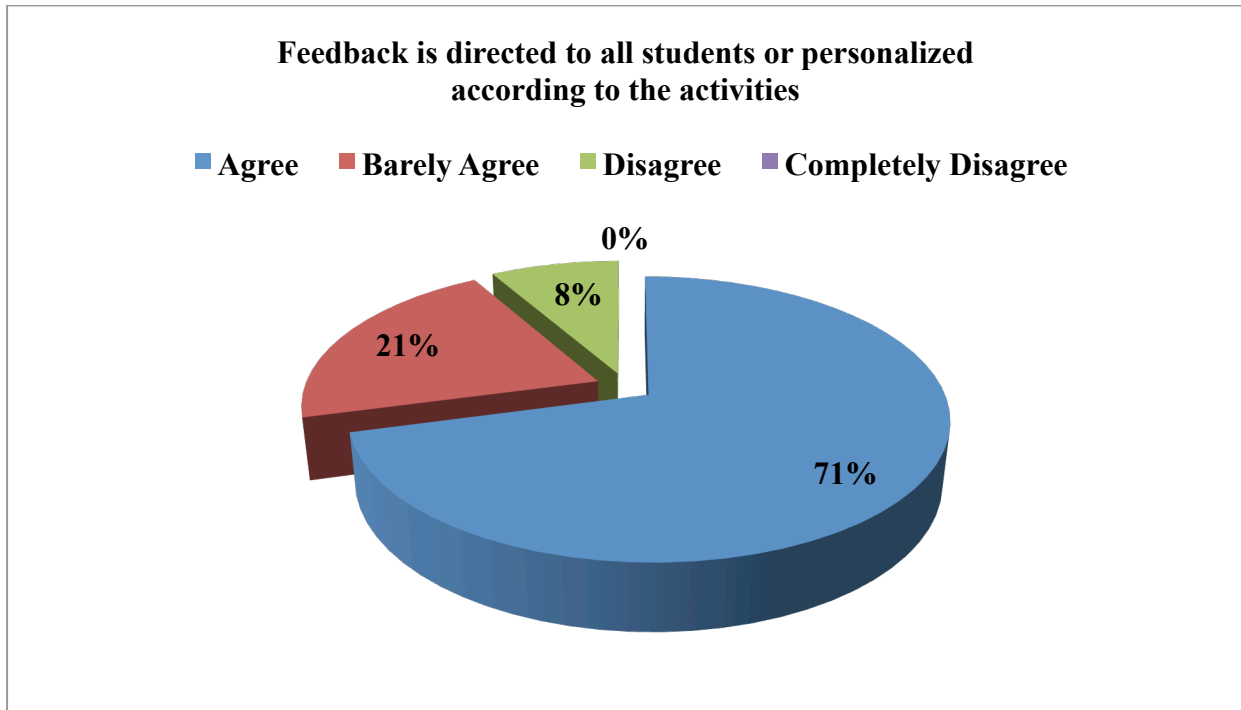


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 3. Dissension occurs when correcting students. | - | - | 5 hours | 19 Hours |

When it comes to correcting students, dissension was rarely present as advised in the graphic. The 79% goes for “completely disagree” part that indicates how frequent or present dissension occurred during the feedback. It is seen that only 21% of the times students and teachers disagreed when errors appeared.

Part II -FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XVII

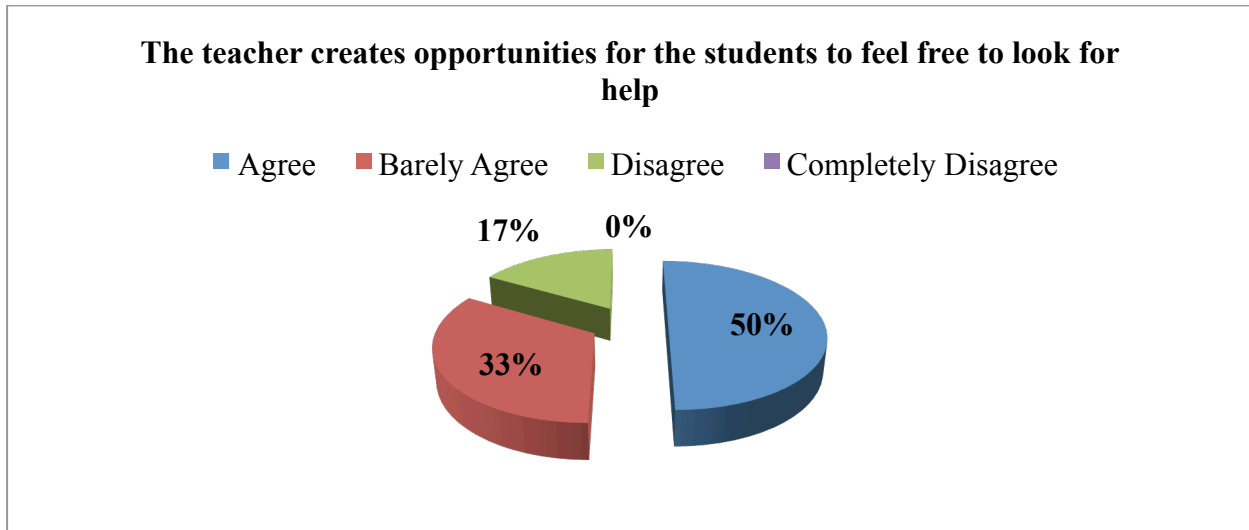


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 4. Feedback is directed to all students or personalized according to the activities. | 17 hours | 5 hours | 2 hours | - |

During the classtime along the course, the feedback provided was mostly addressed to students as required by the activities. The 71% certainly shows how this governs over an 8% that fit into the “disagree” category which suggests the proportion of times the feedback was misdirected taking into account the nature of the activities.

Part II -FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XVIII

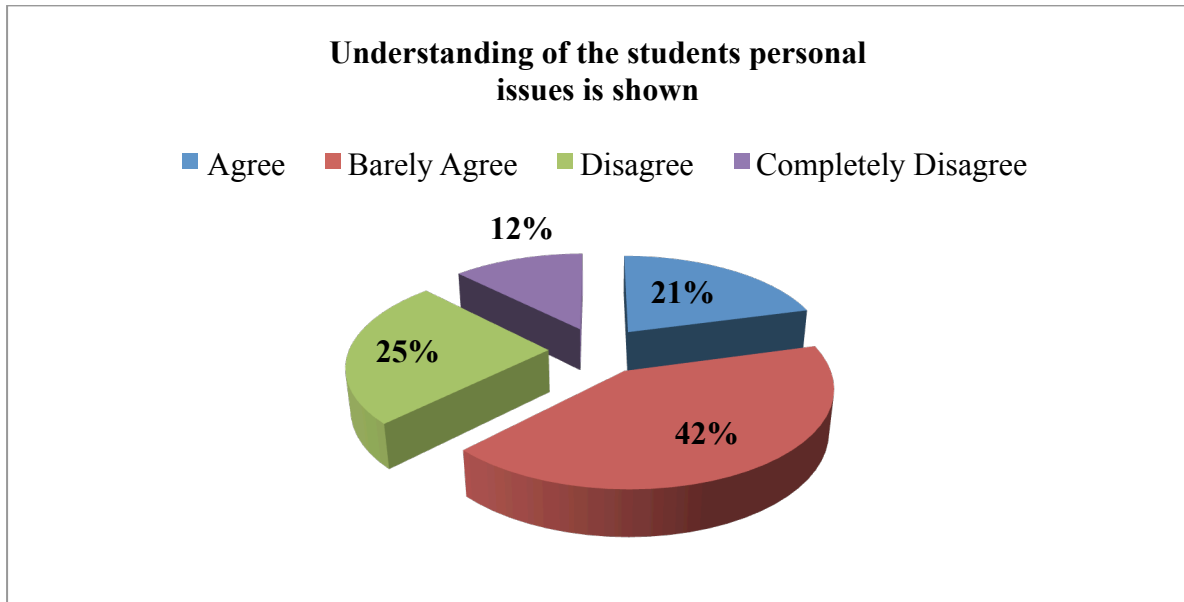


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|----------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 5. The teacher creates opportunities for the students to feel free to look for help. | 12 hours | 8 hours | 4 hours | - |

In this graphic, it is depicted how frequent the teachers give students the chance to look for help. Certainly, the teachers created opportunities for them to feel free to look for help as proposed in the graphic. The blue section of the graphic corresponds to the 50% that, at the same time, fits into the “agree” part. The red section belongs to the “barely agree” category, whereas the green section is the “disagree” part. Therefore, it is evident that the teachers created the opportunities for their students to ask them for help when it was required.

Part II-FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XIX

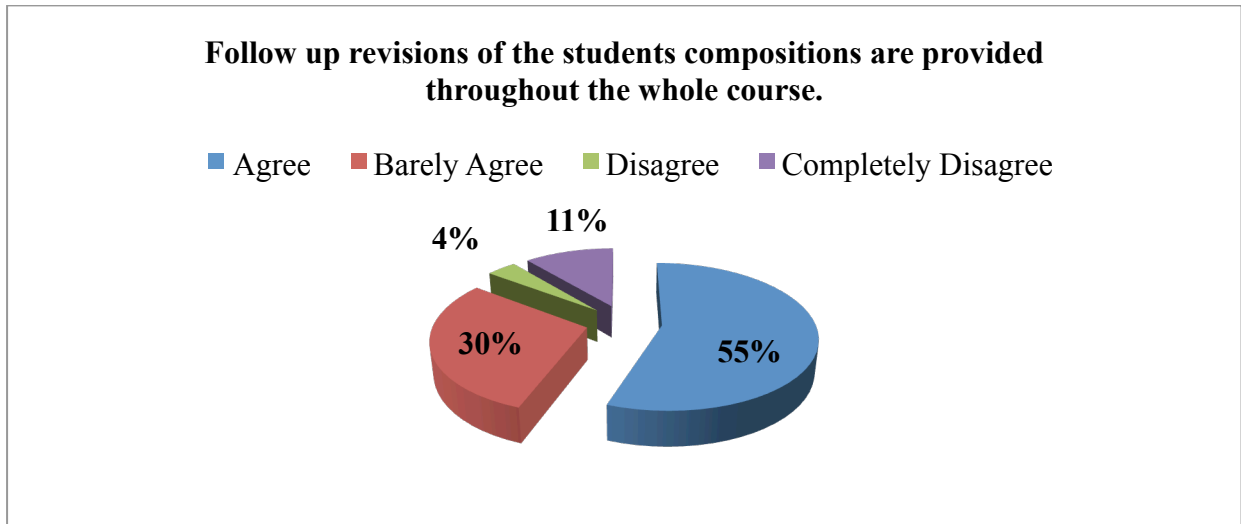


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 6. Understanding of the students personal issues is shown. | 5 hours | 10 hours | 6 hours | 3 hours |

The graphic above indicates whether students’ personal issues were understood whenever it was required. A red section suggests a 42% of agreement with the stamen versus a purple section that indicates a 12% of complete disagreement with it. Definitely, whenever students faced personal issues and let the teachers know about it, most of the times there was a level of understanding from the teachers.

Part II-FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XX

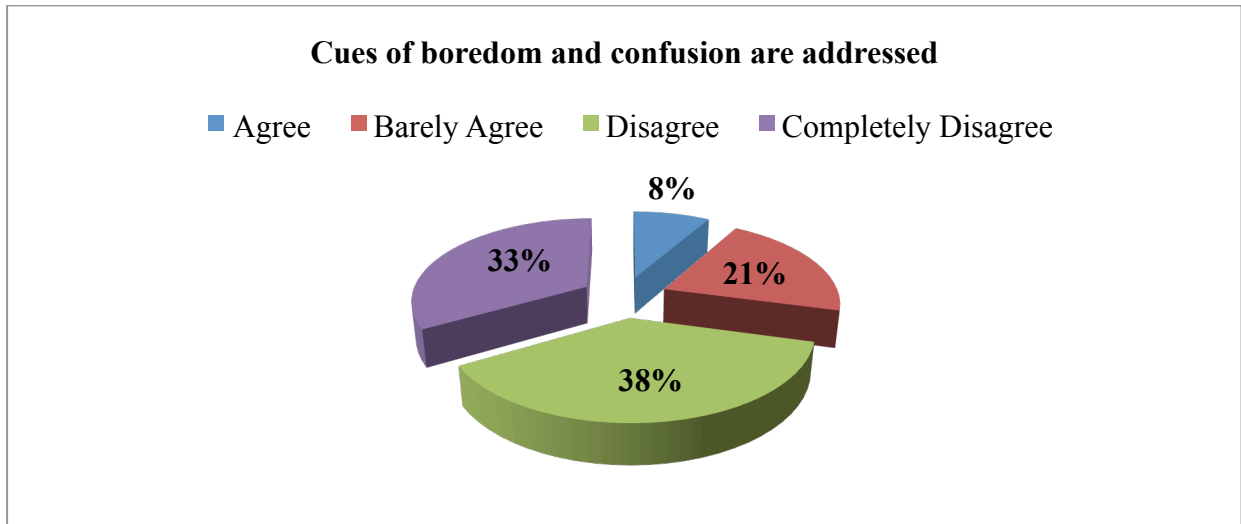


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|----------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 7. Follow up revisions of the students compositions are provided throughout the whole course. | 15 hours | 8 hours | 1 hours | - |

In this graphic, the 55% advises that students’ compositions were constantly revised through the course but a 4% proposes that the follow up feedback is not actually happening. Even though a total of 85% corresponds to the teachers following up their students’ progress, this does not mean it could not improve. Though only 4 percent relates to disagreement, 11% is a high number that corresponds to the “completely disagree” classification and should be taken into account.

