

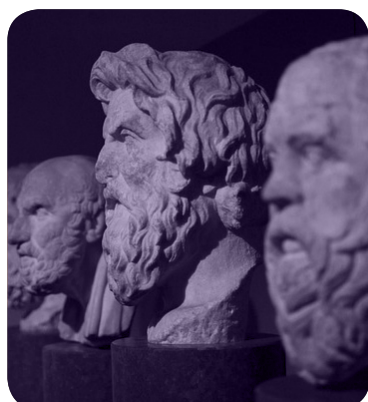
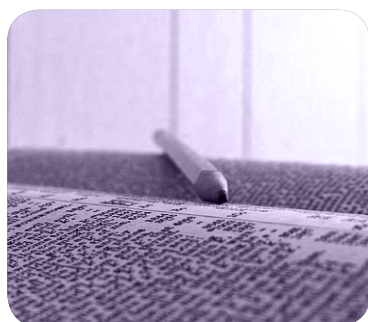
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**Creative writing as a  
methodological tool  
to improve writing  
competences in english  
as a second language  
at secondary school**  
*Marta Hernández Ruiz*

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**MÁSTER EN FORMACIÓN DE PROFESORADO DE EDUCACIÓN  
SECUNDARIA Y BACHILLERATO**

**CREATIVE WRITING AS A METHODOLOGICAL TOOL TO  
IMPROVE WRITING COMPETENCES IN ENGLISH AS A  
SECOND LANGUAGE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL.**

**AUTORA: MARTA HERNÁNDEZ RUIZ**

**TUTORA: ANA LLINARES**

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## **Abstract**

The study deals with the issue of including creativity in English as a Second Language classes through creative writing. The main purpose of the research is to demonstrate the positive impact that creative writing activities could have on general writing competences. To do that, I have focused on a particular genre, recount, and on five specific competences (personal appreciation, elaboration on initial ideas, structure and organization of ideas, fluency and accuracy in verb tenses). The procedure was the following: first, two groups of students were asked to write a recount, then five creative writing activities carried out were carried out with one of the groups (experimental) and finally, a second recount from each group was collected. For the assessment, a rubric was created, which included the five competences and the corresponding marks. The conclusions show that using creative writing in ESL classes seems to have positive effects in terms of general writing competences and that ESL teachers could take advantage of the benefits that creative writing activities provide.

**Key words:** Creative writing activities, Competences, Recount, Rubric

## **Resumen**

El estudio considera la idea de incluir la creatividad en las clases de inglés como segunda lengua a través de la escritura creativa. El principal objetivo de la investigación es demostrar el impacto positivo que las actividades de escritura creativa podrían tener en otras competencias de escritura general. Para ello, me he centrado en un género en particular, el relato, y en cinco competencias específicas (la apreciación personal, la elaboración sobre ideas iniciales, la estructura y organización, la fluidez y la precisión en el uso de tiempos verbales). El procedimiento fue el siguiente: primero, se pidió un relato a dos grupos de estudiantes, después, se llevaron a cabo cinco actividades de escritura creativa con uno de ellos (experimental) y, finalmente, se recogió un segundo relato. Para la valoración, se creó una rúbrica que incluía las cinco competencias y la puntuación correspondiente. Las conclusiones muestran que usar actividades de escritura creativa en clases de inglés como segunda lengua parece tener efectos positivos en términos de competencias generales de escritura y que los profesores de inglés pueden aprovechar los beneficios que estas actividades de escritura creativa aportan.

**Palabras clave:** Actividades de escritura creativa, Competencias, Relato, Rúbrica.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity is usually ignored in most of education systems, mainly in secondary schools. However, there is no doubt of its relevance in nowadays world. In fact, Sir Ken Robinson, creativity and education expert, assures that creativity is the crucial 21<sup>st</sup> century skill (TedTalks, 2006) and for that, I have considered creativity as a key stone in the development of this project.

Before defining creativity by itself, I would like to evaluate the misconceptions people usually have about creativity. Based on Sir Ken Robinson's words from an interview for the magazine Educational Leadership (see Azzam's interview with Robinson, 2009 for more details), there are three main misunderstandings: the first one is believing that only a few people are creative, when he claims that "everyone has tremendous creative capacities" (Robinson, 2009). Then, the association of creativity with certain areas such as arts and crafts. In this case, Sir Robinson confirms that creativity is about the whole curriculum, not just subjects as fine arts. And thirdly, people may think that creativity has to do with "letting yourself go", when, in fact, is a "disciplined process that requires skills, knowledge and control" (Robinson, 2009) as well as imagination and originality, I would add.

The aspects mentioned above can be deemed the main reasons that have driven me towards the idea of introducing creativity in a L2 class. For Sir Robinson, creativity is "a process of having original ideas that have value" (2009). Therefore, with this project, I would like to make my students part of this process and give them the opportunity to develop their creativity progressively. In addition, I want to show that activities developed to enhance creativity in English classroom have a positive effect on the learners' development of the L2, in particular, in writing.

For my Practicum, I was assigned to a bilingual high school and there I realized how fluent most of the students were in oral skills (their listening and speaking competences were quite good for their young age) but, when they were asked to write, they did not show the same abilities. Therefore, to address both my personal concern in education (creativity) and a need I observed in the context of my teaching practice (writing development), I have decided to focus on creative writing. I consider that in

these contexts of bilingual education and CLIL environments, sometimes, the oral skills are more developed than the writing ones. For that, I have carried out this research with some creative writing activities in order to promote students' writing competences in the L2, which I believe are essential and very useful for future requirements, such as explanations of concepts in other subjects' exams or other types of more personal writings (e-mail, letters, blogs...).

As this study is limited in time and resources, I have decided to narrow down my objectives and I have chosen just some aspects in which creative writing can contribute. Two of the aspects are more related to creativity (personal approach and elaboration on initial ideas) and the last three of them have to do with writing competences (structure and organization of ideas, fluency of words, accuracy in the use of verb tenses). At the same time, I have focused on one particular genre, recount, to measure the effects of creative writing. The purpose of this type of text is to retell or recount an event or experience, usually a direct experience of the writer.

Before concluding the introduction, I would like to make clear that I did not want focus on creative writing itself but on using it as a mean to improve writing competences. I have used creative writing for the creation of the activities in order to enhance the use of imagination among the students and because I consider important to develop creativity in my subject. However, the main point of the research is seeing its impact in certain writing competences.

With this research, I hope to contribute to the field of creative writing and developing writing skills through it, as I believe it is a research area with a lot of potential that still needs to be explored and, as I have previously explained, creativity should be most often included in education because it is fundamental in today's society.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Even though there are some studies about the topic of creative writing and how to teach it, Martha C. Pennington, at the end of her chapter entitled *Creativity in composition*, demand more research on how creativity can be enhanced in writing and demands that “studies examining approaches that attempt to ensure creativity within a genre emphasis would be especially welcome.” (Pennington, 2016, p.493) Following this claim, I have tried to connect the concept of creative writing together with the genre of recount in this project, because, as we will see throughout this section, they can complement each other.

### **2.1 Creative writing**

Defining “creative writing” can be complex, at first, because it includes several types of texts and diverse connotations. It comprises poetry, novels, and any kind of literature, but it can also include any writing that “encourages thought, elicits emotional response and personal interpretation” (Harper, 2016, p. 498). This same author finally defines creative writing as “the action of writing creatively, informed by the human imagination and the intellect, employing both personal and cultural knowledge, and creating a variety of results, some private, some public, some tentative, and some in various ways complete” (Harper, 2016, p.498-499). This definition may seem ambiguous, but for the purpose of this project, some key words can be extracted: imagination and intellect, together with personal and cultural knowledge, as I am going to focus on the use of imagination and the previous knowledge that students may have to produce the creative writing activities.

The previously mentioned creative writing activities that I have planned for the project, have the purpose of scaffolding student’s creativity in writing. As Pennington explains about the process models of writing:

“Process models of writing incorporate both the mental and physical processes connected with planning, generating ideas, refining ideas, and drafting a composition through successive stages of development. (...) process approach methodology includes activities aimed at generating ideas – such as pre-writing



discussion, brainstorming, and free-writing – as an important formative step.” (Pennington, 2016, p.485)

At the same time, for the design of these activities, I have taken into account the ideas of Soh et al. in their study entitled *Enhancing Children’s Creativity*, when he explains that “Children’s creativity can be encouraged by exposing them to a wide variety of stimulation, providing them opportunities to acquire information and materials to combine and arrange them, giving children freedom to ask questions, disagree, experiment...” (Soh et al., 2003, p.68).

## **2.2 A genre approach to writing development: recount**

Regarding the genre selected, the recount, it is necessary to clarify some features and important aspects of this type of text. A recount is used to retell past events or experiences and its aim is normally to inform or entertain the reader. David Rose, apart from explaining that the purpose of a recount is recounting events, describes the three stages of this genre: “orientation, record of events and resolution” (Rose, 2015, p. 4). In other words, the structure of a recount consists of: a first paragraph, which sets the scene (Who? Where? When?), then, it is followed by a series of events or details of an experience. In this part, it is very important to keep a chronological order, so the use of time connectors is very frequent. The final paragraph must include the resolution of the events, a personal evaluation and bring the reader back to the subject.

Some specific grammatical features of a recount are the use of past tenses and the use of first person, because it is normally written by the same person who had lived the event. This type of texts is usually found in biographies, diaries, newspaper report... More specifically in a subject such as history, this type of genre could be useful as it is very common to find historical recount.

There are three main reasons for choosing a genre like recount for this project. The first one is because according to Pennington “while genre is a logical focus for composition instruction, it needs to be taught in ways that do not overly constrains students’ options for their own writing. (...) it has fuzzy boundaries.” (Pennington, 2016, p.482) Lately in the same chapter, the author adds that “English composition has strong

formalist roots” (Pennington, 2016, p.483). With these statements, she makes clear the necessity to teach explicitly some structures and the form of genre, however it is important to look for a balance that do not limit the freedom of students when writing.