Part II -FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XXI

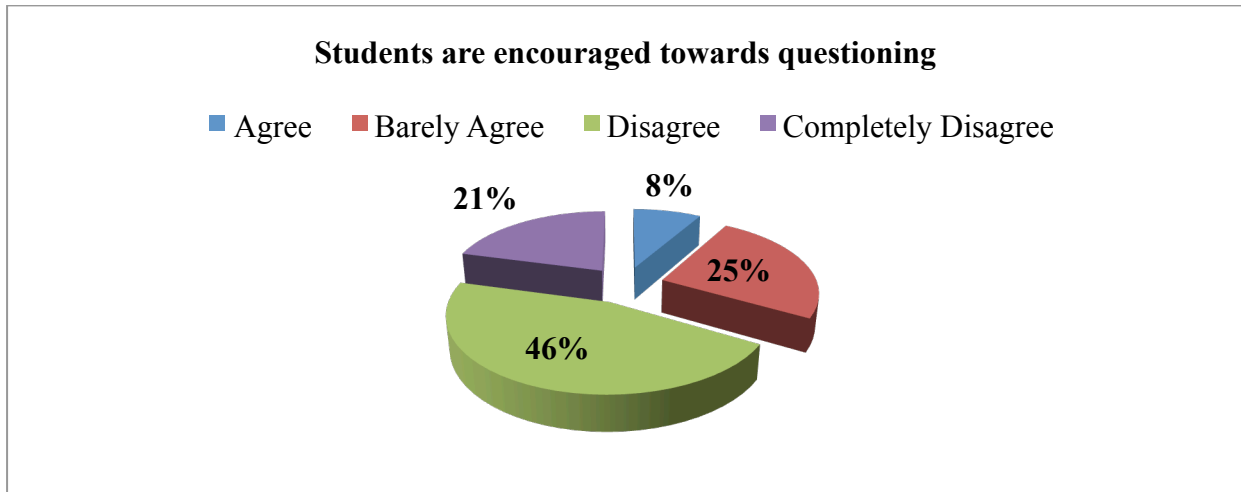


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 8. Cues of boredom and confusion are addressed. | 2 hours | 5 hours | 9 hours | 8 Hours |

Seen in the current graphic, 29% corresponds to “agree and barely agree” classifications and is quite a low percentage for the teachers to address. Ideally, the composition class should be a space for the students to open their minds to their ideas and creative writing should occur, and not for a total of 71% corresponding to the “disagree and completely disagree” classifications. Certainly, this issue should be taken into account as a possible affecting factor in the students composition in English.

Part II -FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XXII

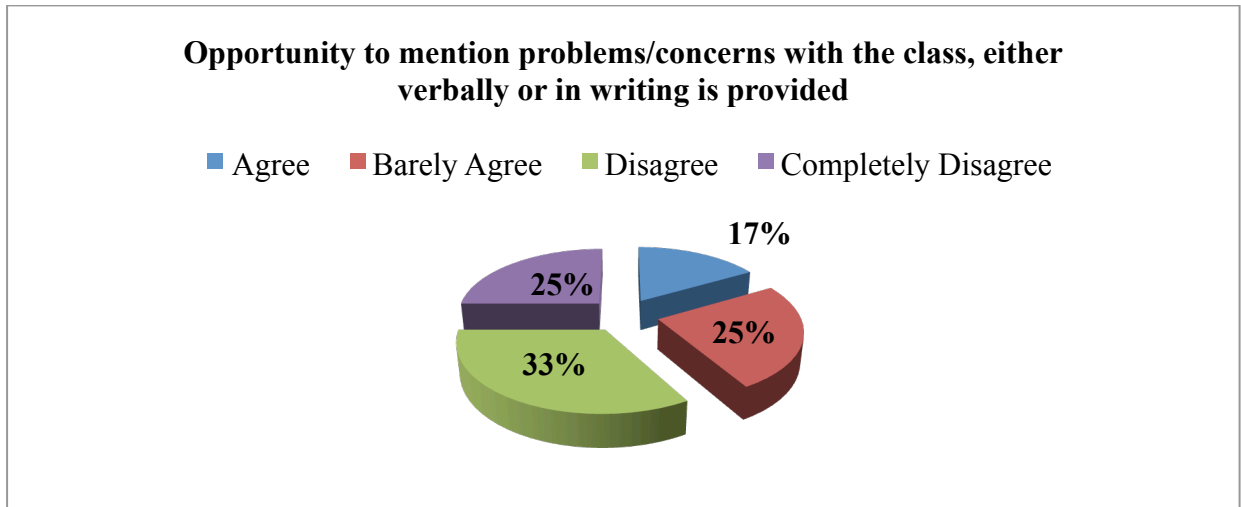


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 9. Students are encouraged towards questioning. | 2 hours | 6 hours | 11 hours | 5 Hours |

As the graphic shows, a significant 21% corresponding to the complete disagreement is significant in the matter of making the students comfortable in the class environment and suitable for adequate learning. Other 46% is quite a high percentage for the “disagreement” classification. Therefore, eliciting knowledge, answers, from the students should ideally make the class participative and dynamic, making the students perform better in their attention spans; thus, this graphic shows how this issue is lacking and that it certainly should be addressed and taken into account as a possible factor hindering students composition in English.

Part II -FEEDBACK-

Figure 4.2.3 XXIII

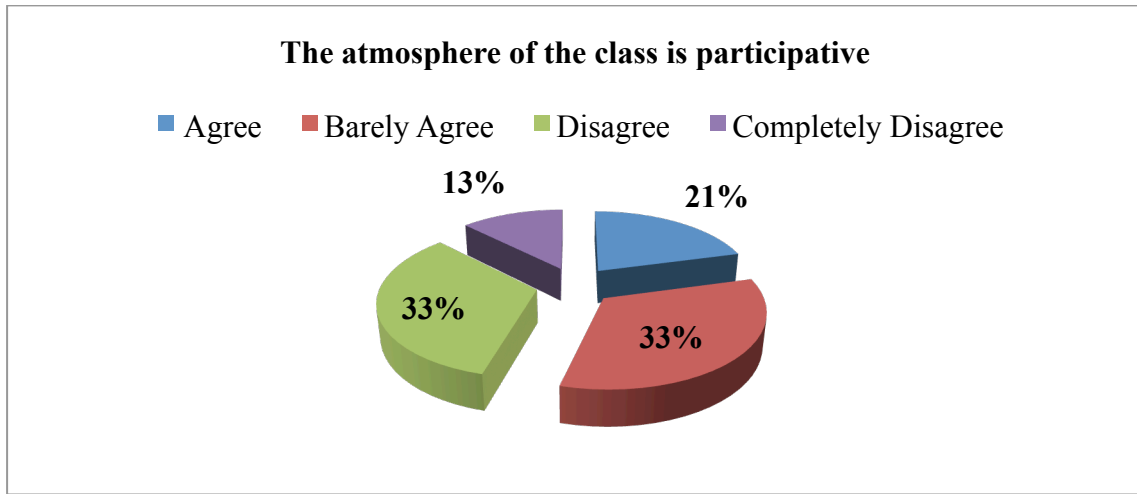


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 10. Opportunity to mention problems/concerns with the class, either verbally or in writing is provided. | 4 hours | 6 hours | 8 hours | 6 Hours |

Depicted here, the opportunities to mention personal issues or concerns with the class are addressed. High numbers such as: 25% corresponding to the complete disagree and 33% for the disagreement are rather significant. This means the students cannot express whatever might be affecting their performance in the class, and therefore, chances are they would keep being unsuccessful in their writings until unsolved issues are addressed. This also should be taken into account when looking for possible causes of hindrances in the students' English compositions.

Part III -MOTIVATION-

Figure 4.2.3 XXIV

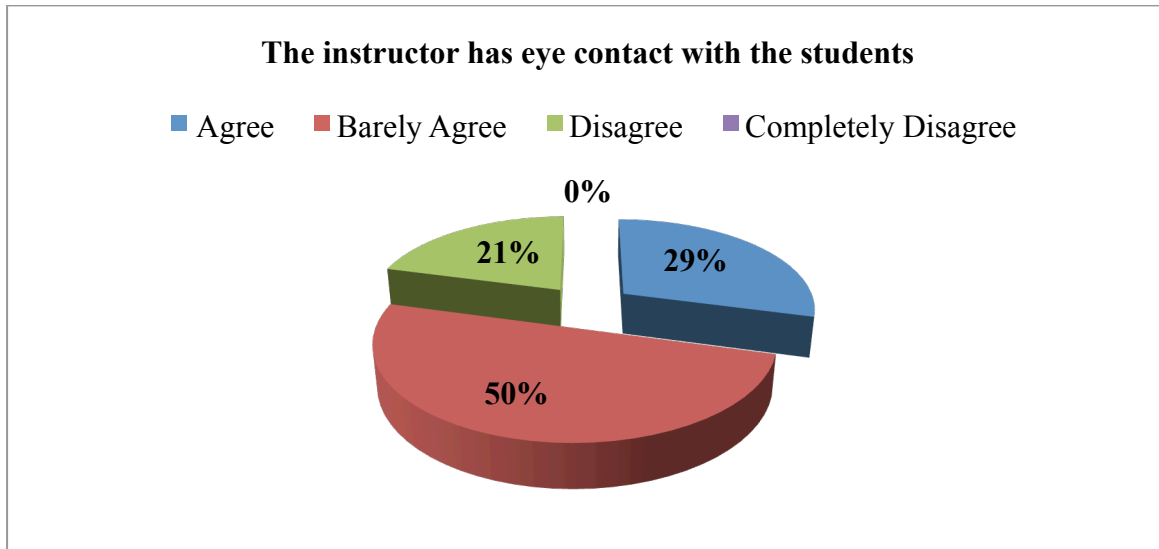


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The atmosphere of the class is participative. | 5 hours | 8 hours | 8 hours | 3 hours |

In the current graphic, the percentages related to the participative atmosphere in the class are depicted. The majority is split in two 33% of “disagree” and “agree” classifications. In spite of the 21% corresponding the “agree” classification, a small but significant 13% goes for the “completely disagree” classification. Definitely, the atmosphere of the class should become more participative in order for that 46% that make up the disagree and completely disagree classifications join the agree percentage. This must be taken into account when looking for factors that may influence the students learning in the classroom.

Part III -MOTIVATION-

Figure 4.2.3 XXV

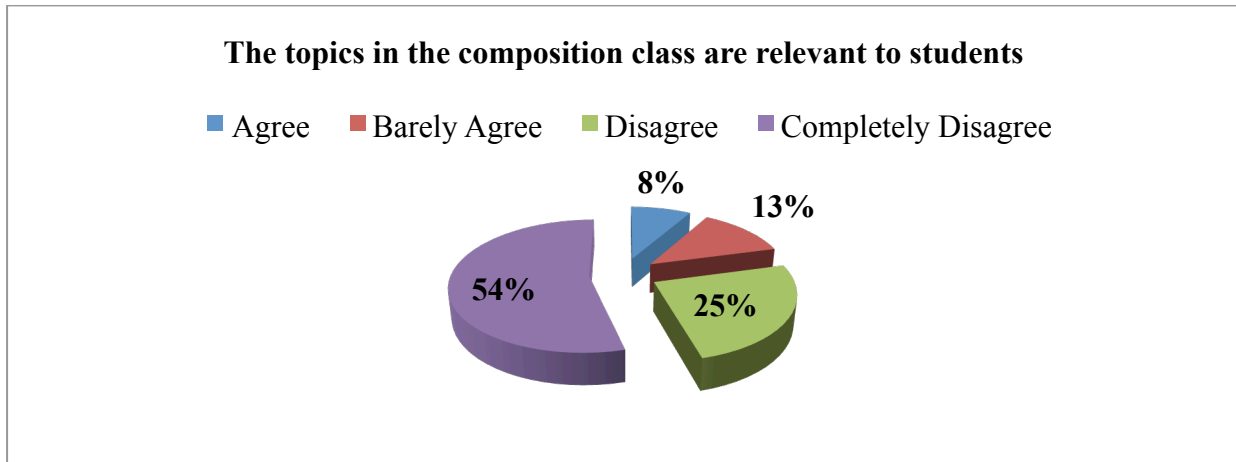


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 2. The instructor has eye contact with the students. | 7 hours | 12 hours | 5 hours | - |

The graphic here represents the percentages for the eye contact with the students. Though there are no “completely disagree”, there are 21% corresponding to the “disagree” classification. However, 29% goes for the “agree”, plus the 50% corresponding to the “barely disagree” make up a whole of 79% for the teachers making eye contact. The 21% should be reduced, however. This means that the teachers should take this into account and work on their eye contact with the students.

Part III -MOTIVATION-

Figure 4.2.3 XXVI

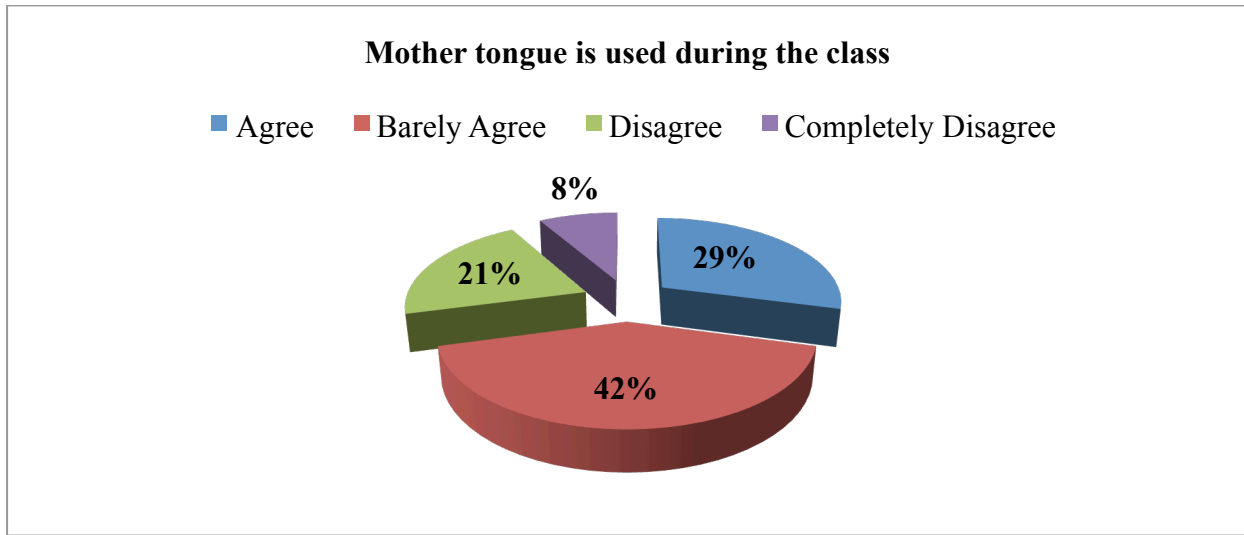


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 2. The topic in the composition class are relevant to students. | 2 hours | 3 hours | 6 hours | 13 Hours |

As the graphic shows, 79% corresponds to the “disagree” classification in the percentages. Seriously, this should be taken into account when looking for factors that affect students’ English composition. Clearly, there is dissatisfaction related to the fact that students are told what to write rather than letting them make a choice. This might seriously discourage students and therefore make them loose interest and learning from the composition class. Ideally, it should be all about creativeness and creative writing instead of something from which students complain. Students should never feel that their own opinions and perspectives on issues are not being taken into account by making them forfeit their own topics.

Part IV -MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE-

Figure 4.2.3 XXVII

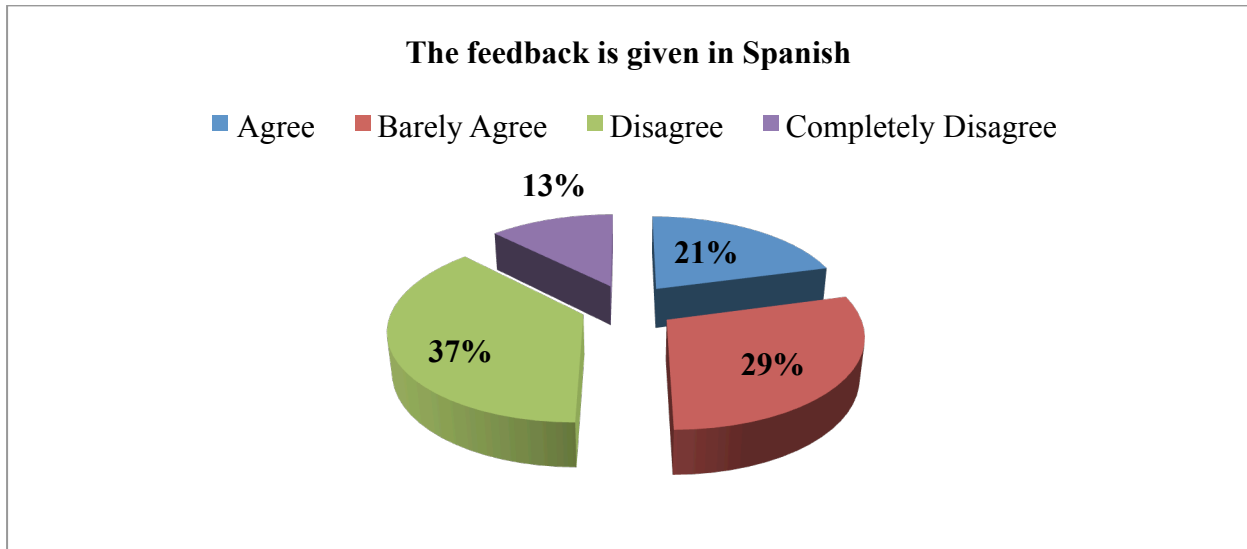


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Mother tongue is used during the class. | 7 hours | 10 hours | 5 hours | 2 Hours |

When it comes to the usage of mother tongue during the class, a high number, 29%, corresponds to the “agree” classification, and also a 42% for the “barely agree”, which means that teachers do not use Spanish mainly but there is some usage of it and it is significant. This, too, should be taken care of and also into account when looking for factors that might cripple the students’ English composition skills.

Part IV -MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE-

Figure 4.2.3 XXVIII

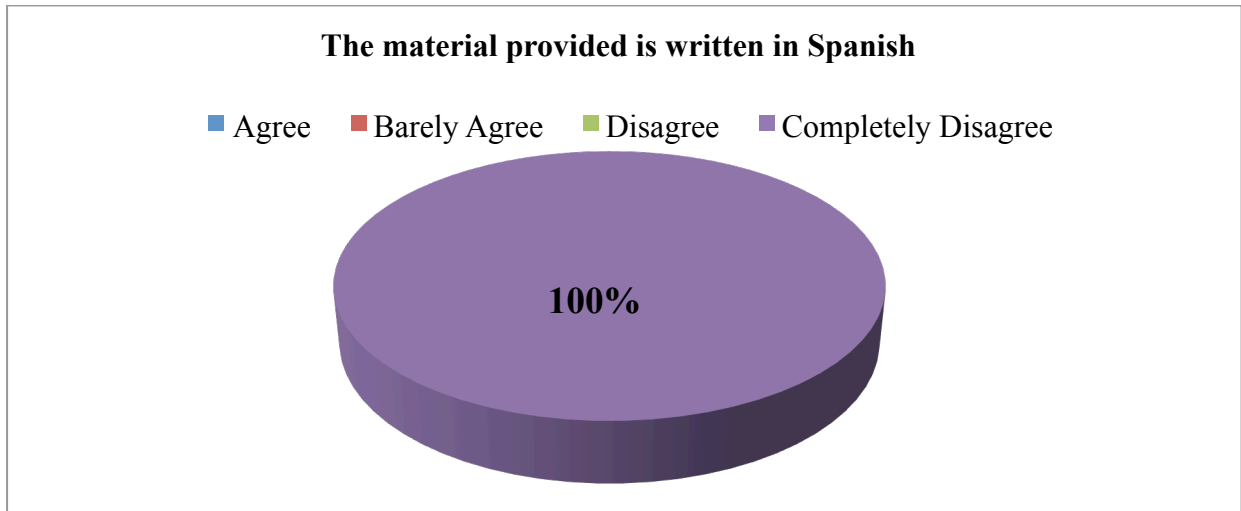


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--------------------------------------|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 2. The feedback is given in Spanish. | 5 hours | 7 hours | 9 hours | 3 Hours |

As depicted in the graphic, there are also high numbers when it comes to teachers giving feedback in Spanish in the composition classes. As a whole, the numbers are split: 50% for the “agree” section and 50% for the “disagree”. Definitely, this too, should be taken into account when looking for factors that cripple not only the students’ English composition, but also their English proficiency, listening, out of the classroom issues and their proficiency as a whole.

Part IV -MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE-

Figure 4.2.3 XXIX

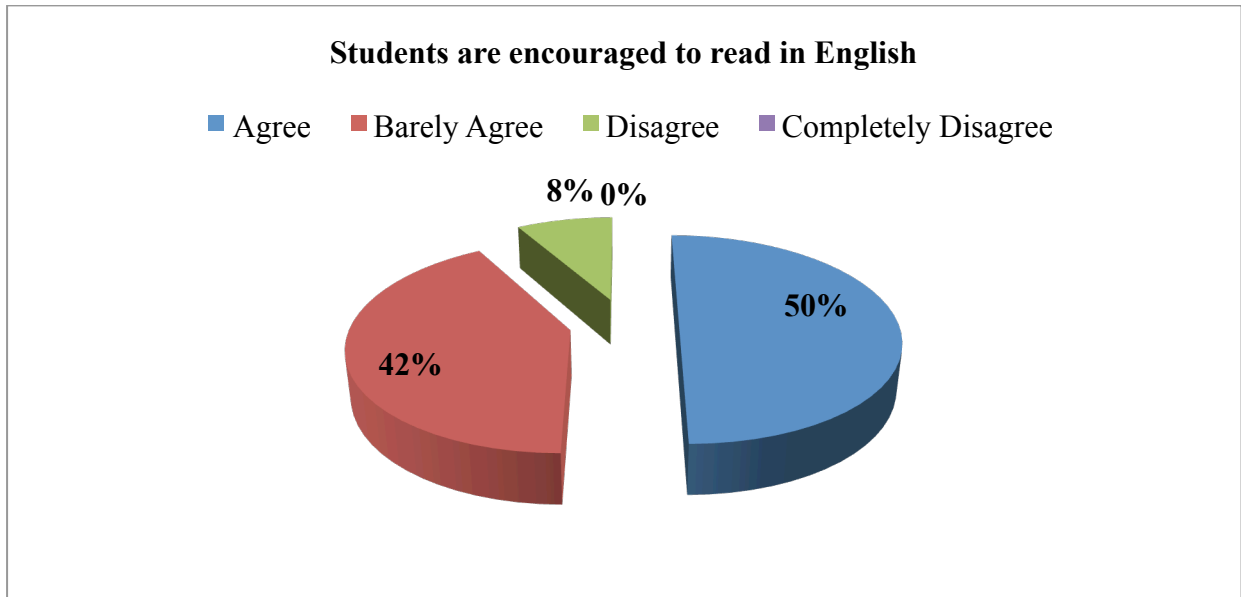


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|---------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 3. The material provided is written in Spanish. | - | - | - | 24 Hours |

Quite clearly depicted in the graphic, this aspect should be ruled out when it comes to the search for the factors that obstruct students' English composition. Definitely, teachers are providing their information for the composition classes completely in English.

Part IV -MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE-

Figure 4.2.3 XXX

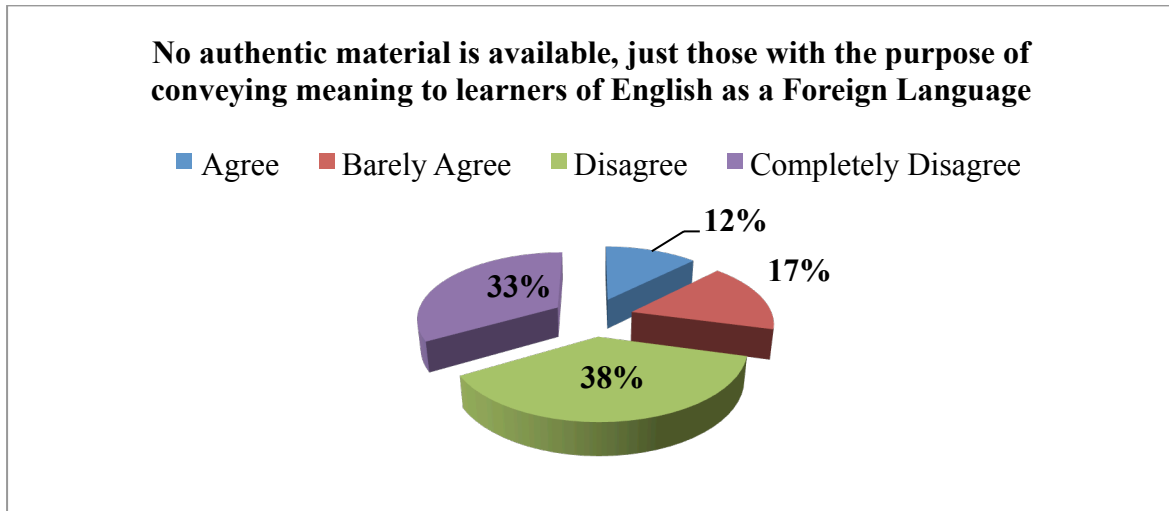


| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|--|----------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 4. Students are encouraged to read in English. | 12 hours | 10 hours | 2 hours | - |

As the graphic suggests, a 50% shows that teachers motivate their students to read in English in order to improve their compositions, while only an 8% advises that students do not receive any kind of motivation to the English reading.