Along the same lines, Harper assures that “Creative writing teaching also incorporates the understanding of the forms and functions of texts” (Harper, 2016, p. 503), what means that the comprehension of text forms is crucial before going directly to creative writing, and for that, I have decided to be working with a genre, in particular that of recount.

The second principal reason is the connection between creative writing and recount. At first sight, it may seem that retelling a past event could not entail any creativity. However, as Harper assures, this genre can “elicit emotional response and personal interpretation” (2016, p.498) and it is connected to creative writing, so I have considered that both areas can be perfectly joined together.

And the last reason why I have chosen this genre is that it is a very personal genre, close to the reality of the students, and they could feel comfortable with it. Besides, I consider this type of text very closely related to speaking abilities (as it has to do with telling experiences, and it is something quite common in any oral interaction), so I believe that knowing this genre can be helpful for the students not only to develop writing competences, but also for speaking skills and improving communication.

### **2.3 Writing in CLIL**

In every CLIL environment, as the one shared nowadays in many high schools in Madrid, there is one common objective and is that of “finding ways of achieving better literacy levels (both in reading and writing) since these are key determining academic success in the L2” (Whittaker et al., 2011, p. 344) Although it is considered one of the main purposes of CLIL contexts, the same article illustrates later that “extensive classroom observations such as those reported by Dalton-Puffer (2007) show little focus on writing in these CLIL classes” (Whittaker et al., 2011, p. 344).

On the one hand, the purpose of improving writing (and reading) in L2 that the CLIL context suggests and the fact that there is a tendency to focus very little on that skill, lead to think about the need to provide different tools and means for CLIL teachers to use in their classes, so they could pay the attention that writing requires in these contexts.

On the other hand, the same article mentioned above points out that “understanding and participating in the genres and registers of the disciplines at secondary level is a challenge for many students” (Whittaker et al., 2011, p. 344). This statement also suggests the urgent necessity of using new techniques that could help students when facing genres in CLIL contexts. Not only because it represents a challenge for them, but also because it is an important requirement along their academic development in bilingual education.

The assertions that the article mentioned reveal, demonstrate the special relevance of focusing on writing, and more specifically on genres, in CLIL environments, as the one chosen for this study.

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS.**

As I have mentioned previously, my study has two objectives. The first one, which is the main one, is improving written language performance (focused on organization of ideas, fluency, and accuracy in the use of verb tenses) through creative writing. And the second purpose, less obvious, would be enhancing student's creativity in writing (in terms of personal implication with their own writing). My hypothesis is that using creative writing activities can have a positive impact in the student's writing proficiency.

Consequently, my research questions for this study are:

- Does creative writing have any influence on writing general competences? If so, in which aspects (fluency, accuracy...) does creative writing have more impact?
- How do students response towards introducing creative writing in English lessons?

With these questions, I will try to give an answer to Pennington's claim for "ensuring creativity within a genre" (2016, p. 493) that I mentioned at the beginning of the section on theoretical framework. I am aware of the time and resources limitations that I have for this study, but with it, I would also like to encourage other teachers to include creativity in their classes, not just for their personal interests, but because I want to prove that students can obtain academic benefits from it, too.

#### **4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

In this section, I will address, firstly, the context in which the study has been developed (the high school, the participants' profile and the duration of the research). I will also analyse my hypothesis and research questions followed. After that, I will explain the procedure and the resources used: the activities prepared and the rubric that was used for the assessment of creativity and writing competences. And finally, I will briefly describe the register table employed for the data collection along the research.

##### **4.1 Context**

The data for this study was collected from High School IES Profesor Máximo Trueba in Boadilla del Monte between the 18th of April and the 12th of May 2017. This is a bilingual school and, therefore, it offers two different programmes: on the one hand, there is the *bilingual section*, in which the students have five hours of English a week and all their content subjects (except Maths) are taught in English. On the other hand, in *bilingual programmes*, students also have five hours of English a week, but only some of the rest of their subjects are taught in English, but never Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Geography or History.

The participants of this study belong to two *bilingual section* groups, so, as they had many other subjects taught in English, the time of exposure and the knowledge of this language were higher. It was something that I considered necessary in order to carry out the creative writing activities successfully because, from my perspective, creativity is a further step that can be reached more easily when the basic use of language is achieved.

##### **4.2 Participants**

The participants of this study were fifty-nine students from two groups of 1º ESO, between twelve and thirteen years old. Out of them, 26 (45%) were boys and 33 (55%) were girls. For this particular research, I will not focus on gender differences as,

for example, Soh (2003) did in a very similar study, but maybe for some future research it could be interesting to compare creativity in gender.

Even though the groups were heterogeneous in terms of students characteristics, they all had more or less the same English level, since a requirement to be enrolled in the bilingual section is to have attended a bilingual primary school or to be able to provide proof of a B1 level. Moreover, the vast majority of these students comes from the same two or three primary schools, which suggests that they all have had a very similar education in English.

From these two groups of 1ºESO, I had to choose one of them to be the control group and the other the experimental one. Both of them had the same English teacher and they had been following the same curriculum during the course, so the decision of which group should be each was mostly aleatory.

Although fifty-nine students was a high number of students to develop a study of these characteristics, for the purpose of this research I had to take out some of them for two main reasons: either, because they did not do the first or the second writing or because they did not write anything in one of the writings. So, the final number of student for the research was twenty-three in the control group and twenty-three students in the experimental group.

#### **4.3 Procedure and materials used: creative writing activities and rubric.**

Briefly explained, the procedure for this study was the following: I asked the students first for a recount about an experience of their Easter Break, then I carried out some creative writing activities with the experimental group, and then I asked both groups for a second recount after a trip they had with the school. To assess the progress, I created a rubric that will be explained at the end of this section.

#### **4.3.1 First data collection**

For the first writing, I decided to choose the first day after Easter Holiday because I considered that they would have several experiences that they had lived to recount. In order to scaffold the writing and before asking them to write directly, my tutor, who was very engaged with the project, and I decided to tell the students some of our experiences during Easter. So, she first told them her best moment of her break. After that, I did something similar and I recounted them one anecdote of those days. In this way, we manage not only to scaffold their writing, but also to focus their attention and, moreover, they had two examples of oral recount to follow and they knew exactly what they were asked for.

Then, I asked them to tell me something similar but in a written composition. The statement used was the following: "Now, I want you to do as we have done. Please, write a composition in which you tell an experience, an anecdote, something horrible or something great that has happened to you or that you have done during Easter Break. You will have twenty minutes to write it." But, before writing, I asked them to have an individual brainstorming writing eight key words that they would include in the composition. This was another pre-writing stage which was very useful to activate their ideas before facing their writing activity.

Regarding the time limit, I decided to give them twenty minutes for some reasons. The first one is about concentration, it is very difficult for adolescents to spend more than that time focused on the writing activity. Second, because I wanted to leave some time of the class for my tutor to do what she had planned. And thirdly, because as this is not a genre that requires long texts, in twenty minutes I considered that student could write enough to tell a complete recount.

As another detail about my demand of the writing, I would like to highlight an aspect in which both Pennington (2016) and Soh (2003) agree when they refer to creative writing: tell the students that their work will not be graded. This will encourage them to express themselves freely and without the pressure of a mark behind. In the case of this study, I decided to do the same, I assured the students that there would not be a mark, so they could feel more comfortable. Nevertheless, my tutor advised me to

tell them that there would be a mark that would complete the classwork section in their results. This was a way to ensure that everyone did their work and they did not leave the page empty. In other words, a balance was met: the writings would not be graded, but it was compulsory to do the writing because it would count as classwork.

Needless to say, I followed the same procedure in both groups. However, it is necessary to highlight that the students were very distracted in this first writing. After thinking about the possible factors that could have caused them to be so talkative and unwilling to work, I have found at least three: firstly, it could be because they did not know me well, so we did not trust each other as we did at the end. Another factor could be the fact that it was the very first day after Easter Break, and it takes time for students to get back to class routine. And the last factor that I have considered is that they did not expect to be asked for a writing the first day of school, so maybe it was a surprise for them and they were not ready yet.

#### **4.3.2 Creative writing activities**

The next step for the development of this project was the realization of the creative writing activities prepared for the experimental group. Some of them were inspired by the book called *Creative Writing. Activities to help students produce meaningful texts* (Frank and Rinvulcri, 2007) which is full of very interesting creative writing ideas and resources; and other were directly created by me. I made a set of six worksheets thought for the assessment of these aspects: personal appreciation, elaboration on initial ideas, organization of ideas, fluency of words and accuracy in verb tenses. For reasons of time limitations, I had to leave out the one about richness of vocabulary. So, for the study, I finally took into account the following activities (see worksheets in appendix I), designed to improve specific writing skills and creativity.

These activities were carried out with the experimental group during three consecutive days, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> until the 5<sup>th</sup> May. I am aware it was not much time to develop this type of activities, but the practicum tutor and I agreed on those days because she needed to continue with the curriculum she had planned, so she could not let me more days. The creative writing activities carried out were the following:



- “Speed writing.” This was a special exercise divided in the three days, so each day at the beginning of the class, this was the first activity. It consisted in giving the students a time limit of ninety seconds and ask them to write as much as they could about certain topics. They were asked to produce proper sentences and not just ideas. I tried to select topics that were close to their reality and appealing for them, so the first one was “mobile phones”, the second topic was “music” and the last one was “friends”. After writing, they were asked to count the number of words and they saw how their number of words was higher each day. This activity was created to work on fluency of ideas and words and, as an overview, I must say that it worked really well, not only because the students enjoyed it, but also because of the results in the fluency of words.
  