Part IV -MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE-

Figure 4.2.3 XXXI



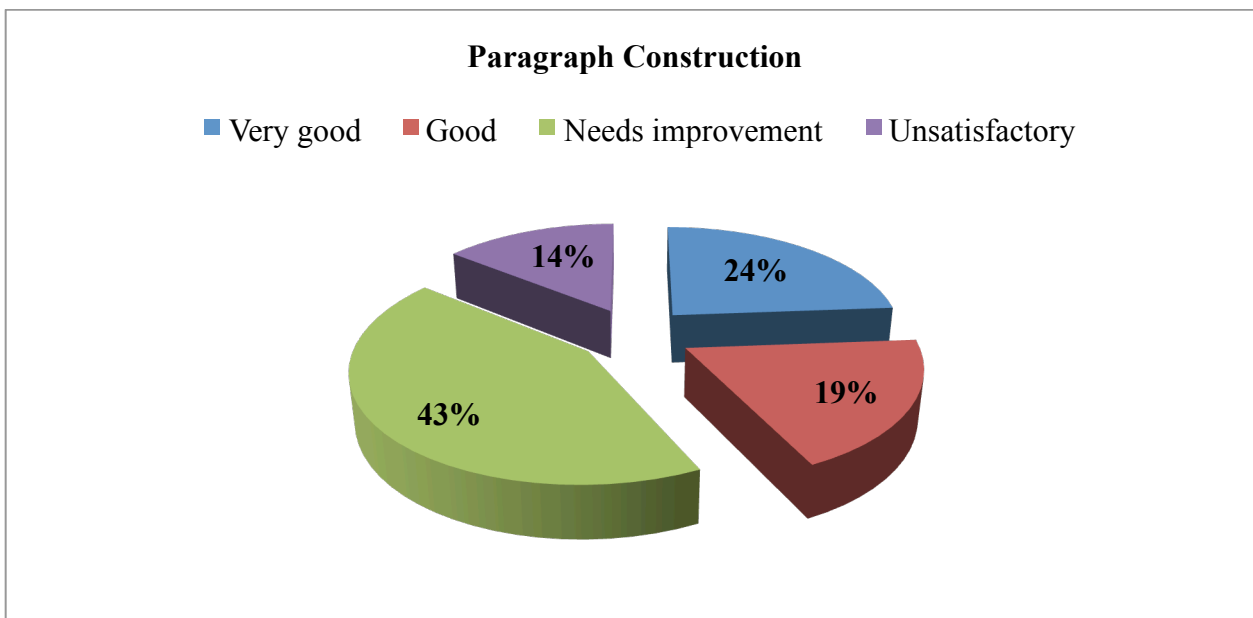
| Items | 1 Agree | 2 Barely Agree | 3 Disagree | 4 Completely Disagree |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 5. No authentic material is available, just those with the purpose of conveying meaning to learners of English as a Foreign Language. | 3 hours | 4 hours | 9 hours | 8 hours |

The graphic shows that the material provided in the classes was authentic and not of the sort of learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, this material served the purpose of writing as expected as the 38% in the graphic describes. So students were given a material with they felt comfortable with and just a few times they were provided with material that did not meet the expectations concerning to the objectives of the class as suggested by the 12% above.

4.2.4 Analysis of Students' compositions

Lastly, below are found the graphics that represent the findings of the instrument used to analyze the students' English compositions. The items in the graphics are segmented in five: Paragraph Construction, Amount of Information, Quality of Information, Mechanics and Mother Tongue Interference.

Figure 4.2.4 I



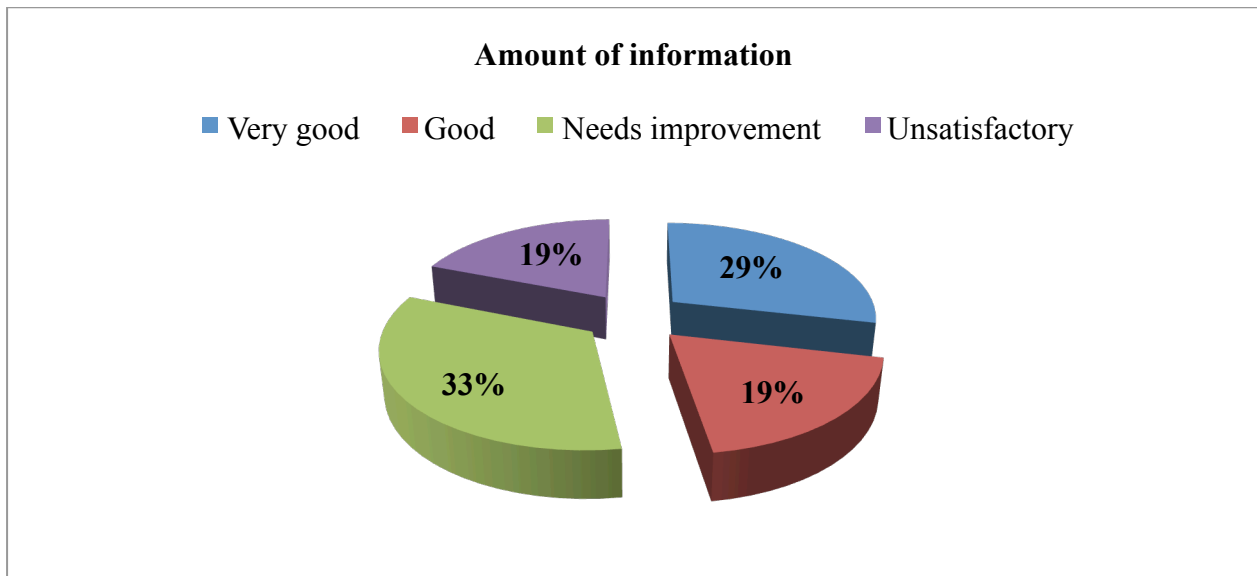
| Category | Very good 4 | Good 3 | Needs improvement 2 | Unsatisfactory 1 |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Paragraph Construction | 5 Students | 4 Students | 9 Students | 3 Students |

As the graphic clearly displays, in the “paragraph construction” category, the 43% of all the analyzed compositions corresponds to criteria number 2, which is named “Needs improvement,” versus a 14% depicted as “very good.” This reveals that, according to the analysis, this amount of compositions showed no bigger problems at introducing their ideas and supporting them with

clear details. However, as the percentages denote above, the majority of compositions still faces difficulties when it comes to providing introductory sentences or well developed details and even solid concluding sentences.

This certainly means that teachers should be aware of the deficiencies they will face in future compositions courses, in order to take serious actions concerning not only the organization and writing a well written topic sentence, but also the supporting details that a well written paragraph should have. By doing so, this could improve the mental processes and therefore a better written product is to be expected.

Figure 4.2.4 II

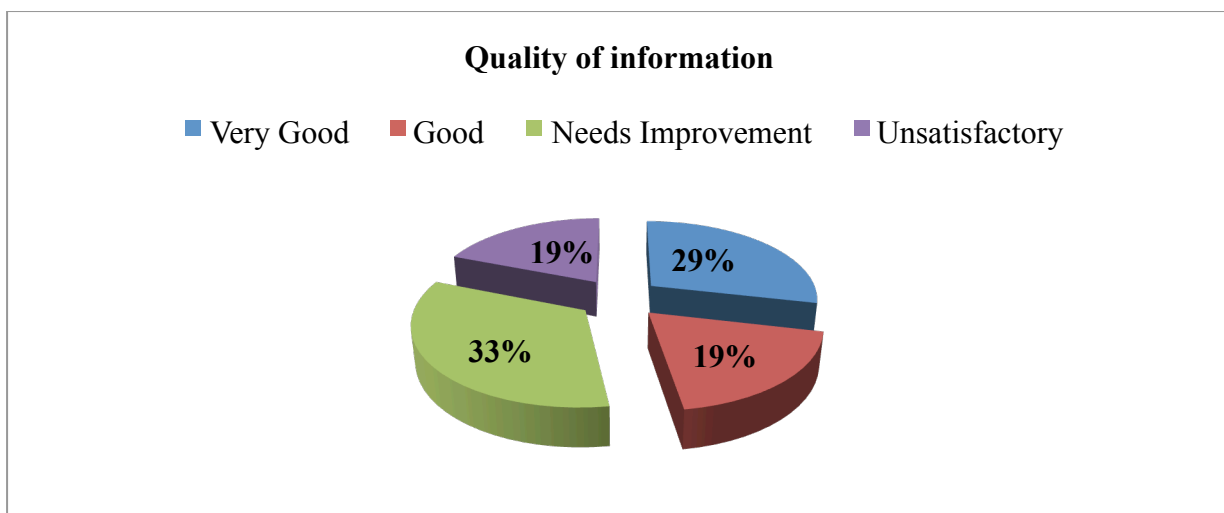


| Category | Very good | Good | Needs improvement | Unsatisfactory |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Amount of Information | 6 Students | 4 Students | 7 Students | 4 Students |

Definitely, as the graphic suggests, the amount of information provided by the students of Composition I was not sufficient to achieve what was expected. The 33% goes for the “Needs improvement” criteria. That is to say that as well developed and well supported sentences, students still have to deal with the information they put on their papers, in other words, they have to be more cautious when picking up the information they want to transmit in their compositions for it has to complement their main topics not only in quantity but also in the quality as their composition grow richer and easier to understand .On the contrary, a 29% of all the compositions demonstrated a “very good” supporting information as they were analyzed.

As the results come into discussion, it is necessary to do something respecting to those students that still have to deal with problems when selecting and thinking of the information they write on their papers, reinforcing and reviewing their written background and paying more attention to their deficiencies concerning to the quantity and quality of information and also providing topics of relevance for students could help to prevent these kind of problems.

Figure 4.2.4 III



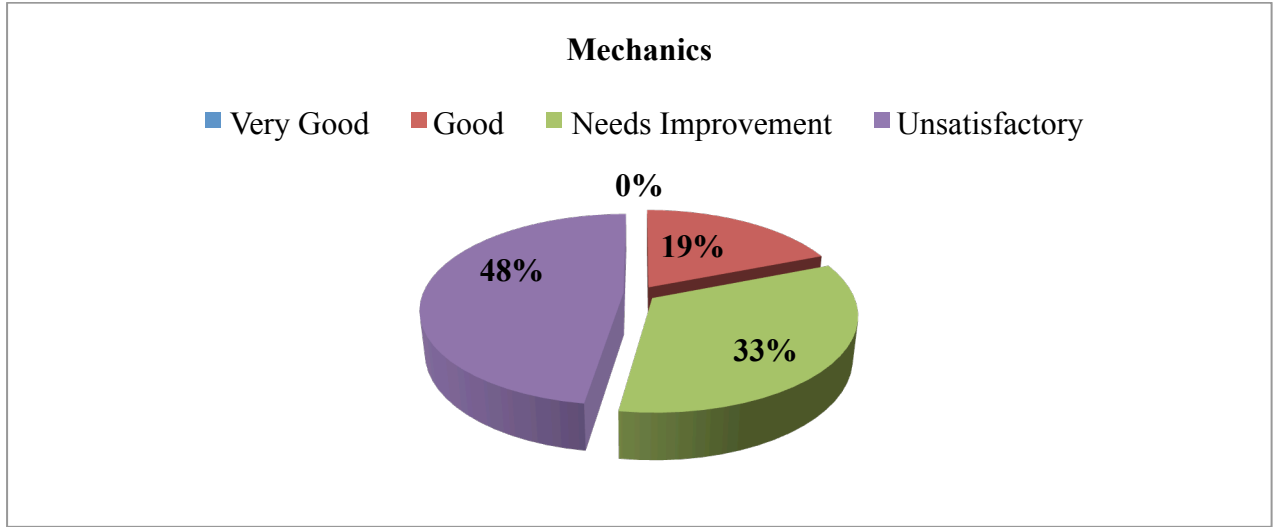
| Category | Very Good 4 | Good 3 | Needs Improvement 2 | Unsatisfactory 1 |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Quality of information | 6 Students | 4 Students | 7 Students | 4 Students |

Concerning the amount of information, this graphic depicts clearly that the percentages are distributed in a very fair manner: almost equally for the four categories involved. To start with, a 29 % of the students fall into the “very good” category. This means that not even the half of the students, slightly over a quarter, are doing things better than required. The following is the “good” category, which only has a very small 19 %. What this is saying is, that not even a quarter of the students are doing things properly. Needing improvement, there is a big 33% of the students. And another 19% of the students are completely unsatisfactory.

Meaning that the quality of the information, of what students are actually communicating, is that 52% of the students are not doing things well. When half of the students have not got good quality of information in their writings, teachers of composition to come should be aware that the quality of information in their students’ writings should be seriously taken into account. This means that teachers should struggle to make their students work harder in their students’ relevance of topics, importance of outline organization, the creation of supporting ideas of significance, etc.

In other words, what a teacher must expect from their students is a very coherent, cohesive, well structured piece of writing that has a strong and valid argument of great relevance. Future teachers should take this into account before starting with their courses.

Figure 4.2.4 IV



| Category | Very Good 4 | Good 3 | Needs Improvement 2 | Unsatisfactory 1 |
|-----------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Mechanics | - Students | 4 Students | 7 Students | 10 Students |

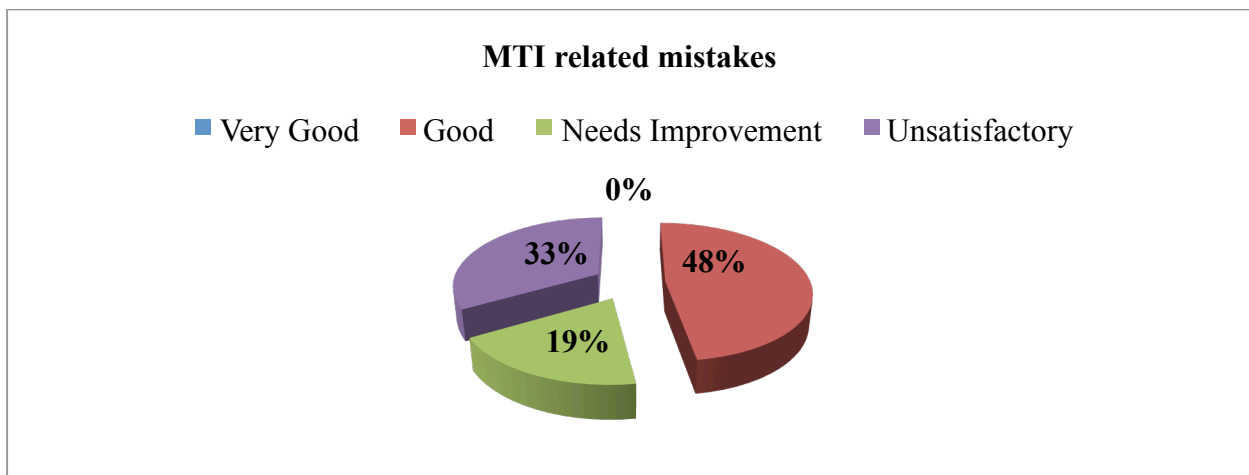
The graphic under the title “mechanics” deals with aspects of writing as punctuation, grammar and spelling. Even though it is not as deep as the content relevance and the quality of the supporting sentences and paragraphs, the mechanics of writing are still very important in English composition.

There are no students in the category of very good; this is not a good sign. 19% of the students, less than a quarter, are the only and small percentage related to the students who do a good job in their writing mechanics. A third part of them all falls into the “Needs improvement” classification. When a third part of the students need improvement and less than a quarter are good, definitely, the mechanics of writing should be reviewed and practiced in class. Effort,

great effort, should be taken when 48% percent, half of the students, are writing with unsatisfactory mechanics.

Definitely, going back to basics is a very good thing to do with the students of composition that have problems with their grammar, spelling and punctuation in English. Probably, these aspects are not given the enough effort in their English subjects and hence, their deficiency in the basic mechanics of writing. Before starting with the paragraph structures, these aspects should be reinforced with great effort.

Figure 4.2.4 V



| Category | Very Good 4 | Good 3 | Needs Improvement 2 | Unsatisfactory 1 |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| MTI related mistakes | - Students | 10 Students | 4 Students | 7 Students |

The graphic representing the percentages related to the Mother Tongue Interference shows how the students work towards their proficiency in English; the more students are acquainted with the culture and the interaction in English, the more likely they will have less problems of Mother

Tongue Interference. In the other hand, the more students are focusing only in the learning part of the English language, even though they possess plenty of knowledge related to the language per se, the less communication skills they will possess and their English is very likely to become an English version of their Spanish.

0% goes to the “very good” classification, which is not so alarming, taking into account that the course is carried out in a country in which there is no English education available to the common university student. People in El Salvador, especially the ones who enter the only public university, do not go through a lot of interaction with people of English speaking countries, and this is a disadvantage that should be considered. However, almost the half of them, 48%, falls into the “good” area. This is very good news. At least, they are doing the best to keep up to the standards and go beyond. It is a shame, however, that a third part of the whole sample is unsatisfactory. This means, that their English reflects not only the Spanish, their mother language, but their Salvadoran version of it. Some students even literally translate sayings and popular words of El Salvador. Effort to introduce students to the culture of English speaking countries should be done. Also, the proper use of audiovisual materials could be used in order for the students to get a closer approach to acquisition of the target language as well as to the culture of the countries of English speaking countries. To interiorize the language is something that relates more to acquisition than to learning. And this could be reached only through an instruction focused on the interaction and the use of the language in the classroom and outside the classroom.

To sum up, it is strongly recommended to spend great efforts in the implementation of more interaction in the English subjects throughout the whole major. Likewise, to enhance the

use of authentic material in the composition classes is strongly recommended. The use of the internet is not limited to the complex of the university. The use of tools such as youtube, facebook, and other internet sites could be highly effective, not only because it is something the students already now and master quite well, but because they can receive the audiovisual input of authentic origin that can make them go closer and closer to English language acquisition and not only to sheer learning.

4.2.5 General Representation of the Findings Per Instrument

In order to clarify and to attain concrete but concise general understanding of the findings, it is necessary to represent what the graphics contain in a more visual and general way. Therefore, as a manner of better depiction, the following charts are such general representation of the total findings per instruments. It is necessary for a clearer understanding to see percentages put together in a chart to simplify the findings in a practical and easier way, more visually.

4.2.5. I Chart of the Teachers' Questionnaires

The following chart is the representation of the data found in the questionnaire passed to the teachers. This chart contains ten items representing the ten questions passed to the teachers. Each question was per se a graphic in the section of graphics related to the Teachers' Questionnaire; however, in this chart, only the most outstanding percentage of each graphic is represented in each item of the chart. In the left column lie the questions; in the central column, the highest percentage found in each graphic is depicted; the last column to the right stands for the figure number of each graphic.

Figure 4.2.5 I

| QUESTIONS | PERCENTAGE | FIGURE NUMBER |
|--|--|-------------------|
| 1. List the five most common errors that you think most of your students make whenever they are asked to write in English. | Grammar Structures: 23% | Figure 4.2.1 I |
| 2. Do you think that mother language, Spanish, is actually affecting or even interfering with students' English writing development? | Yes: 50% - No: 50% | Figure 4.2.1 II |
| 3. List some of the things that you do to deal with the Mother Tongue Interference. | Reading in and outside the classroom: 50% | Figure 4.2.1 III |
| 4. What is the main focus of correction when reading students' composition papers? | Content 29% | Figure 4.2.1. IV |
| 5. List the ways in which you give feedback to students. | Tutoring: 29% | Figure 4.2.1 V |
| 6. Which strategies do you carry out to keep your students motivated? | Videos and Online Magazines: 33% | Figure 4.2.1 VI |
| 7. Which writing approach do you use/apply in your classroom? | Process Oriented Approach: 75% | Figure 4.2.1 VII |
| 8. List some of the instructional techniques (discussions, demonstrations, lectures, dissension, etc) that you use during the class. | Discussion: 33% | Figure 4.2.1 VIII |
| 9. Do you recommend specific formats, templates, frameworks or models to write in order to help students improve their composition papers? | Yes: 60% - No: 40% | Figure 4.2.1 IX |
| 10. What do you do to integrate reading within the writing class? | Students are requested to bring in information from books, internet, newspapers, etc to support their writings: 75% | Figure 4.2.1 X |

4.2.5. II Chart of the Students' Questionnaires

Representing the general findings of the instrument used to get data from the students; this chart contains 14 items, which stand for each of the questions in the questionnaire. Again, each question of the questionnaire was depicted with a graphic of its own; therefore, each of these items is only a general representation of the findings of each of such graphics. The chart as well as the instrument, is segmented in three parts. In the left column lie the questions; in the central column, the highest percentage found in each graphic is depicted; the last column to the right stands for the figure number of each graphic.

Figure 4.2.5 II

PART I

| QUESTIONS | PERCENTAGE | FIGURE NUMBER |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Mention three of your hobbies. | Sports: 29% | Figure 4.2.2 I |
| 2. What are the three types of things that you mostly read? | Informative: 31% | Figure 4.2.2 II |
| 3. What are your favorite books? | Literature: 41% | Figure 4.2.2 III |

PART II

| | | |
|---|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. Based on your personal experience, organize the following errors in writing from 1 to 5. | Grammar 52% | Figure 4.2.2 IV |
|---|-------------|-----------------|

| | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| 2. What is the most difficult thing for you when you write in English? | Coherence and Cohesion: 29% | Figure 4.2.2 V |
| 3. Do you think that your mother language, Spanish, is actually affecting or even interfering with your English writing development? And how? | Yes: 76% No: 24% Affects at a cultural level and also the syntax interferes: 33% | Figure 4.2.2 VI / VII |
| 4. Have you learned some writing techniques? | Yes: 100% | Figure 4.2.2 VIII |
| 5. Which writing techniques have you learned in the Composition Class? | Outlining: 43% | Figure 4.2.2 IX |

PART III

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| 1. How do you rate the instruction provided in your composition class? | Good 38% Barely Acceptable 38% | Figure 4.2.2 X |
| 2. When it comes to clarifying your doubts about composition, is the feedback provided satisfying enough? Why? | Yes: 58% - No: 42% Don't know: 38% Instruction Issues 33% | Figure 4.2.2 XII / XIII |
| 3. Have you been instructed in how to use description? | Yes: 86% - No: 24% | Figure 4.2.2 XIV |
| 4. Have you been instructed in how to use narration? | Yes: 77% - No: 23% | Figure 4.2.2 XV |
| 5. How well do you think you could use description in your composition? | Well: 38% | Figure 4.2.2 XVI |
| 6. How well do you think you could use narration in your composition? | Well: 33% Normally: 29% | Figure 4.2.2 XVII |

4.2.5. III Chart of the Class Observation

As for the next chart, it represents the data found through the use of the instrument related to the observation of the Composition I classes. In this case, the percentages taken into account for the creation of this chart are only those that the researchers held to be really important for this investigation, being them high percentages of disagreement in the areas in which the instrument and this chart are segmented: I- Instruction, II- Feedback, III- Motivation and IV- Mother Tongue Interference. In the left column lie the items of the instrument; in the central column, the percentage of disagreement is depicted. This percentage of disagreement is the total of “The disagree percentage” with the percentage of “disagree completely” from the check list of the instrument. Finally, the last column to the right stands for the figure number of each graphic.

Figure 4.2.5 III

Part I -INSTRUCTION-

| ITEMS | PERCENTAGE OF DISAGREEMENT | FIGURE NUMBER |
|---|----------------------------|------------------|
| Instruction is given to students when reading or using the texts if necessary | 62 % | Figure 4.2.3 III |
| Objectives for the class are given verbally and in a written manner as well | 79% | Figure 4.2.3 IV |
| Specific instructional outcomes are used | 59% | Figure 4.2.3 V |
| Objectives are discussed at the end of the class | 88% | Figure 4.2.3 VI |
| Students are actively involved in deciding what issues to discuss | 41% | Figure 4.2.3 X |

Part II -FEEDBACK-

| ITEMS | PERCENTAGE OF DISAGREEMENT | FIGURE NUMBER |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Feedback is provided in a variety of forms | 63 % | Figure 4.2.3 XIV |
| Dissension occurs when correcting students | 100% | Figure 4.2.3 XVI |
| Cues of boredom and confusion are addressed | 71% | Figure 4.2.3 XXI |
| Students are encouraged towards questioning | 67% | Figure 4.2.3 XXII |
| Opportunity to mention problems/concerns with the class, either verbally or in writing is provided | 58% | Figure 4.2.3 XXIII |

Part III -MOTIVATION-

| ITEMS | PERCENTAGE OF DISAGREEMENT | FIGURE NUMBER |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| The atmosphere of the class is participative | 46 % | Figure 4.2.3 XXIV |
| The topics in the composition class are relevant to students | 79% | Figure 4.2.3 XXVI |

Part IV -MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE-

| ITEMS | PERCENTAGE OF DISAGREEMENT | FIGURE NUMBER |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| The feedback is given in Spanish | 29% | Figure 4.2.3 XXVIII |

4.2.5. IV Chart of the Students' Compositions

Lastly, there is the chart that represents the findings of the instrument used to analyze the students' English compositions. As with the other charts, this is only a general representation of the findings that the researchers held as important for this investigation. Therefore, the percentages taken into account are those that showed that the students are deficient and are divided in the instruments as Needs Improvement and Unsatisfactory. The items in the chart are segmented in five, as it happened with the items in the instrument: errors in the students compositions related to Paragraph Construction, Amount of Information, Quality of Information, Mechanics and Mother Tongue Interference. In the left column lie the items of the instrument; in the central column, the percentage of deficiency; the last column to the right stands for the figure number of each graphic.