- “Same event, different perspective.” In this worksheet, I had included a short scary story that they had to read. I chose a scary story because I thought it could be attractive for teenagers. We read it aloud to make sure that all the students understood the vocabulary and then we extracted the main characters of the story and I wrote them on the blackboard. The purpose of this activity was to choose one character and tell the story from his/her point of view. This was thought to develop the aspect of elaboration on initial ideas, as I gave them the basis of the story, and they had to create something different from that initial idea. With this activity, students were a little disoriented because they were not used to writings like this one. Some of them even copied the same story changing the personal pronouns. This proves that it is hard for them to use imagination and creativity in writing.
  
- “Different ways of thinking.” I brought some objects to class (a small toy elephant, a bottle with messages, and a painted stone) and they had to choose one and write different sentences about the object following the instructions that appeared in the worksheet (see appendix). The use of realia in class was very positive and motivating for students. It was an activity that students enjoyed a lot but, at first, they were blocked by the instructions because they were not told exactly what to write. However, this was the main idea: to write freely,

following the brief guidance of the worksheet, about one of the objects. This activity was created to develop the idea of reflecting personal and emotional implications in the text they were writing.

- “Live the life.” In this worksheet, they were asked to write sentences with the same verb (*to live*) but used in different tenses. To do it, and as a way of scaffolding the activity, I created a slide with the same verb tenses but using another verb (*to play*). So, I asked aloud to create sentences using those beginnings to make sure that everyone understood its usage and then they completed their worksheet by themselves. This was an original way of revising verb tenses and doing creative writing at the same time, because with some tenses they had to include real facts but in other cases they could imagine anything they wanted.
- “My adventure in a farm.” This is the last creative writing activity that we did and it had to do with organization of ideas and structure. It consisted of two parts: the first one was the organization of a recount. I gave them a short text cut into paragraphs, so they had to pay attention to the chronological connectors used to put them in the right order. After that, they had to write their own adventure in a farm. They could retell a real story or they could try to image an experience they could have in a farm. To make this worksheet, I used visual aids by dividing the page into three big squares that represented each part of the recount. As it was the last activity, we did not have enough time and they could not finish the writing, but the main objective, which was learning the structure of a recount, was achieved.

The students’ response towards these activities was quite positive. At first, they were shocked because they were not told exactly what to write. For most of these activities, they were asked to use their imagination and to invent something original to write and, as they were used to very guided instructions from teachers, when the demand was so open, they looked surprised. However, after understanding that in these activities they were not asked for right-wrong answers and that it was fine for them to

write freely as long as they met the requirements of the prompts, they were more comfortable and happy to complete the worksheets. This fact proves the necessity of providing them with independence to write on their own: students sometimes need to face a situation in which they have to think independently and not following so strict instructions.

#### **4.3.3 Second data collection**

After accomplishing the creative writing activities with the experimental groups, both of them were asked to write the second composition. As I have briefly explained before, the most similar period of time to the Easter Holiday was the four-day trip that to Salamanca with the school. I am aware that the characteristics are not the same (e.g. in Easter Break they were mainly with their family and during the school trip they were with friends) but, due to time limitations, this was the best experience that I could make use of. In addition to this, for the purpose of this research, which is writing a creative recount, the actual experience was not considered so important as long as they were able to write a proper recount.

The students were requested to do the second writing just the first day after their trip. I followed the same procedure as in the first one. First, I told them an anecdote that had happened during those days with the ones who stayed in Madrid. After that, I gave them the same instructions as in the previous writing: "Now, I want you to do as I have done. Please, write a composition in which you tell an experience, an anecdote, something horrible or something great that has happened to you or that you have done during your trip to Salamanca. You will have twenty minutes to write it." As before, I asked them to do a brainstorming of eight key words about their experience and then they had twenty minutes to complete the writing. Some examples of these writings are included in appendix II, to illustrate the research with real material.

It is important to mention that not all the students had gone to the trip. In one group, there were five students who had stayed here and in the other one seven of them had stayed. With these students, in English classes we had prepared a short theatre play, they had made an excursion to El Escorial, and they had played games and done

experiments in other subjects, so they could also write an interesting and creative recount even if they had not participated in the trip.

In contrast with the first writing, in this case, they were much more concentrated in both groups and some of them even asked me for more time because they wanted to write more. I will explain my reflection on this later, in the discussion of the results, but I wanted to remark it here too because I consider it something shocking and relevant enough to mention.

#### **4.3.4 Rubric**

Once both writings were completed and the creative writing activities were done with the experimental group, I designed a rubric for the assessment of the students' writings (see below). I will briefly describe its elaboration, then, the standards that I followed for the assessment of each competence and, finally, some reflections on its applications.

The creation of my own rubric was a long and complex process. For the first draft, I based it on two samples: the rubric that can be found in the paper report mentioned before *"Enhancing Children's creativity: An Exploratory Study on Using the Internet and SCAMPER as Creative Writing Tools"* by Kay-Cheng Soh (2003). From this study, I extracted some of the main competences that I wanted to assess, such as the elaboration on initial ideas or accuracy in grammar. The other sample that I followed was a rubric created by my tutor of the teaching practice, which she used to evaluate fairy tales from her students. As it was a similar writing, I could use some of her items and indications in my own rubric.

For the holistic analysis that I was interested in, I was aware of the interrater reliability. The possibility of having two different teachers grading the compositions would have been a very stimulating tool of assessment, but because of having few resources and the time limit, it was impossible to carry it out. For that reason, the rubric had to be as precise as possible.

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
PERSONAL APPRECIATION	Presentation of factual events. No personal appreciation.	One personal appreciations related to the events.	Two or more items of personal appreciations in the text.
ELABORATION ON INITIAL IDEAS	No elaboration on initial ideas.	Just one idea is elaborated.	More than one idea is developed.
STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS	No structure. The author has not followed the structure at all.	Ideas are divided in paragraphs. At least two stages are followed.	The structure is completely followed, all the three stages. The events are well-organized.
FLUENCY (NUMBER OF WORDS)	The author has written less than 130 words.	The author has written between 130-190 words. (average: 160 words)	The author has written more than 190 words.
ACCURACY IN THE USE OF VERB TENSES	The writer has used less than the 30% of verbs correctly.	The writer has used between 30% and 60% of the verbs correctly.	The writer has used more than 60% of the verbs correctly.

*Table 1: Rubric about creativity and writing competences*

During the elaboration of the rubric, there were several modifications such as changing the competence about accuracy in grammar into accuracy in the use of verb tenses, given its relevance in the genre of recount. Or, for example, as most of the second writings were surprisingly long, I considered important to include a competence that would measure fluency in terms of number of words. The final rubric includes five competences (two of them closer to the creative aspect, and the other three were more related to writing skills) and the corresponding points according to the writing.

As the rubric shows, for each of the competences, the students could obtain a maximum of three points and a minimum of one point, therefore the final mark would be out of fifteen. In order to decide how to grade each competence, the following criteria was followed.

To begin with, the personal appreciation presented in the writings was a competence that, because of its ambiguity, was important to determine specifically. Taking into account the genre of recount, students had a tendency to present events as mere facts, that would correspond to the minimum punctuation. But, to make the text more attractive and creative, and thanks to the creative writing activities carried out, they were supposed to show some personal appreciation related to the events. Therefore, if they were able to express one instance of it, they got two points and the maximum was only achieved if they showed two or more items of personal appreciation. In order to clarify this competence, see below some extracts of students' recount in which the personal appreciation is clearly shown. In order to facilitate the reading, all the extracts presented here were slightly corrected in terms of spelling mistakes and punctuation.

*"We made some races and we went into the second positions, rowing wasn't easy!" (second recount, experimental group)*

*"It was cold but it was the funniest day. I would repeat it again. I wanted to stay there forever. I loved it." (first recount, experimental group)*

*"It has been one of the best experiences of my life." (second recount, control group)*

Regarding the elaboration on initial ideas competence, it consisted on developing at least one idea properly and with details, which is the purpose of the recount. As some students were able to develop two events in the same recount, I assessed it as precise as possible, considering the lower punctuation if they had not elaborated any idea, the elaboration of just one idea the medium, and if they had developed more than one idea, the higher punctuation. As this competence could seem vague, there are some examples of elaborated ideas below.

*"After learning the theory we set out to find out the height of a tree. Our group, the "smart" group, had the biggest tree. So, first we measured the length of our arm, then, the length from the spot we were in, to the tree. Later, the height from our arm to the ground. After some calculations, we got it. But the thing was that we did it wrong. We were the "not so smart" group. Rosa helped us and at the end we found out the height." (second writing, experimental group)*

*"In our cabin, at night we were talking, and we should be sleeping. Then, Andrés knocked the wall two times. I thought it was a teacher so I jumped into my bed, I kick my foot into a metal bar and I started shouting. My foot began biggest, so I decided to say it to a monitor. I went out of the cabin but there was nobody. I started walking, with my lantern on, into my monitor cabin. I knocked the door but nothing happened. I went to another cabin, the one with lots of monitors. Then, a teacher called my attention "At last!" I thought. I told her that I kicked my foot and she helped me. At the morning, there was a rumour that I was sleepwalker and I was in my underwear, but it was my pyjama and I didn't have t-shirt because I sleep without t-shirt." (second writing, control group)*

*"Last week we went to Salamanca. I was at 7:00 in my cabin with all my friends. I was getting a shower and when I was showering, I opened my eye and a spider was climbing the wall. I started to shout a lot because I have terror to spiders. Paula and Inés entered running and said: "What happened?" all the water was in the floor and I put my towel and go out of the shower. Paula got a shoe and killed the spider. The other girls of the cabin started to laugh a lot, but for me it was a very bad experience." (second writing, control group)*

Focusing on the structure and organization of ideas competence, deciding the punctuation was quite easy. The structure of the recount consisted of three main parts and it was well delimited: orientation, sequence of events and conclusion. If there was no structure followed, the student got one point. If the ideas were divided into paragraphs and at least two of the parts of a recount were followed, two points. And finally, if the three stages of the structure were completely kept and the events were well-organized, the students could achieve the three points.