Figure 4.2.5 IV

| ITEMS | PERCENTAGE OF DEFICIENCY | FIGURE NUMBER |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Paragraph Construction 57% | Needs improvement: 43% Unsatisfactory: 14% | Figure 4.2.4 I – P98 |
| Amount of information 52% | Needs improvement: 33% Unsatisfactory: 19% | Figure 4.2.4 II – P99 |
| Quality of information 52% | Needs improvement: 33% Unsatisfactory: 19% | Figure 4.2.4 III – P100 |
| Mechanics 81% | Needs improvement: 33% Unsatisfactory: 48% | Figure 4.2.4 IV P 102 |
| MTI related mistakes 52% | Needs improvement: 19% Unsatisfactory: 33% | Figure 4.2.4 V P103 |

4.3 Summary

4.3.1 The Most Common Errors in Students' English Composition

As the purpose of this research was to find the main deficiencies in Composition I students' English writing, the needed data was collected via four different instruments:

- questionnaires administered to the teachers in charge of the subject,
- questionnaires administered to the students in the four Composition I courses,
- class observation rubric, and
- the students' compositions.

Each of these served the purpose of finding the most common deficiencies in the four areas corresponding to the four instruments:

- The teachers' perspectives on their students' writing deficiencies.
- The students' perspectives on their own deficiencies.
- The researchers perspectives on the students' deficiencies
- The facts about the students' writing deficiencies manifested in their writings

4.3.1 I The Most Common Deficiencies According to the Teachers Questionnaires

First, the most common deficiencies found through the use of the first instrument: the questionnaire administered to the teachers in charge of the four groups of Composition I are as follows:

Grammar Errors

Punctuation Errors

Coherence Errors

Mother Tongue Interference related Errors

Grammar Errors

When it comes to the teachers' perspectives on the most common errors in their students' writing, a significant 23% goes to the grammar errors.

- Punctuation Errors

As for the punctuation errors, the teachers in charge of the four groups are of the opinion that 18 % of the most common errors are punctuation errors.

- Coherence Errors

Also, coherence is another big issue that cripples students' writings. A significant 17% goes to the coherence issues.

- Mother Tongue Interference Errors

Lastly, in a 12%, teachers' opinion tilts for the Mother Tongue Interference errors as another of the most common errors, appearing in the data drawn from the 4 instruments.

4.3.1 II The Most Common Deficiencies According to the Students' Questionnaires

Furthermore, the most common deficiencies found through the use of the second instrument: the questionnaire administered to the students in the four groups of Composition I are as follows:

| | | | |
|----------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Grammar | Punctuation | Unity | Coherence |
| Cohesion | MTI | Instruction | Feedback |

- Grammar and Organization

According to the data taken from the students' questionnaire, the two most problematic areas for the students are grammar and organization, both with a 24% of the students thinking it is the most problematic of all their issues in writing development. Grammar is a major issue, according to the graphics of the four instruments.

- Unity and Punctuation

As well, grammar and organization issues rival grammar and organization issues only to be falling behind by a slight 3% of difference; the percentage to both is of a significant 21%. This is also a major issue that could be clearly seen and more thoroughly detailed in the graphics belonging to the other instruments.

- Spelling

Even though spelling issues are behind with just a 10% of the students thinking it is also one of the most common errors in their experience in English composition.

- Coherence and Cohesion

This is a very common error, according to the students' questionnaires and the students' writings analysis. As the students opinion goes, to a 27% of them, coherence and cohesion is what troubles them the most when writing.

- Mother Tongue Related Errors, Instruction and Feedback

Truly, this is a major issue in the writing development of the students, as it can be clearly seen in all the graphics that belong to the four instruments. A stunning 73% of the students consider it is actually affecting their writing development. Also, a 21% of the students' feedback was given in Spanish, as seen in the graphics section dedicated to the mother tongue interference, Instruction part. English composition is given to them in Spanish, in a more informal way. As for how they think it is happening, 27% goes to the cultural issues and English syntax.

4.3.1 III Findings on the Class observation

As all the instruments were cautiously analyzed, it was discovered those deficiencies that certainly prevented Composition I students from writing proficiently in English. Some of the weaknesses detected in the analysis of the data were those related to instruction, feedback and Mother Tongue Interference.

- Instruction

As for the instruction, and according to the results, a big number of students were not satisfied with the instruction received in class and probably still have to deal with some writing techniques in order to polish their writing proficiency. Only the 40% is in an acceptable range, that is to say that the 60% of the whole population claims that teachers still need to come up with different strategies when it comes to discussing objectives or activities in the classroom. (See part II, number 10 to get more information on instruction.)

- Feedback

Regarding the feedback, a 42% of the total students stated not to be happy with the feedback due to some factors such as personal issues, concentration and instruction issues and this can certainly be a limitation, for students' level of concentration is affected depriving a satisfactory academic performance (see part II, number 13 for more details on feedback.)

- Mother Tongue Interference

When it comes to writing in English, Spanish is definitely a problem that hinders students from writing efficiently. A 73% of the population stated that they believe L1 does affect their writing due to many issues such as grammar, culture, syntax and vocabulary.

4.3.1.1 IV The Most Common Deficiencies According to the Analysis of the Students' compositions

- Grammar

Grammar appears to be one of the most common deficiencies that affect students' writing. It is a limitation present in students' writing and their opinion and a case of study for teachers. An 81% of students is not even in the good standards according to the results in the composition analysis, mechanics section. Also, is a major issue according to the results in both, teachers' and students' questionnaire.

- Unity

Unity in a paragraph stands for an entire paragraph should set its basis on one single idea. The supporting details should explain the main idea. It appears to be one significant difficulty for students to write in English and it is more palpable in students' writing with a 43% in the "needs improvement" section, in the composition analysis. It is a limitation present in the students' questionnaire.

- Coherence

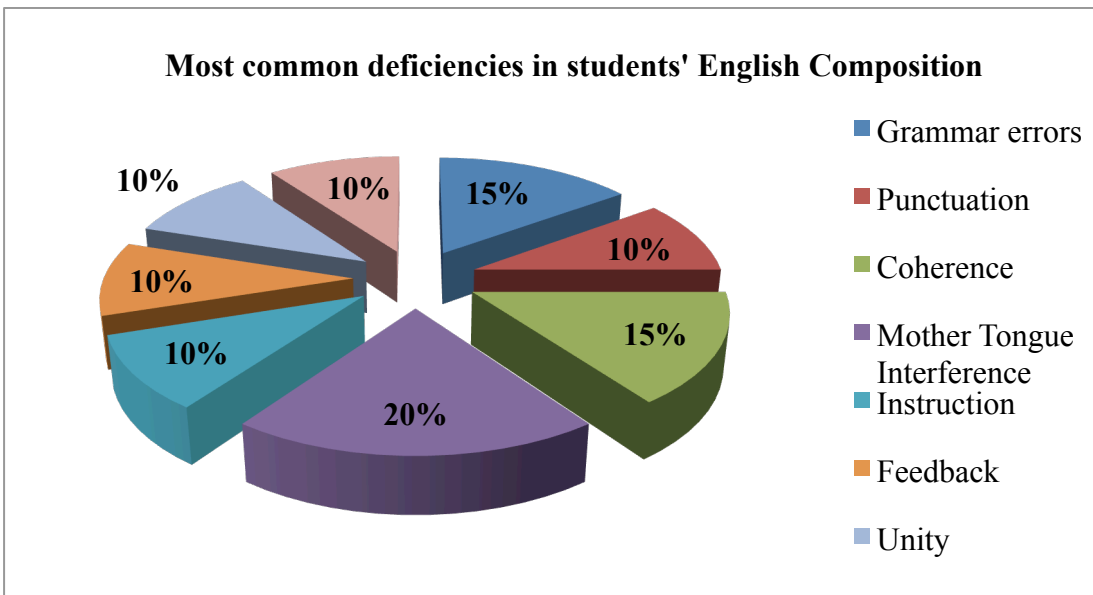
Coherence means establishing a connection between the ideas presented in a paragraph. As shown in the students' compositions, in many of the cases, students lost this connection that made their writing incoherent and confusing. A 33% of the analyzed compositions displayed that students are still facing problems backing up their written product with solid sentences that give support. This deficiency is present in the students' questionnaire as well.

- Mother Tongue Interference

Spanish is definitely one the most difficult problems for students when writing. As the results suggest, a 52% of all the analyzed compositions presented MTI related mistakes. This is an alarming situation that should be discussed and treated appropriately in the future courses since it appears not only in the students' writings, but also teachers and students are aware of this problem.

4.3.2 General Representation of the Most Common Deficiencies

Figure No. 4.3.2 I



The graphic above displays the most common deficiencies found in the research throughout the second semester of the academic year 2012, in the subject of Composition I of the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador.

Depicted here, from the data collected with the four instruments, there are those deficiencies that appear in at least three of them and whose percentages are strong and very significant, meaning that these should certainly be taken into account for further research in the field. Therefore, this graphic shows only the most common and significantly relevant errors in the students' English composition. As seen in the graphic, those aspects such as cohesion, unity, feedback, instruction and punctuation are amongst the most common errors in the students' writing. However, the three most marked kind of errors were found in the fields of grammar, mother tongue interference and coherence.

5. Conclusions overview

This chapter reports the conclusions and recommendations that were reached through this investigation. Given that the purpose of this research was to find out the most common deficiencies of Composition I students' English writing and consequently identify the weak points in the students' writings and then establish a prioritization of such in order to have a better knowledge on the right and precise course of the action to be taken for further researchers a detailed description of each of the findings is provided. Related to that effort, it became necessary to give answer to the main research question of this investigation as well as to give answers to a set of subsidiary questions which are addressed in this chapter in the following sections respectively: Common deficiencies that obstruct the writing skills of Composition I students, Subsidiary questions. Moreover, this chapter proposes a list of recommendations to the students, the teachers, the researchers as well as to the Foreign Language Department in general.

5.1 Research question

“What are the most common deficiencies that obstruct the writing skills of students of the Composition I course?”

The answer to the main research question, in accordance with the data that has been gathered and analyzed throughout this research, and which is shown in the graphics is:

- Errors related to Grammatical Deficiencies
- Errors related to Coherence Deficiencies
- Errors related to Mother Tongue Interference Deficiencies

5.1.2 Deficiencies Related to Grammar

Many students of English are more focused on only trying to purely memorize the grammatical rules of language that lack the ability to analyze grammar in order to develop proficiency in the production of language and therefore their English skills are closer to those stages of English when the learner speaks by memorizing and reproducing prefabricated chunks of language instead of proficiently and more naturally communicating in English.

Grammar mistakes are those systematic faults that interfere with the correct formation of sentences according to the rules of a language. In countries where English is learned as a second language, in some areas, like in writing, it is very common to find this kind of errors in students' compositions. For example, students fail to use articles or even to pick the correct verb tense in a sentence. In the case of the students of the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, the tendency of making mistakes of this sort is inexorable. The analysis carried out showed that Grammar is one of the most common limitations discovered and is definitely affecting students written performance. Therefore, it was observable that students, despite of all the focus Grammar is given in the Foreign Language Department, are still confronting difficulties to overcome this problem. It was found that in a vast number of compositions, students tended to misplace words or used verb tense incorrectly. Besides, the use of run-on sentences was even present, which indicates that also punctuation is a problem that should be given attention. Grammar, consequently, is a factor that was present in every single piece of writing, containing at least one grammar mistake. Grammar is undoubtedly a downside that prevents students from efficiently communicating, however, by doing some reading routine, grammar deficiencies would eventually vanish from students' written and oral competence. "In the long term most grammar mistakes will disappear by themselves, particularly if the learner

does extensive reading in English.” Paul Shoebottom 1996-2013. To conclude, by looking at the results, it is necessary to take serious action in order to improve the quality of writing in terms of grammar of students of the Foreign Language Department.

5.1.3 Deficiencies Related to Coherence

People generally worry about accuracy and correctness in such a way that sometimes they focus too much on form rather than paying attention to the substantiality of their message when communicating. Of course, this affects communication in a huge manner. When focusing too much on the minute things such as spelling, the content of whatever they are trying to convey results harmed and the supporting sentences are not really supporting a topic sentence just as much as a supporting paragraph might not really support a thesis statement.

Coherence stands for being logical, organized and consistent. In other words, there must be a smooth connection between the parts of a composition, that is to say that sentences, words and every single part of it must be logically organized and connected so it can be easily understood by the person who does the reading. According to the results, coherence, like grammar, was another obstacle that students in the Foreign Language Department encountered when writing. It seems that students had a very bad time joining in a logical manner their ideas as they lost the relationship of the main topic and the supporting details. It was found in almost every single written proposal that students begun with a random topic and eventually the nature of it was disappearing as some ideas were completely far away and others were not wholly linked to what they attempted to manifest. Coherence is a key element since it dictates the way how a person not only sets up his thoughts, but also the manner those thoughts serve as means of communication since it keeps the flow in a conversation or paragraph. To some people, contrary

to grammar, coherence helps a person communicate with ease in a fluent manner and this seems to be one of the major problems students in the Foreign Languages Department have due to they focus more on form rather than the logic of what they mean to say. “The majority of ESL students feel that the only tool they can use in writing English essays is grammar and this causes them to have difficulty in making their writing coherent.” Masputeriah Hamzah & Malini Karuppiah Faculty of Education, University Teknologi Malaysia. Consequently, in order to increase the quality of writing in terms of coherence, teachers and students should put greater emphasis since earlier courses and in this manner the organization of mental processes of students would end up with better results in their compositions.

5.1.4 Deficiencies Related to Mother Tongue Interference

People are having problems related to the communicative competence development in relation to the mother tongue interference primordially because El Salvador is a country where English is not really spoken. Though more recently, even more people are getting small and feeble notions of the English language, they remain in very basic levels in both the oral language and the written language, but in the written language, the difference is enormous.

In the process of learning a second language, learners go through the production of interlanguage. During this process, the language of the learners is a kind of produced by second-language learners who are still in the process of learning the language. Therefore, many of the errors of the students learning the language are counted among the borrowings of patterns from their mother language and expressing meaning through the use of words and syntax that are known already. Generally, the errors related to Mother Tongue Interference are evident in areas such as the use of articles, gender, number, personal pronouns, relative pronouns, adjectives,

prepositions, possessives, question formation, negation, verb tenses, passive voice, word order, etc (Dam, Phap, 2010).

Amongst all the common deficiencies in the students' writing proficiency, mother tongue interference is the most common of them. Through the four instruments used to collect data in this research, some errors have had a marked pattern of repeating in the data of the different instruments, however, mother tongue interference has been appearing in all the data gathered from the four instruments. And not only appeared, but its presence in the data had a strong presence in the statistical analysis that came afterward. Therefore, there is no doubt that the most common error in the students of the four courses is certainly the interference of the mother tongue, Spanish.

Students of English as a foreign language strive to develop a good level of proficiency. Not only it is important to actually speak English but it is also necessary to understand the spoken words in reply: so, conversations are born and communication in the second language truly happens. However, audible communication is not the only form of communication that exists; it is the fastest way, perhaps, for a person to communicate his or her necessities, feelings and troubles. Therefore, everybody speaks; everybody can talk. Admittedly, it is the audible communication that comes first, for we must learn to utter words first and then to go through more complex forms of communication just as we first need to crawl to go through more complex manners of moving ourselves from one point to another.

Despite the importance of the spoken language, it is the written language that this research is concerned to and to all the relevance in understanding it in order to attain higher levels of proficiency in English. For certain, in countries where English is not spoken officially, the usage of the language is limited; people use the language to operate computers and other kinds of

equipment like machinery; people use it to search for information in the internet, to close businesses abroad, or just for entertainment; to become optimum users of the leading-edge technology, English is more than a necessity. So, what seems to be the real use of English is to understand contents and not to interact in an audible manner. Very curiously, people actually studying the language in different places seem to tend to think more on developing their speaking skills instead of thinking about developing their reading and writing skills.

Of course, speaking and listening are important, but writing and reading are just as important as they are, though the latter came afterwards. As stated by Suratno (2005), “The more readers read, the more they get from it, it increases the knowledge that finally brings to the increase of intelligence.” Thus, reading and writing skills are truly important and should be exploited in order to gain proficiency; however, there are certain deficiencies when it comes to reading and writing in the EFL instruction in the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, in the four courses of Composition I and they are what this research was aimed to find.

And of course, the finding of the deficiencies in the students’ English composition was not carried out in order to simply create a list, but with the purpose of starting a process of prioritization such that could serve as a basis for further investigation in the field. Through the use of the instruments, data collected showed deficiencies that were to be classified into common errors. Consequently, with the knowledge of the common errors at hand, the process of prioritization could actually be carried out so that the researchers could give answer to the main question of this investigation: What are the most common deficiencies that obstruct the writing skills of composition I students?

The analysis of the English composition of the students listed on the four groups would then help the researchers to describe how the situation is in terms of defining the most common

errors present in their writing. In doing so, the research is certainly to come in handy to future researchers who would try to establish a relationship between the most common errors in the students' writings and the possible factors that may be causing the hindrances. Once a much deeper understanding of the roots of such deficiencies is attained, the development of the students' writing proficiency should be evident.

As the data was collected, the most common deficiencies were appearing until they became more than obvious. Among the common deficiencies found, instruction, feedback, unity, cohesion and punctuation are counted. These errors appear very strongly in the data collected by at least two of the four instruments. However, there are three kinds of errors that stand out as the most common errors in the students' writings: those related to grammar, coherence and to Mother Tongue Interference issues.

5.2 Subsidiary Questions

5.2.1 What are the most common errors in students' English composition?

Now, based on the results from the students' papers and according to the figure 4.2.5 IV (p111), the percentage of the deficiencies found in the Composition of the students could be clearly appreciated. The instrument's items were classified into Paragraph Construction, Amount of Information, Quality of Information, Mechanics and Mother Tongue Interference Issues.

5.2.1 I Paragraph Construction

In concordance with the figure number 4.2.5.IV (p111), the total percent of the deficiencies related to Paragraph Construction is of 57%, divided into a 43% of those who need improvement and a 14% of unsatisfactory shown in the instrument's results.

5.2.1 II Amount of Information

As for the percentage belonging to the Amount of Information category of the instrument, a total 52% goes to the deficiencies. Such result is divided by a 33% that goes to the Needs Improvement classification and a 19% that represents the total of unsatisfactory results.

5.2.1 III Quality of Information

As well, the category pertaining to the quality of the students' information usage in their writings leaves another 52% of deficiency. This also is classified by the results that need improvement, 33% and the unsatisfactory ones, 19%.

5.2.1 IV Mechanics

Moreover, what is related to the mechanics of writing, a strong 81% of deficiency was spotted. This time, those classified as unsatisfactory surpassed the ones that were classified as in need of improvement, and by a significant percentage: 48% for the unsatisfactory results and 33% for those results that showed need of improvement.

5.2.1 V Mother Tongue Interference Related Mistakes

At last, of the errors related to MTI issues, 19% of the results showed that students are in need of improvement and a 33% of the students' results are classified as unsatisfactory. Provided that in these five categories students' deficiencies are over a 50%, Paragraph Construction, Amount of Information, Quality of Information, Mechanics and Mother Tongue Interference Issues are without doubt common errors in the students writings.

5.3 Prioritization of the Most Common Errors in Students' English Writing

To conclude with, with an 81% in deficiency, the mechanics of writing stand out as the most common of the students deficiencies. Also, with a 57%, Paragraph Construction proves to be the second poorer category as seen in the figure 4.2.5.IV (p111).

5.4 Overall Perspectives on the Students' English Composition

As for the findings in relation to the students' composition skills, according the students' perspective on their errors in writing that is reflected in the graphics and more clearly depicted in the figure 4.2.5 II (p107), it is the errors pertaining Grammar and Organization that students believe mostly cripple their composition in English.

Also, it is important to bear in mind the students' position related to Mother Tongue Interference, with a 73%, students believe that MTI issues are actually damaging their English writing development. What is more, 27% of the students think that their Organization, Coherence and Cohesion in English writing is being affected by their Mother Tongue, Spanish.

It should be taken into account that students' do not believe that the root of some of their problems comes from the instruction they receive. According to the figure 4.2.5 II (p107), third part, 58% of the students consider they are receiving a satisfying feedback. 90% of the students admit they have been instructed in description, as well as 83% of the students admit they have been instructed in narration. However, only 40% of the students believe they can use properly description in their writing, and a smaller 32% reckon they can use correctly narration in English composition.

5.4.1 Teachers Perspective on their Students' English Composition

Considering the opinion of the teachers in the Foreign Language Department on the matter of their students' deficiencies, Grammar Structures was the answer to the question of what they considered was the most common kind of errors in their students writing. According to the figure 4.2.5 I (p106), teachers believe it with a 23%, the highest percentage on this item in the instrument.

When it comes to their opinion about whether Mother Tongue Interference is actually happening to their students, their opinion is divided: yes=50%, no= 50%. Moreover, teachers' focus of correction when checking their students' papers is on content, with a 29%, seen also in the figure 4.2.5 I (p106).

Related to feedback, the preferred type of feedback is tutoring, with a 29%, instead of e-mail writing, writing notes on their students' papers or answering questions during the class. It might be that, conferencing, compared to writing on notes or via e-mail, is a more interactive kind of feedback, which saves time and allows more flexibility for the students to ask more freely what they have in mind. The answers of the students on this reflected that they do not think the feedback they receive from their teachers is bad, as 58% of them stated they are satisfied with their feedback, according to the results seen in the figure 4.2.5 II (p107).

As a conclusion, teachers' point of view on their students' deficiencies

To answer the question "What is the teachers' point of view on their students' deficiencies?" it is necessary to see the percentages that came about as a result of inquiring by making use of the teachers' questionnaires. The teachers' opinion was very clear, they expressed that their students' most outstanding deficiency was grammar structures, with a 23% in the figure 4.2.5 I (p106). However, after analyzing the students English writing through the use of the rubric designed for

such analysis, it turned out that the result was the mechanics of writing, standing out with an 81%, the most common error in the students English composition, followed by a 57% in issues related to paragraph construction.

5.4.2 Students' Perspectives on their Own English Composition

On the other hand, the perspective of the students about their own writing in English clearly hold Grammar related errors as those two more damaging to their English writing. Also, among the most common errors in the students' writing, it is the mechanics of writing that outstands as the most common deficiency in the students' English composition. Paragraph Construction is also worthy of taking into account as it came second in the results for search of the most common errors in the students English writing.

Also worthy of highlighting, even when 86% of the students admitted they have been instructed in description, only 38% of the students expressed that they can use description properly in their writing. The same phenomena occurs with narration 77% of the participants expressed they have been instructed in narration, but sadly, only a small 33% of them think they can use it in their writing; therefore, it is natural to infer that the root of these problems might not be related with the instruction they receive. When 76% of the students openly expressed their Mother Tongue is actually affecting them in their composition, it is also natural to infer that it is very possible that students are not doing much about confronting this problem. Instruction might not be the cause but perhaps teachers and students alike have not really reflected upon Mother Tongue Interference Issues.

5.4.3 Instruction Received by the Students in their Composition Classes

In regards of instruction, teachers listed a number of instructional techniques which they apply in their classes. Based on the findings a 33% percent of the teachers agreed that “Discussion” is one of the most applied instructional techniques (see: Figure 4.2.1 VIII, p55), followed by “demonstrations” which represent a 25% percent of the total.

Among the different ways that instruction was provided, teachers claimed that they recommended specific formats, templates, frameworks or models to write, which they assured help students improve their composition papers.

When it comes to students’ perspective of the Instruction provided, 43% percent of them agreed that the instruction provided is good (see: Figure 4.2.2 X, p57). However, based on the finding of the class observation, 62% of the time the instruction was not given to students when reading or using the texts and the objectives for the class were not given verbally and or in a written manner (see: Figures 4.2.3 III/IV, p69/70). Therefore, even when the instruction received by students in their composition classes is perceived as good, it can definitely be improved.

5.4.4 Feedback Received by the Students in their Composition Classes

Based on teachers’ opinions, they provided feedback to students through a variety of forms, such as: written feedback, e-mails, websites, checklists, peer assessment and tutoring. However, they claimed that most of the feedback students received is given orally, this in order to address students’ needs in a more efficient manner. Thus, they agreed that the 29% of the feedback was provided through tutoring.

In regards of students' perspective of the feedback received 58% percent claimed that the feedback provided was satisfying enough (see: Figure 4.2.2 XII, p64). According to the gathered through the class observation, 63% percent of the time the feedback was not provided in a variety of forms but through oral discussions only (see: Figure 4.2.3 XIV, p80).

As a conclusion, the perspective of the students about the feedback provided appears to satisfy students' needs; therefore, it does not appear to contribute negatively to students' writing development. However, teachers should consider providing feedback in a variety of ways.

5.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered as possible ways to improve and follow up this study as with further investigations.

5.5.1 Recommendations for teachers:

Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended for teachers to:

1. Provide guidance and feedback to students throughout the process of writing. These making uses of a variety of ways such as: tutoring, written feedback, conferences, peer revising etc. Thus, teachers will be able to highlight the importance of clear and thoughtful writing as well as the importance of the aspects involved in a paragraph or essay construction.
2. Let the students know the value of good writing and its connection with reading.
3. Encourage students to improve their writing skills. With practice and feedback on performance, writing becomes better. Learning most complex skills involves many

attempts; students do not need to feel discouraged if they are not able to instantly accomplish a specific goal in writing.

4. Make sure students meet all the writing stages and provide feedback during each of them in a timely manner. Focused responses to students' drafts that include comments on how well the draft meets the demands of the assignment, and one or two ways to improve other matters, such as organization or coherence.
5. Be a role-model for your students and carry always a book everywhere; let your students see you read all the time. They will try to imitate you.