Regarding the fluency competence, Úriz and Whittaker suggest some fluency measures such as the number of word per clause, for instance (2005, p. 82). However, for the purpose of this study, I considered fluency as the total number of words in a text. Therefore, to divide the sections of the rubric, I had to calculate the mean of words of each group of writings and select the highest, which was 160 words, and then, divide the punctuation according to that.

And the last competence included in the rubric was the accuracy in the use of verb tenses. To assign the different punctuations, I calculate the percentage of verb tenses used correctly in each of the writings and then give the corresponding mark.

In general terms, although the elaboration of the rubric was complex, using it as a mean to assess was something very useful. After this experience, I must admit that this type of tools is a way to ensure the objectivity and be more precise in the assessment. It is useful especially in a skill such as writing, where there are so many aspects to take into account and a rubric allows the teacher to pay attention to every detail and assess the text as objective as possible.



#### 4.4 Data collection

The time planned for the data collection was the following: on the 18<sup>th</sup> April, just the first day after Easter Holidays, I asked both groups to write an anecdote or an experience that they had lived during their break. Then, during the 3, 4 and 5 May, I accomplished the creative writing activities with the experimental group. For the second writing, I waited until they came back from their four-days trip to ask them for the second writing about an event or a special experience in their excursion. As I will explain lately, it was shocking how little they had written in the first writing, and how they were able to write such long compositions when they are asked the second time.

		WRITING 1	WRITING 2
Creativity	1. Personal appreciation		
	2. Elaboration on initial ideas		
Writing competences	3. Structure, organization of ideas		
	4. Fluency of words		
	5. Accuracy in verb tenses		
Total			

*Table 2. Individual register table, used to include the points from the rubric.*

The data for this study was collected from the two writings and the use of the rubric to assess them. The register table shown below was created and it was completed for each student in order to clearly classify the punctuation (see a sample of completed tables in Appendix III).

With each student's composition, a register table was completed following the rubric's criteria and giving the corresponding punctuation to each aspect of the rubric. It was a very useful tool because it allows to see in detail the points gained in each section, so I could compare very easily the strengths and weaknesses of each students and which competences need to be emphasized.

## 5. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

For the analysis of the results obtained in this research, some basic concepts of descriptive statistics have been used, such as mean and standard deviation. Table 2 shows this data based on the final results of each writing. First, I will analyse these results in general terms, and later I would like to focus on the analysis of each of the creative and writing skills that have been developed throughout the project.

**Descriptive Statistics Results**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Stand. De.
W1_Control	23	5.00	11.00	7.30	1.743
W2_Control	23	5.00	12.00	8.47	1.927
W1_Experimental	23	5.00	14.00	7.52	2.107
W2_Experimental	23	7.00	15.00	10.69	1.893

*Table 3. Statistics based on the results of final marks.*

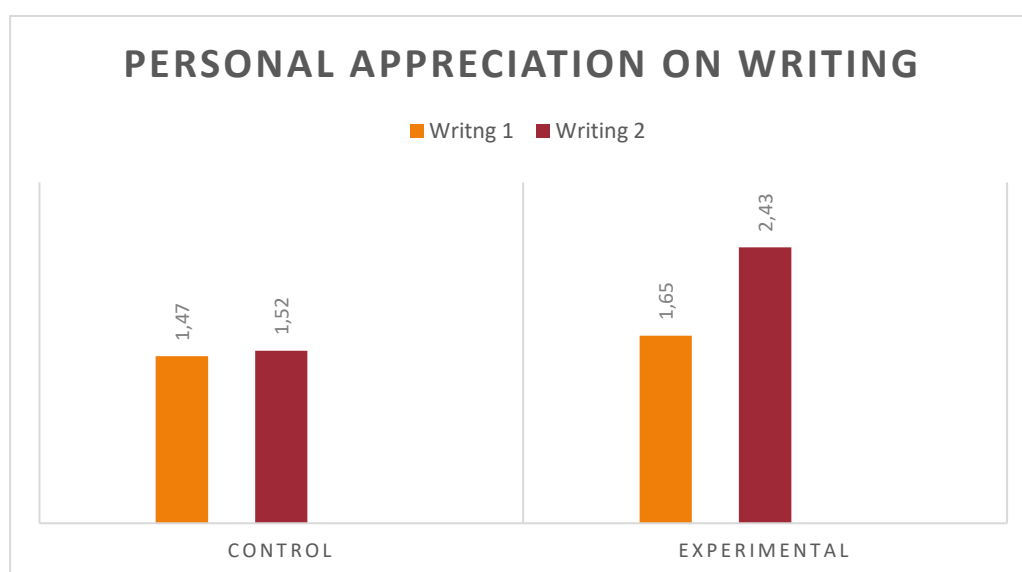
As the table shows, the study has been done with twenty-three students from each of the groups. The minimum could be five points, because there were five competences and the lower mark was one point in each of them. And the maximum punctuation could be fifteen, as there were five competences and the higher mark was three. The means, out of fifteen, reveals a generalized improvement from the first writing and the second one in both groups. What is relevant is the marked increase in the second writing of the experimental group, which goes from 7.52 to 10.69 out of 15. These results will be explained in the discussion section.

Regarding the standard deviation, which tells the differences between the results in a group in relation to the mean, there is no a high variety between the results of each of the groups. This could mean that the two classes were quite homogenous, or, it could be due to the low number of participants. I expected a higher standard deviation because of the differences among students, but it is true that, as I had to remove most of the low-level students because they did not write anything in one of the writings, the number of students left was not high enough.

From now onwards, the graphics and the analysis of the results will be based on the mean obtained in each of the aspects studied in the research, considering one point the lowest punctuation and three the highest one, as the rubric describes.

### 5.1 Results on *Personal Appreciation* reflected in writing.

This first creative competence included in the writing is the one related to the examples of personal appreciation that the student may include in the writing produced. This means, if the author shows positive or negative evaluations towards the topic he/she is writing about. In order to improve it, the creative writing activity was the one called “different ways of thinking”, in which I provided the students with realia and they had to write positive or negative statements, apart from others instructions, about the objects. In other words, they had to express personal appreciation towards those items. (Appendix)



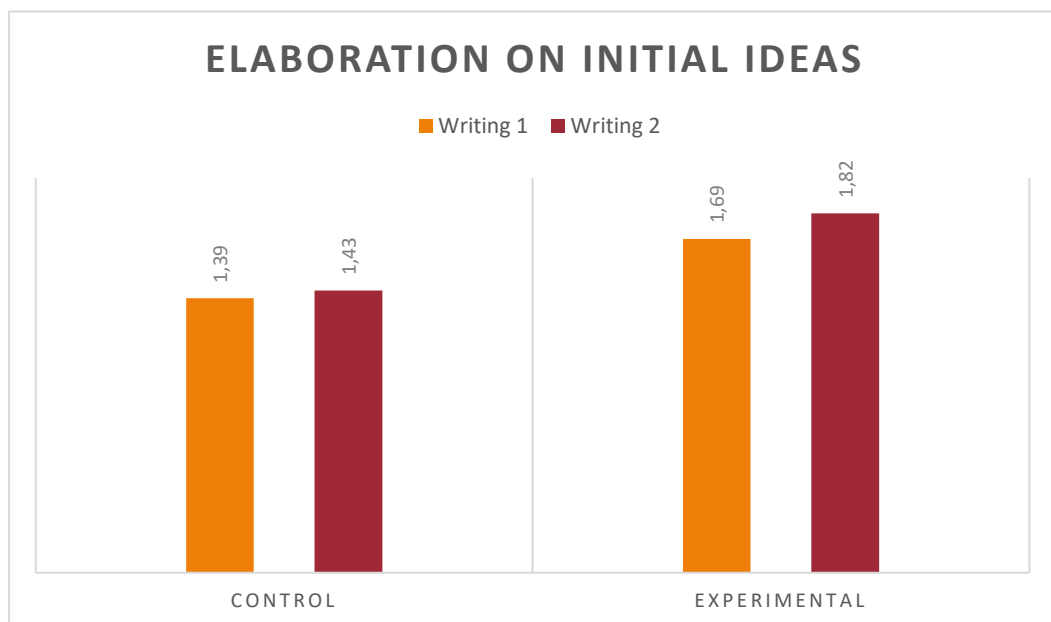
*Graph. 1 Comparison between means of the results obtained in the Personal Appreciation on writing section.*

As the graphic illustrates, the number of instances of personal evaluation that appears in the text is, in both writings, slightly higher in the experimental group, what shows an initial predisposition to show their personal appreciation in texts. However, in both classes, the second writing seems to be more personal than the first one. What

seems more interesting is the increase in the experimental group, which goes from an average of 1,65 to 2,43 points from the first composition to the second one. This fact could be due to several factors that will be discussed in the discussion section.

## 5.2 Results on *Elaboration on Initial Ideas*

The elaboration on initial ideas is an aspect that has been worked through the view of an event from a different perspective. In the worksheet, I provided the initial event, which was a version of a scary story, and the students needed to elaborate on that. In other words, this skill focused on the capacity to explain events detailed and not just as mere facts.



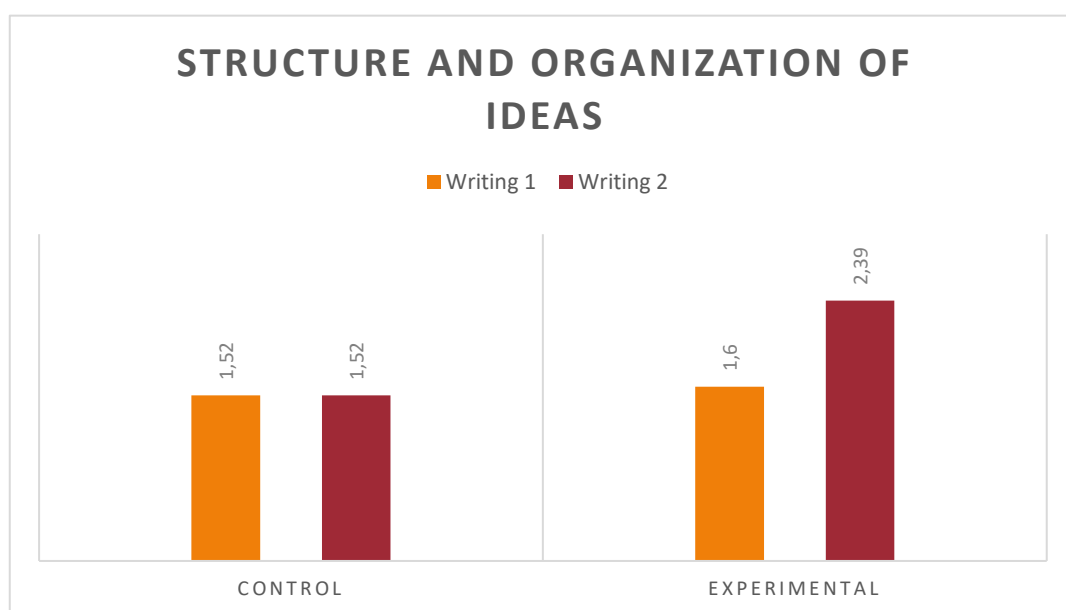
*Graph. 2. Comparison between means of the results obtained in the Elaboration on initial ideas section.*

From this bar chart, it can be seen that the experimental group seems to have a tendency to elaborate more on ideas than the control one, because not only in the second writing, but also in the first one, they tend to develop ideas by themselves. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that the improvement from the first recount to the second recount is higher in the experimental group.

Regarding the control group, the slight increase seen from one writing to the other could be due to the generalized improvement that has been mentioned in the previous analysis.

### 5.3 Results on *Structure and Organization of ideas*.

In this writing competence, the application of the formal aspect of the genre chosen was crucial, in other words, how a recount should be structured, the distribution of paragraphs and the organization of ideas were taken into account to assess it. To improve it through the creative writing sessions, the activity prepared was about re-organising a text focusing on connectors and then creating their own text following a template with the structure.



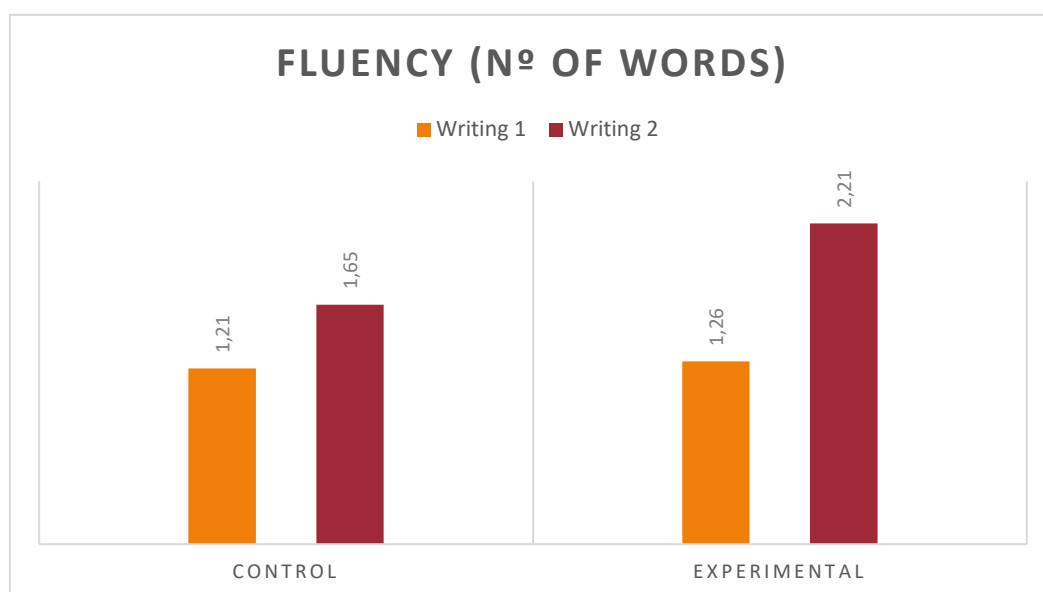
*Graph. 3 Comparison between means of the results obtained in the Structure and Organization of ideas section.*

The results collected about this writing skill are noteworthy (see graph 3 above). While the mean of punctuation obtained in the control group is exactly the same in both writings, the difference in the experimental class is noticeable. This could be due to several reasons that will be discussed below, but the main one seems to be the necessity

of explicit explanation and teaching of the genre structures, as it has been done with the creative writing activity carried out with the experimental group.

#### 5.4 Results on *Fluency*

Fluency is understood as the total number of words that a text has. This specific point was a problematic issue when the students were asked to write the first recount because many of them were complaining because they did not know what else to write. In fact, most of the writings were quite short and, as has been mentioned before, some of the texts had to be removed because they only had a sentence or a few words. Therefore, and in order to solve this problem, the activity of “Speed Writing” was created. It consisted in writing as many proper sentences as possible about a specific topic in ninety seconds.



*Graph. 4 Comparison between means of the results obtained in the Fluency section.*

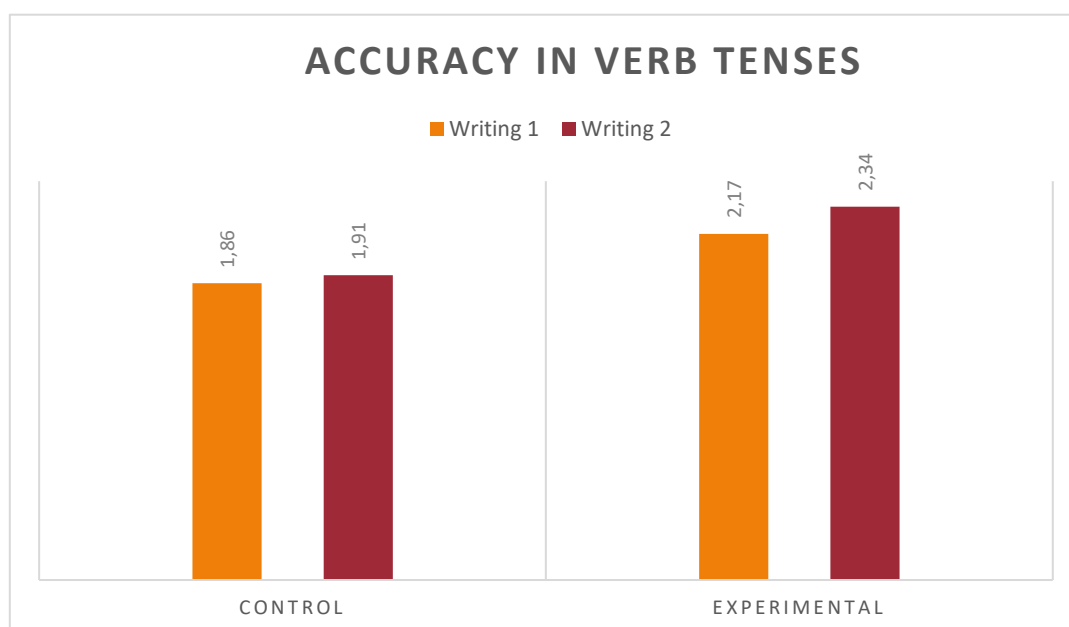
There is a high increase, illustrated in graphic 4, between writing one and writing two in both groups. However, what calls the attention is not only the increase with respect to the first writing, but the improvement of the second writing in the

experimental group, what shows the possible positive impact of the creative writing activity designed for the purpose of improving fluency.

### 5.5 Results on *Accuracy in Verb Tenses*

The accuracy in the students' use of verb tenses was measured by counting the number of verbs used in each writing and then, calculating the percentage of verbs used correctly. The creative writing activity, described in the section about procedure, together with the scaffolding thought for it, focused on the use of several verb tenses. It consisted in completing sentences that included the verb *to live* in many verb tenses, so the students needed to know the concrete use of the tense in order to complete the sentence properly. The scaffolding prepared was a similar activity with a simpler verb (to play) and it was done aloud, so everyone could finally understand the uses.

Although, in the genre of recount, the most common verb tenses are the past tenses, the activity included other more to give students the chance to improve in this aspect too and use them in the recount if they consider it appropriate.