5.5.2 Recommendations for students

The following recommendations are offered to students interested in the field of writing:

1. Bearing in mind the importance of the relationship that lies between reading and writing, starting up a reading habit and maintaining it throughout their university studies is strongly recommended.
2. Spread the word to all the other students in the major about how important it is to read in English to attain higher levels of English proficiency.
3. Pay at all times close attention to what teachers have to say. Teachers given instruction and feedback are not only available, but they are also necessary for students' development and achievement of higher levels of English proficiency. Remember, there are multiple learning styles and problematic situations, and the teachers are only human. So, it would be for the best to be open to the teachers' instruction and feedback, but be also ready to complement it with your own efforts.

4. When writing: proofread everything to avoid vague or repetitive writing. Be concise. Request feedback and apply it to your writing. Discover what techniques work best for you and use them.
5. Follow the stages of the writing process: Prewriting, reread, peer revision, revise, editing, final draft, publishing.
6. Keeping a journal or joining an internet forum is always a good idea when it comes to rising up our level of English literacy.
7. Remember, whether it is a hospital, a terminal line or the university campus, if you bring a book with you, reading makes waiting more bearable. Read all the time.
8. Keep a portfolio of your composition class assignments is very motivational.

5.5.3 Recommendations for Future Researchers

1. Although it may be time consuming, when inquiring about “Writing skills” it is recommended to study “Students’ reading habits”. This could also include the possibility of adding a separate question about the relationship between Writing and Reading skills.
2. Given that this study provides the basis for future investigations, researchers could explore the factors that help students to develop their writing skill positively in order to reach a high level of writing skills. Based on this, the findings of this research may lead to changes in the field, such as innovating classroom activities, raising awareness on students’ reading and writing habits.

5.5.4 Recommendations for the Foreign Language Department:

1. More investigations should be conducted in this area in order to more clearly define the deficiencies that obstruct students' English composition skills. Larger sample sizes, for example, may allow for more detailed and significant information. In addition to determining the deficiencies that obstruct students' composition skills, research should be conducted to determine effective ways to counterbalance these factors.
2. The Foreign Language Department should consider checking the curriculum design and even considerate some teaching decisions to give more relevance to the improvement of students' writing skills.

APPENDIX A: Questionnaires administered to teachers.

University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Foreign Languages Department
Semester II, Academic year: 2012



“The most common deficiencies that that obstruct the writing skills of Composition I students”

Objectives:

- To find out the most common deficiencies of Composition I students’ English writing.
- To get an insight into the fields of Instruction, feedback, students’ motivation and attitude towards learning, and the mother tongue interference.

Instructions: Answer the following questions in the most sincere way possible.

1. List the five most common errors that you think most of your students make whenever they are asked to write in English. (Being number 1 the most common)

2. Do you think that mother language, Spanish, is actually affecting or even interfering with students’ English writing development? How?

Yes ___ No ___

3. List some of the things that you do to deal with mother tongue interference:

4. What is your main focus of correction when grading student composition paper? (Content, grammar errors, coherence, cohesion, etc.)

5. List the ways in which you give feedback to students:

6. What are the methods that you use to motivate students to write? (List some of them)

7. What are some of your effective classroom management strategies?

8. List some of the common instructional techniques that you use during the class:

9. Do you recommend specific formats to write in order to help students improve their composition papers?

Yes___ No___

If "YES", list some of the benefits of giving specific formats to write:

10. What do you integrate reading within the writing class?

APPENDIX B: Questionnaires administered to students.

University of El Salvador
Faculty of sciences and humanities
Foreign Language Department
Semester II, Academic year: 2012



“The most common deficiencies that that obstruct the writing skills of Composition I students”

Objectives:

- To find out the most common deficiencies of Composition I students’ English writing.
- To get an insight into the fields of Instruction, feedback, students’ motivation and attitude towards learning, and the mother tongue interference.

Generalities

Age: ____ Sex: ____ Composition Group #: ____

Instructions: Answer the following questions in the most sincere way possible. Remember that your responses are confidential.

I

1. Mention three of your hobbies.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

2. ¿What are the three types of things that you mostly read?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

3. ¿What are your three favorite books?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

II

1. Based on your personal experience, organize the following common errors in writing from 1 to 5 (Being number 1 the most common)

___ Grammatical errors ___ Unity of the text (Cohesion)
___ Spelling errors ___ Organization of ideas (Coherence)
___ Punctuation errors

2. What is the most difficult thing for you when you write in English?

3. Do you think that your mother language, Spanish, is actually affecting or even interfering with your English writing development? If “YES”, how?

4. Have you learned some writing techniques?

Yes ___ No ___

5. Could you name them or give some examples?

III

1. How do you rate the instruction provided in your composition class?

Very Good ___ Good ___ Barely Acceptable ___ Poor ___ Very Poor ___

2. How do you consider you have developed your writing skills since you are attending the composition classes?

3. When it comes to clarifying your doubts about composition, is the feedback provided satisfying enough? Why?

Yes ___ No ___

4. Have you been instructed in how to use description?

Yes ___ No ___

5. Have you been instructed in how to use narration?

Yes ___ No ___

6. How well do you think you could use narration in your composition?

Very Good ___ Good ___ Barely Acceptable ___ Poor ___ Very Poor ___

7. How well do you think you could use description in your composition?

Very Good ___ Good ___ Barely Acceptable ___ Poor ___ Very Poor ___

APPENDIX C: Class observation instrument.

University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Foreign Language department
Semester II, Academic year: 2012



Research on process:

“The most common deficiencies that that obstruct the writing skills of Composition I students”

Objectives:

- To find out the most common deficiencies of Composition I students’ English writing.
- To get an insight into the fields of Instruction, feedback, students’ motivation and attitude towards learning, and the mother tongue interference.

Generalities:

Composition

Group: _____ Schedule: _____

Scale: Choose whether you agree, barely agree, disagree or completely disagree by making a check in the appropriate box:

| | | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| 1= Agree | 2= Barely agree (needs improvement) | 3= Disagree | 4= Completely disagree |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|

1. About Instruction:

1. Films, websites, and other audiovisual materials have a clear purpose.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

2. Handouts are appropriate in number and subject.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

3. Instruction is given to students when reading or using the text, if necessary.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

4. Objectives for the class are given verbally, and in a written manner as well.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

5. Specific instructional outcomes are used.

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|

6. Objectives are discussed at the end of the class.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

7. Students and teacher are interested and enthusiastic.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|----------|--|-------------|------------------------|
| 1= Agree | 2= Barely agree (needs improvement) | 3= Disagree | 4= Completely disagree |
|----------|--|-------------|------------------------|

8. Humor is used appropriately

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

9. The timing of classroom activities considers attention spans.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

10. Students are actively involved in deciding what issues to discuss.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

11. Examples that show class preparation are provided

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

12. Students show awareness of what preparation (reading or other assignments) they should have completed prior to class.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

13. No students is belittle in any way.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

2. Feedback

1. Feedback is provided in a variety of forms

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

2. Full rapport of trust and respect with the students is created

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

3. Dissension occurs when correcting students.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

4. Feedback is directed to all students or personalized according to the activity

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

5. The teacher creates opportunity for the students to feel free to look for help.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

6. Understanding of the students' personal issues is shown.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|----------|--|-------------|------------------------|
| 1= Agree | 2= Barely agree (needs improvement) | 3= Disagree | 4= Completely disagree |
|----------|--|-------------|------------------------|

7. Follow up revisions of students' composition is provided throughout the whole course.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

8. Cues of boredom and confusion are addressed

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

9. Students are encouraged towards questioning.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

10. Opportunity to mention problems/concerns with the class, either verbally or in writing is provided

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

3. Motivation, or students attitude towards learning

1. The atmosphere of the classroom is participative.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

2. The instructor has eye contact with the students.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

3. The topics in the composition class are relevant to the students.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

4. Mother tongue interference (both)

1. Mother tongue is used during the class

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

2. The feedback is given in Spanish

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

3. The material provided is written in Spanish

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

4. Students are encouraged to read in English

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|

5. No authentic material is available, just those with the purpose of conveying meaning to learners of English as a foreign language.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|



APPENDIX D: Rubrics for analyzing students' composition papers

University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Foreign Language department

Research question: *What are the most common deficiencies that obstruct the writing skills of Composition I students?*

| CATEGORY | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Paragraph Construction | Includes very clear introductory sentence, explanations or details, and concluding sentence. | Includes introductory sentence, explanations and details, but need clarification and could be improved. | Paragraph does not include at least one of these: introductory sentence well developed details or explanations and a solid concluding sentence. | Paragraphing structure was not clear and sentences were not typically related within the paragraphs. |
| Amount of Information | Supporting ideas are backed up by at least two well connected supporting sentences. | Supporting ideas are backed up by one well connected supporting sentence. | Supporting sentences are not clear, nor well structured and do not really support the supporting ideas. | There is only one supporting sentence per supporting idea, and this does not really support the supporting ideas. |
| Quality of Information | Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting ideas and/or examples. | Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides at least 2 supporting ideas and/or examples. | Information clearly relates to the main topic. No supporting ideas and/or examples are given. | Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic. |
| Mechanics | No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. | 1-2 grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors | 3-5 grammatical spelling or punctuation errors. | More than five grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. |
| MTI related mistakes | The paragraph contains no mistakes related to the Mother Tongue Interference or/and vocabulary. | The paragraph contains 1-2 mistakes related to the Mother Tongue Interference or/and vocabulary. | The paragraph contains 3-5 mistakes related to the Mother Tongue Interference or/and vocabulary. | The paragraph contains more than 5 mistakes related to the Mother Tongue Interference or/and vocabulary. |

7. References

1. Kroll, B. (1990) *Second Language Writing* Cambridge University Press
2. Holloway 2009
3. Denzin, NK & Lincoln (1994) *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* Sage Publications
4. Willians, M. & Wright, T (1999) *A Course in Language Teaching*, Cambridge University Press
5. American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages, *ACFTL Guidelines*, revised 2012
6. Bagaric, V (2007) *Defining Communicative Competence* University of Zagreb
7. Hymes, D H (1972) *On Communicative Competence*, Hammondsworth Penguin.
8. Canale, M & Swain M (1980) *Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing*, Applied Linguistics, Oxford Journals.
9. Krashen, S (1981) *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. University of Southern California, Pergamon Press.
10. Hartono, H & Pauli, M & Suratno, A (2005) *The Influence of English Reading Habit on the Students' Achievement in Literary Related Subjects: A Research Report* Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching.
11. Freeman, D & Freeman Y (2004) *Essential Linguistics: What You Need to Know To Teach Reading, ESL, Spelling, Phonics and Grammar*. Heinemann Portsmouth NH
12. Charuporn, P (2001) *Relationships among grammatical accuracy, discourse features and the quality of second language writing: the case of Thai EFL learners* Disertation submitted to the College of Human Resources and Education at West Virginia University

13. Newman, M (1996) *Correctness and its Conceptions: The meaning of language form for basic writers*, Journal of Basic Writing, City University of New York, Vol 15 No.1
14. Nassaji, H & Fotos, S (2004) *Current developments in research on the teaching of grammar*, Cambridge University Press
15. Hyland, K & Hyland, F (2006) *Feedback on the second language students' writing* Language Teaching, Cambridge University Press
16. Ferris D, (2007) *Preparing Teachers to Respond to Students' Writing* Journal of Second Language Writing, Elsevier Inc.
17. Denzin N & Lincoln Y (1992) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* Sage Publications Inc.
18. Polgar, S & Thomas, S (1995) *Introduction to Research in the Health Areas* Churchill Livingstone
19. Patton, M (1987) *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation* University of California
20. Kvale, S (1999) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* Sage Publications Inc.
21. Sampieri, R & Fernández, C & Baptista, P (2006) *Metodología de la Investigación* McGraw-Hill/Interamericana Editores
22. Website: www.thesurveysystem.com (2012) Sample Size Calculator, retrieved from URL: <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>
23. Cohen, L & Manion, L (1989) *Research Methods in Education* London, England: Routledge

24. Ferris, D (1995) *Student Reactions to Teacher Response in Multiple-Draft Composition Classroom TESOL Quarterly* Vol. 29 No. 1- California State University, Sacramento.
25. Krüger, S (2008) *Ethnography in the Performing Arts: a student guide* JMU/Palatine
26. Brown, J (2001) *Using Surveys in Language Programs* Cambridge Language Teaching Library, Cambridge University Press.
27. Weiss, R (1994) *Learning From Strangers; The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* New York, The Free Press.
28. Website: <http://esl.fis.edu/index.htm> (January 2011) A guide to learning English/learners. Retrieved from URL: <http://esl.fis.edu/learners/index.htm>
29. Enkvist, N. E. (1990). *Seven problems in the study of coherence and interpretability*. In U. Connor & A. M. Johns (Eds.), *Coherence in writing: Research and pedagogical perspectives* (pp. 9-28). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
30. Website: <http://www.viethoc.com/> (2010) Mother-Tongue Interference in Spanish-Speaking English Language Learners' Interlanguage. Retrieved from URL: <http://www.viethoc.com/Ti-Liu/bien-khao/khao-luan/mothertongueinterferenceinspanishspeakingenglishlanguagelearners%E2%80%99interlanguage>