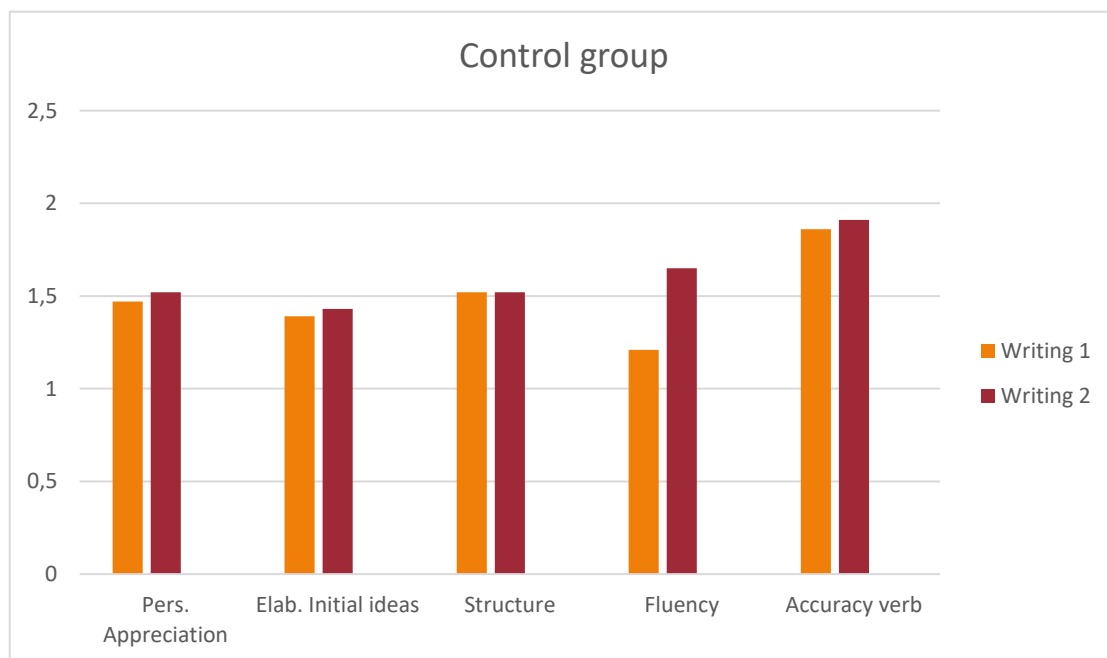
*Graph. 5 Comparison between means of the results obtained in the Accuracy in Verb Tenses section.*

The first surprising fact about this graphic is that the results related to use of verb tenses are much higher than any of the previous competences in both groups. The reflections about this fact will be explained later, but one of the main reasons for this correct use of verbs could be the fact that these students were in the bilingual section of the high school, so their proficiency in English was supposed to be higher than the students from other groups.

At the same time, it is also interesting how, as in all the previous results, in both groups there has been an improvement. It is lower in the control than in the experimental, but it is still remarkable.

## 5.6 Overall view of results

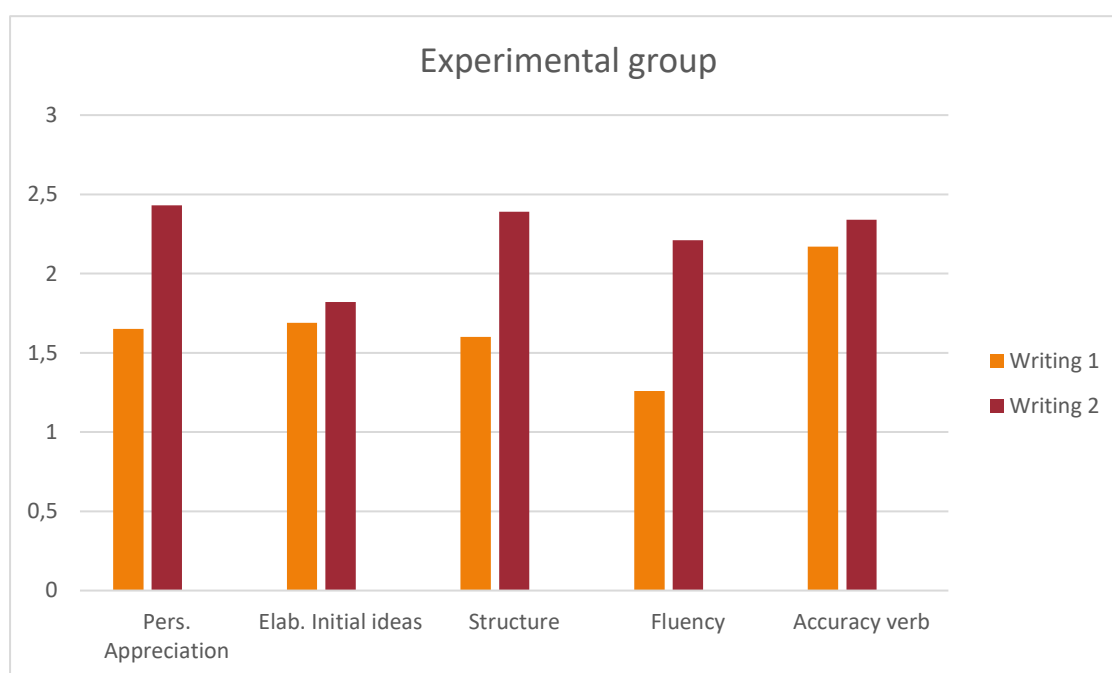
Once all the specific competences have been separately analysed, it is important to have an overview of all of them together to compare similarities and differences. The following two graphs show all the competences' results of each group.



*Graph 6. Overall view of the results obtained in each competence in control group.*



As this graphic illustrates, even it is the control group, there has been a slight improvement in most of the competences. The most remarkable progress is seen in the fluency area, as will be discussed in the discussion section. In the first recount, fluency has the lowest marks because most of the writings were quite shorts, while in the second writing, they seem to have written much more. Then, it is also interesting how the higher marks are obtained in the accuracy of verb tenses, in both, first and second writing.



*Graph 7. Overall view of the results obtained in each competence in experimental group.*

The graph above shows the progress that the experimental group has had in each of the competences. The most notable advances have taken place in three particular competences: personal appreciation, structure and organization of ideas and fluency. In the other two, there a slight improvement, but not so remarkable as the other competences.

Comparing the two last graphs, the main difference is that while the higher results of the experimental group are closer to 2,5 (being 3 points the maximum), in the control group, the highest score not even reach the 2 points. This fact demonstrate that

although there have been a general improvement, the experimental group has obtained better results in all of the competences.

In order to conclude this section, it is important to include an overview of the final results. For that, I have used Spearman correlation. I considered that the two most interesting parameters to compare would be: the first (W1) and the second writing (W2) of the experimental (E) group and then, the results from the second writing (W2) in each of the groups. This is shown in the tables below, in which the data highlighted indicates if the difference is significant or not.

#### Correlations

		W2_E	W1_E
Rho de Spearman	Coeficiente de correlación	1,000	,420
	W2_E Sig. (bilateral)	.	,046
	N	23	23
	Coeficiente de correlación	,420	1,000
	W1_E Sig. (bilateral)	,046	.
	N	23	23

*Table 4. Spearman correlation between W1 and W2 in the Experimental Group.*

The first correlation, between the two writings of the experimental group, was calculated to find if the intervention with the creative writing activities has had any influence in the second composition. In this case, the difference was significant because 0.46 is lower than 0.05. It means that there is a significant difference between the first and the second writing in the experimental group and, therefore, the creative writing activities carried out seems to have had an effect on the writing competences.

### Correlations

		w1_C	w2_C
Rho de Spearman	Coeficiente de correlación	1,000	,459*
	w1_C Sig. (bilateral)	.	,028
	N	23	23
	Coeficiente de correlación	,459*	1,000
	w2_C Sig. (bilateral)	,028	.
	N	23	23

*Table 5. Spearman correlation between W1 and W2 in the Control Group.*

In this second correlation, between the two writings of the control group, the result is very similar. As  $P=0.28$  it is also lower than 0.05, therefore, the difference is significant. These results show how relevant can be the external factors for students, as we will be explained in the discussion section.

Although in both groups the difference between writings is significant, it is relevant how the experimental group improves much more in each of the competences developed in the research, as has been shown in the graphs along this section.

## **6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS.**

As a brief synthesis of the results previously analysed, there are some main ideas that can be extracted. On the one hand, it is a fact the general improvement in both groups from the first composition to the second one. Then, it is worth mentioning the increase of fluency in both groups. After that, the accuracy in the use of verb tenses was also quite positive in the two groups. On the other hand, and focusing more precisely on the experimental group, it is important to highlight the improvement in all of the five aspects taken into account. The most striking advances were found in the personal appreciation shown in the text (see graphic 1), in the structure and organization of ideas (see graphic 3) and fluency (see graphic 4). In turn, the improvement has been very slight in the accuracy in the use of verb tenses (see graphic 5) and in the elaboration on initial ideas (see graphic 2).

From this analysis, several reflections can derive. Regarding the generalized improvement in the second writing on both groups, it could have been due to three main reasons. From my point of view, and this is a subjective perspective, the fact that when I asked for the first writing the students hardly knew me and I was unfamiliar for them can have affected the brief texts they produced. In contrast, when I demanded the second recount, we had spent much more time together, I had prepared several activities for them, apart from the ones for the project with the experimental group, I knew the students better and they knew me... In other words, the empathy between the students and me, as a teacher, was an important factor, which may have had a positive effect on the second composition.

In addition to this, they were asked to do this in the very first day after Easter Break and they could be more distracted. When the second writing was required, it was at the beginning of May, and maybe the students were more focused and willing to write. In short, once the students feel engaged with the teacher and they are concentrated enough, the general results on any writing composition tend to be higher and better.

Another interesting reason that affects both, control and experimental group, is related to the increase of fluency in the second writing. The main reason that could

explain it, apart from the connection with the teacher and the level of concentration that students may have, I believe it is the fact that the experience they had to write about was different. This means that for the first writing they had to look for an event, an anecdote or an experience they had had during their Easter Holiday and for the second composition they had to write the same but based on the trip they had had with the school. Obviously, in the case of adolescents, it is not comparable anything they could have done during the break with their families to the adventures they have had during the school-trip with their friends. At this point, the factor of motivation is crucial. Therefore, for them it was more motivating writing about the experiences they have had during the school-trip, and in fact they wrote much more words, than writing about their holidays with their parents.

Apart from that, another relevant issue to discuss is the high punctuation that both groups have achieved in the verb tense accuracy part in both writings. Grammar tends to be one of the main focuses in English lessons, however in bilingual high schools like the one in which this project has taken place, grammar is understood as something that students learn from context, not in an explicit way. As the results from this project shows, it has a positive effect on students, in the control and in the experimental group, because most of them has use the verb tenses correctly in the recounts, specially the past tenses, which are the most common ones in this type of texts. In any case, the results in this competence comparing the first writing and the second one of the experimental group shows a higher improvement.

After observing the general improvements in both groups, I would like to focus now on the improvements of the experimental group in three main areas (structure and organization of ideas, personal appreciation shown in the texts and fluency). The progress seen in the areas of personal appreciation and fluency can have similar explanations. The first reason could be the one explained above about the motivation of writing about a school-trip. Maybe it could be easier to express positive or negative feelings, that is, the personal appreciation aspect, and to write more words, which represents fluency, about a topic that really matters to the students such as the trip they made.

Nevertheless, the improvement seen in the experimental group with respects to the control group in these two aspects is much higher. This could mean that, apart from the reasons explained before, the creative writing activities have had an important effect too. With the two worksheets that were used to practice these two competences, students could have realized the importance that was given to showing their feelings and opinions in this type of writings. In addition, they were also trained in writing as many words as possible about a topic and using proper sentences, and for that they were more prepared to think and write fluently.

Regarding the progress achieved in the structure and organization of ideas, it is important to describe the type of creative writing activities carried out (see Appendix) because they seem to have had a significant effect on the results in this aspect of the second writing. The first part consisted on the organization of some paragraphs of a recount, and therefore, they had to elicit the structure guided by some chronological connectors. After that, they had to imagine their own recount and fulfil a template, which was a visual aid, following the different parts discovered before and using some of the connectors mentioned in the previous activity. From my point of view, this was a very efficient way to introduce the form of the genre of recount, and the results demonstrate it.

Before concluding this section, it is important to summarize the results in relation to the research questions of the project:

- Can creative writing inspired activities have any influence on writing general competences? And, if so, in which aspects (fluency, accuracy in verb tenses, organization of ideas...) does it have more impact?

Creative writing, as has been proved, has an influence on general writing competences. The activities prepared were focused on five different writing skills and in most of them there has been a positive impact. In the experimental group, thanks to the activities and some other external factors, the improvement on writing competences is obvious in three of the five aspects. The students of this group have had progress in fluency, in the personal appreciation shown in texts and in the way of structuring and organizing ideas when writing a recount. However, it is true that the improvement in

the accuracy of verb tenses and the elaboration on initial ideas was not so relevant. For that reason, it is important to find different activities that could lead to advances in those areas.

- How do students response towards introducing creative writing in English lessons?

At first, most of the students were shocked when they were asked to do the activities. In some of the activities, they were not told exactly what to write and they needed to use their imagination or let their main think freely, without being told what they were supposed to write. The idea of “everything you write is fine”, as long as it follows the instructions, was difficult for them to assimilate. However, as the activities were little by little completed, they all caught the idea and they started to feel more comfortable, they asked less questions and they looked happier doing the activities. To sum up, this first nuisance at the beginning could mean the lack of habit in this type of writing, so maybe it is important to try and give them more opportunities to use creative writing in other moments.

## **7. LIMITATIONS AND PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED IN THE PRESENT STUDY**

Throughout this paper it has been mentioned, more than once, that we are dealing with a limited study due to several reasons. First of all, the creative writing activities were carried out within three days, so there was no possibility of following any of the groups through a certain period of time to identify long-term improvements in writing competences.

Another problem related with the limitation of time was that the topic, that is the experiences lived before writing each of the recount, could not be compared. In other words, for the students, it is not the same to write an event or an anecdote about their Easter Break, in which not all of them had had the chance to travel or to do exciting things, as writing about a trip that they have shared with their classmates, far from home, where they have done exciting activities and they are willing to talk (or write) about it. However, as this part of the Practicum only took one month and a half, I did not have the opportunity to ask them after another vacation time. In order to follow closely their progress, it would be very interesting to ask for a recount after each holiday (one after summer holidays, another one after Christmas and a last one after Easter) and compare them to see if there is any improvement.

Another limitation was the number of students in which the study has been based. The fact that I had to disregard many of them because they did not write anything in one of the two compositions, left the project with a low number of participants. Therefore, the results of this study may not be as binding as the ones obtained from other investigations with a higher number of participants.

Moreover, the genre selected, the recount, at first, was not the most appropriate to elicit creative writing. As it has been explained in the theoretical background, there are some aspects that can justify the connection between both, but it was not the ideal type of text. Asking for a tale or a short story, for example, would have been perfect to develop the originality and imagination of creative writing, but there was a big inconvenient: the students had been involved in a project about fairy tales a few weeks before, so maybe it would have been repetitive and unnecessary for them to keep writing and working on tales for another period of time.



One last problem was related to the theoretical basis of the study. There are many studies done about creativity in teenagers, but it was hard to find research more specific about creativity and writing performance. For that reason, it was very difficult to find a solid theoretical basis about the topic that I chose.

Despite these limitations, it seems that this research has provided some interesting results about the possibilities and the benefits of including creative writing in L2 classes. At the same time, it highlights the positive impact that using creativity seems to have on the writing performance of students, particularly in some areas. Therefore, even it is a limited research, it could lead other teachers to perform it in their classes and to investigate more about the topic.

## **8. PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are several pedagogical applications of this research. First of all, while doing the reflection about the activities and considering the positive students' responses, the ideas of including a creative writing workshop in the syllabus came to my mind. It would need to be adapted to the characteristics of the group of students, such as age, their motivations and interests, or their necessities, but it could have a very positive impact. Then, each of the activities presented in the project can have many others purposes in any ESL lesson, as it is going to be developed later in this section. Finally, as creativity and teaching English, from my point of view, is such an appealing topic, some future research is suggested in order to go in depth and find new ideas.

The possible creative writing workshop would take place during an hour per week, so the teacher could follow the scheduled syllabus, and it would include teamwork writing activities as well as individual worksheets, like the ones prepared for this project. For the assessment, considering the many benefits of applying a rubric, the same one presented in this project could be used, as it includes creative aspects and writing competences. Or, as an alternative, it can be done through the realization of a portfolio where the students would be able to include all the compositions they have done thanks to the creative writing activities during the year and a reflection about their progress. In this way, the teacher can assess classwork, writing skills, progress, interest... and as many aspects as wanted. This portfolio can be part of the continuous assessment and it can represent a certain percentage of the final mark. In this way, it is not directly graded, but it counts as part of the final result.

Apart from that idea, all the creative writing activities presented in this study can have other pedagogical applications, different from the ones proposed in this study. For example, the "Speed writing" worksheet could be an interesting resource to have prepared if there is extra time in some classes. It is easy for the teacher to prepare and simple to explain in a few minutes. The "Speed writing" technique could be used, also, as a warm-up activity if the teacher wants to activate the previous knowledge that students may have about a certain topic and focus their attention towards a new didactic unit, for instance. Besides, it can be motivating for some students because it

shows, in a very direct way, the progress that they have had and how the number of words and, therefore, their fluency, increases day by day.

Another example of activity that can be exploited in other ways is the one called “Same event, different perspectives”. In this one, students read a short scary story, they identify the characters and rewrite the story from a different perspective. The teacher can change the text and adapt it to the requirements of a specific didactic unit, but the idea of telling a story from another perspective is something interesting and, apart from developing students’ imagination, they have the opportunity to develop their writing competences in an original way.

Moreover, the “Live the life” worksheet can also have different pedagogical applications. It can be used to revise verb tenses before a grammar exam, for instance, or it can help students to compare different verb tenses together. Moreover, it can be very useful to fix the verb structures and the usage of each verb tense while talking about personal experiences, and it is done in a way that differs from the usual workbook grammar exercises that most of the students normally abhor.

And even the activity about the structure of a recount, the one entitled “My adventure in a farm”, can be exploited with a genre different from the recount. The same procedure of delivering the text divided into paragraphs and asking to organize it, followed for this project, can be used. Besides, the visual organizer with the parts of a recount can be prepared for another type of text, such as advantages and disadvantages essay, for example, and it would be a very helpful tool for students to face new types of writings for the first time.

Along the lines of future research, it would be interesting to analyse in detail each of the answers of the activities. Compare the type of errors, with what kind of activities the students feel more comfortable, what topics they prefer to write about, the content of each activity... In fact, with some of the activities, the teacher can even identify social features of the group, such as friendships or acceptance of a person in the group. However, in this research, due to time limitations again, it was not possible to go deeper, but the door is opened for future investigation.

In addition to this, it would have been very interesting to have a higher number of participants and therefore the results would have been clearer and more relevant. For that reason, I suggest to enrich the studies in this field with more researches about it in which the number of participants is really significant.

Furthermore, as the results reveal, some of the competences worked (elaboration on initial ideas and accuracy in the use of verb tenses) did not achieve the results expected and the difference between their punctuation in the first writing and in the second one was not relevant. Therefore, for future research, it would be interesting to look for other techniques or activities inspired by creative writing to improve these two aspects.

Enhancing creativity and writing competences at the same time is a long process that requires interest and more research in the field. For that, in the future, it would be interesting to research new ways which include enhancing creativity and improving academic competences at the same time. Therefore, with this study, I hope to encourage other teachers to bring creativity in their classes, not only because it would be positive for their students, but also because it is an enriching experience for both, students and teachers.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS**

There is no doubt of the relevance of creativity in today's world but, how can we, ESL teachers, include creativity in our classes? And how can we take advantage of it for the progress of our students in some aspects of the language? The answer would be introducing creative writing.

The present study has dealt with an issue that has seldom been researched, which is the possibility of improving the students' writing skills through the use of creative writing activities. Each of the writing competences included in the research are essential for the complete development of the students as efficient writers and, for that reason, they were chosen for the study.

From the analysis of the research that has been performed, it is possible to conclude that, leaving aside external factors, using creative writing as a tool to improve general writing competences has a positive result. It is true that the impact has not been the same on all of the competences analysed: in some of them the improvement has been more important than in others, but, in general, the results are positive. This leads to think of future implementation, such as different ways to confront the aspects in which the progress has not been so obvious.

Despite the limitations mentioned, this research has provided some interesting results about the benefits of including creative writing in English classes. At the same time, it highlights the positive impact that using creativity could have on the writing performance of students. Therefore, even it is a limited research, it could lead other teachers to perform it in their classes and to investigate more about the topic.

The study also reveals the necessity to include more creative activities in the English classes, not only at the level of writing, as this project proposed, but also at other levels, such as oral expression, for example. Definitely, and as the response of most the students shows, creativity is an aspect that is hardly worked in high schools. As it has been seen, the possibilities of including creative writing into English classes are large and the results are mostly positive, therefore, it is in our hands to make an effort and try to bring creativity into our classes.

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## **APPENDIX I. CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES WORKSHEETS**

APPENDIX 1.1 SPEED WRITING

APPENDIX 1.2 SAME EVENT, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

APPENDIX 1.3 DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING

APPENDIX 1.4 LIVE THE LIFE

APPENDIX 1.5 MY ADVENTURE IN A FARM

Name\_\_\_\_\_

## **SPEED WRITING**

**Write as much as you can in 90 seconds about the topics given. You have to write proper sentences, not just ideas.**

Topic day 1:

Number of words

Topic day 2:

Number of words

Topic day 3:

Number of words



Name\_\_\_\_\_

## **SAME EVENT, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES**

### **1. Read the following scary story**

A married couple were on their way home from a party when they saw a young girl on the side of a country road. They stopped and gave her a lift in their car. The girl's name was Lucy and she lived in a cottage opposite the pub in the next village.

For the whole journey, Lucy didn't say very much. All she did was look out of the window. So the couple drove quietly to her village. When they arrived at Lucy's cottage, the man turned around to speak to her – but she wasn't there!

The man was very surprised. He knocked on the door of the cottage to tell the people there about Lucy. When he described her, it became clear that she was their lost daughter. Several years before, she disappeared while waiting for a lift on that same country road.

### **2. Rewrite the event from the point of view of one of the characters**

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Name\_\_\_\_\_

## **DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING**

**Choose one object and try to write...**

- a. One sad sentence about it**
  
- b. One false sentence about it**
  
- c. One clear and objective sentence about it**
  
- d. One very simple sentence (as if you were five years old)**
  
- e. One sentence as if you were ninety years old**

Name\_\_\_\_\_

## **LIVE THE LIFE**

**Complete the following sentences with true information about your life.  
Please, pay attention to the tense and write the sentence according to the  
verb tense. Try to include as many details as possible.**

**I live...**

**I lived...**

**I was living...**

**I have lived....**

**I will be living...**

**I would have liked to live...**

**I would live...**

**I wish I lived...**

# MY ADVENTURE IN A FARM I

(Cut the text into paragraphs and ask to organize it paying attention to connectors and chronological order) Once it is organized, ask the students to identify the linkers reflect on the structure of the text: What does the writer explain in the first paragraph? And in the last one?

## Woollahra Farm Excursion

Last Tuesday Red class went by bus to Woollahra Farm. We were all very excited. The golden sun was shining brightly as we headed to the farm along the long winding road.

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As soon as we arrived, we washed our hands so that we could touch the animals without giving them germs. Although I was looking forward to getting close to the animals I was a bit nervous of seeing the cows. First we went to the dairy shed to watch the large cows being milked by a machine. Despite feeling a bit nervous, it was really interesting to watch.

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Afterwards, we fed a cute baby goat with the bottle. I discovered that they can be quite strong when they want to be. Before long it was time to see the chickens. We held the fluffy yellow chicks in our hands. The feet felt very tickly. It was a very busy day. We fed ponies, goats, donkeys, sheep and deer.

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At the end of the day we went back to school. I liked feeding the ponies the best. I discovered that working on a farm is a lot hard work!

Name\_\_\_\_\_

## MY ADVENTURE IN A FARM II

### HOW TO ORGANIZE IT

Following this template and using some of the linkers we have seen in the previous activity, try to imagine your own trip to a farm.

**Orientation** (Introducing place, time, participants...)

**Events** (Describing series of event that happened in the past. It can be divided in some paragraphs.)

**Reorientation** (Stating personal comment to the story)

## **APPENDIX II. SAMPLES OF THE STUDENT'S RECOUNTS**

APPENDIX 2.1 FIRST WRITING CONTROL GROUP

APPENDIX 2.2 SECOND WRITING CONTROL GROUP

APPENDIX 2.3 FIRST WRITING EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

APPENDIX 2.4 SECOND WRITING EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

## APPENDIX 2.1 FIRST WRITING CONTROL GROUP

Carmen T. [REDACTED]

# MY EASTER HOLIDAYS

## KEY WORDS

- Food
- Friends
- Fun
- Trip in the car
- TV serie
- wake up very late
- family
- Church
- warner

In my Easter Break I had a lot of fun.

On Friday I went with my friends to a park to spend the afternoon. Saturday and Sunday I spend it in my home and on Monday I went out with my friends again.

On Tuesday I went to the Warner Park that is a fun fair, there i had a lot of fun with my family and friends.

## APPENDIX 2.2 SECOND WRITING CONTROL GROUP

Iván

### My experiences at "El Guijo"

Well, the first day (night) at 2 ~~noon~~ o'clock my friend Lucas pretended to be sleepwalking and Hector was scared so he called a monitor. Then, Lucas stop pretending and he slept. That was my funny experience, my fun experience is the kayak day.

This is the second day, at the morning we went kayaking with the sea flip-flops and shorts. We started with kayaks, I was supposed to be with my partners at the same kayaks, but I don't know why they put me alone with a teacher. It was a mess because first we went to some rocks, then to a house and then to the camp, the water was so cold. The teacher and I were the fastest.

Then we jumped into the pedalboat, it was amazing because we were five and no teacher, so we had a lot of fun.

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Scared	Cabin
Hector	First day
Lucas	Kayaks
Bed	Pedalboat



## APPENDIX 2.3 FIRST WRITING EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Pool

Breakfast

Beach

Incredible

Family

Friends

tourism

hot  
football

### Easter Break

In this Easter Break I went to Munich  
and there in Munich my favorite thing was the football stadium  
of Bayern Munich because it was enormous and incredible  
and also because I love football and I was excited

Alvard

Cristina

# EL GUIJO

Cabins Kayak English Monitors Partners Salamanca  
Rain Climbing

Last week we went to EL GUIJO, in Salamanca. We stayed there four days and we did lots of activities each one. But my favourite day has been wednesday because we did Kayak. It was very cold and it rained but it was the best one.

That morning, when we went to the cabins after breakfast, our monitor Sara told us to put our bikini, that meanted that we were going Kayaking. There was a lake next to the camp. First we went Kayaking from the camp to a bridge, and then we went back in pedal boats. The Kayak was very small but we had a lot of fun. All the monitors were splashing and we got very wet. The water was very cold, and the weather to. We where four people on the pedal boats. We had turns to pedal because it was very tired. Our boat was the last one to arrive the camp, because it was very cold and our feets couldn't pedal more. Two monitors with Kayaks helped us to get back.

It was to cold but it was the funniest day. I would repeat it again. I wanted to stay there... I loved it...

**APPENDIX III A. EXAMPLE OF COMPLETE RESGISTER TABLES FROM EXPERIM. GROUP.**

	<b>Student's name 1</b>	<b>WRITING 1</b>	<b>WRITING 2</b>
Creativity	1. Personal appreciations	1	2
	2. Elaboration on initial ideas	2	2
Language Proficiency	3. Structure, organization of ideas	1	3
	4. Fluency of words	1	2
	5. Accuracy in verb tenses	2	2
Total		7/15	11/15

	<b>Student's name 2</b>	<b>WRITING 1</b>	<b>WRITING 2</b>
Creativity	1. Personal appreciations	2	2
	2. Elaboration on initial ideas	1	1
Language Proficiency	3. Structure, organization of ideas	2	3
	4. Fluency of words	2	3
	5. Accuracy in verb tenses	3	3
Total		10/15	12/15

	<b>Student's name 3</b>	<b>WRITING 1</b>	<b>WRITING 2</b>
Creativity	1. Personal appreciations	1	1
	2. Elaboration on initial ideas	1	1
Language Proficiency	3. Structure, organization of ideas	1	2
	4. Fluency of words	1	2
	5. Accuracy in verb tenses	1	2
Total		5/15	8/15

**APPENDIX III B. EXAMPLE OF COMPLETE RESGISTER TABLES FROM CONTROL GROUP.**

	<b>Student's name 1</b>	<b>WRITING 1</b>	<b>WRITING 2</b>
Creativity	1. Personal appreciations	1	1
	2. Elaboration on initial ideas	2	2
Language Proficiency	3. Structure, organization of ideas	1	2
	4. Fluency of words	1	2
	5. Accuracy in verb tenses	2	3
Total		7/15	10/15

	<b>Student's name 1</b>	<b>WRITING 1</b>	<b>WRITING 2</b>
Creativity	1. Personal appreciations	2	2
	2. Elaboration on initial ideas	1	1
Language Proficiency	3. Structure, organization of ideas	1	1
	4. Fluency of words	2	2
	5. Accuracy in verb tenses	2	3
Total		8/15	9/15

	<b>Student's name 1</b>	<b>WRITING 1</b>	<b>WRITING 2</b>
Creativity	1. Personal appreciations	2	1
	2. Elaboration on initial ideas	1	2
Language Proficiency	3. Structure, organization of ideas	1	2
	4. Fluency of words	1	2
	5. Accuracy in verb tenses	1	1
Total		6/15	8/15