



“Do e-portfolios benefit writing skills?”

Master's report

ALEXANDRA GÓMEZ SALAZAR

UNIVERSIDAD ICESI

ESCUELA DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

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Alexandra Gómez Salazar

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Director: JoEllen Simpson, PhD.

General Director of Centro Cultural Colombo Americano

Profesor: Sandra Peña Bernate. Máster

Universidad Icesi

Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación

Master's Program in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

Writing is an important communication tool. Writing skills are important because they help students become independent, be comprehensible and fluent. Since writing is a communication tool, it is important not only because of what you can convey through it but because it can say a lot of the person who writes.

This will be a case study, developed with a group of students from level eight, the last level English course at Icesi. Icesi's students come from Cali's different social strata and therefore from public and private schools as well. In this last level, improving students' writing skills is one of the objectives. I have seen that students have problems writing, this is why I decided to research how to help improve this skill with the use of a technological tool.

Key words:

Writing, e-portfolios, L2 writing, process writing, second language learning

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I. Introduction

Currently I am teaching the last English level at Icesi. I am a relatively new teacher and when I started teaching I saw that students taking the last level of English were not good at writing. First of all, they did not like to write and they had trouble writing. At this time, Level VIII English was following a textbook, and the writing activities that were required were limited both in quantity as well as in length. About three years ago, the Language Department decided to change levels VII and VIII completely. This change involved changing the emphasis to writing and to discard the textbook. A group of teachers from each level developed the syllabus and the materials that were going to be used in these two levels. The other five levels were also restructured to include more writing activities which were designed according to each level.

Regardless of the changes made, I am still getting students with writing difficulties. From my experience, I believe that these difficulties are because students are not required to write in English in any other class. Besides, they only practice spoken and written English during class. Students generally have difficulties developing proper and correct writing skills, for example paragraph structure and punctuation.

Since writing skills are more difficult to develop in an L2, during my classes I have always tried to focus on the common errors the group has and give extra material to help students address individual issues. I have also asked students to write at least one draft, to which I give feedback in order to help

them improve their writing for the final version. I have also tried having them receive peer feedback. As a result, there is a lot of paper moving back and forth between students and me but all of this seems to work because at the end of the semester I have seen improvement in the essays they write.

Seeing this, and wanting to apply what I have learned during the master's program, I decided to try using technology to help us handle this paper work and have everything located in one space where anyone can access easily and without fear of losing the work done. Therefore, in this research project, I seek to find if technological tools can help students overcome some of the weaknesses they have. Therefore, and besides the centralization and management of written work, the focus of this research is to find if electronic portfolio benefits help students overcome their writing problems.

II. Problem formulation

The approach adopted by the Language Department at Universidad Icesi to teach the different languages is the Communicative Approach. Therefore the programs were focused on the oral part of the communication in which it made sure that students were able to communicate adequately in English. This changed some years ago when the head of the Language Department decided that the last two levels had to focus on enhancing students' writing skills since most of Icesi's students were interested in pursuing graduate studies abroad. Due to this, the Language Department changed the programs for levels VII and VIII to make emphasis on written communication without leaving out oral production.

Since the changes made in the English program for level VII and VIII, the difficulties students have with their writing skills has become more evident. It has not been enough to teach grammar, reading and listening comprehension. It is not safe to assume that teaching these students will automatically have good writing skills. Although all of these contribute to develop writing skills, the lack of a strong written requirement has not been useful.

Furthermore, there is a previous research project related with this subject. It is a master's report that has an emphasis on identifying types of written errors Icesi's students of all levels of English courses have. The author classified errors into nine different categories (Shah, 2014). This previous study will be used to classify the errors found in the group that we are going to work with (Shah, 2014).

Since writing is emphasized in the last two levels, it is important to identify how English teachers can help their students develop their writing skills. It is important for teachers to help students develop their writing skills not only for personal growth but because this skill is something that will help them in their future. One way to accomplish this is through the use of technology.

a. Research question

How will the use of an electronic portfolio benefit the development of writing skills of students in English level VIII at Universidad Icesi?

b. Objectives

i. General objective

Establish the relationship between the use of an electronic portfolio and the development of writing skills of a group of students from level VIII at Universidad Icesi.

ii. Specific objectives

1. Identify the most common errors that students have in their written work that are going to be addressed with the use of the electronic portfolio.
2. Evaluate the development of level VIII students' writing skills during one semester.
3. Identify the characteristics of the portfolio that can possibly benefit the development of writing skills.
4. Establish the relationship between the use of a portfolio and the development of writing skills.

c. Relevance

Since I am a relatively new teacher, the findings in this research will allow me to find out if the activities that I have been doing in my class have been helpful for my students and if involving technology in teaching will really help students learn. I would also like to learn if the use of technology facilitates the sharing of documents, the multiple revisions and the peer feedback process.

Since most of the teachers from the Language Department are facing the same kind of issues, what I want to achieve through this project is to help both students and teachers in their teaching and learning process of writing. As a language teacher, I am looking for a tool and strategies that can help me help my students improve their writing skills throughout the semester. Since my students are young men and women, I am interested in finding a technological tool that will help them improve their writing skills as well as engage them in the writing process in L2.

With this research project I want to first of all find common grounds between my two fields of work, systems engineering and teaching. Secondly I wish to find new ways to help my students and to engage them in their learning process through the use of elements they use in their everyday life. If I am successful in teaching them how to use technology in their benefit and that at the same time this benefit involves learning improvement, I will feel very grateful and with high hopes for future students.

Hopefully my findings and my experience with this research will help other teachers help students develop and improve their writing skills through the implementation of the writing process and through the multiple revisions and feedback. Furthermore, I hope this research will also be of help to all language teachers.

Once this research is finished, the hope is that it will become an example of how through the use of technology, teachers from the Language Department can help students with the development of their writing skills.

III. Theoretical Framework

a. Learning English as a second language

There are two distinct ways in which someone can develop a language ability: acquisition and learning. The difference between the two is in how the process takes place. Here, according to Krashen (1981), acquisition the process is very similar to what a child uses when acquiring their first language, in other words, the process is subconscious. In this sense, “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.” (1981, p. 2). The learning process on the other hand is

conscious and is developed through language lessons, that is, through formal instruction, and focusing on grammatical features of the target language. Therefore, it is helped by error correction and by the presentation of explicit rules. The way a person develops language ability affects how they develop the different language skills.

Second language learners bring a lot of knowledge along into the L2 learning process. On one hand, they know how their mother language works and they can use it to help them in their L2 learning. According to Ellis (1997, p. 5) "L2 learners bring an enormous amount of knowledge to the task of learning an L2. For a start, they have already learned a language (their mother tongue) and we can expect them to draw on this when they learn an L2. They also possess general knowledge about the world which they can draw on to help them understand L2 input. Finally, learners possess communication strategies that can help them make effective use of their L2 knowledge."

On the other hand, this background knowledge can affect either positively or negatively the L2 process and development. For Krashen (1981, p. 71), "L1 may 'substitute' for the acquired L2 as an utterance initiator when the performer has to produce in the target language but has not acquired enough of the L2 to do this. First language influence may therefore be an indication of low acquisition. If so, it can be eliminated or at least reduced by natural intake and language use." In my short teaching experience, I have seen that students tend to write as they speak in L1, use false cognates or invent words in order to express their ideas. Sometimes this will help them,

but sometimes it will make the ideas confusing affecting the communication process.

b. Writing skills

Writing is an important communication tool. Writing skills are important because they help students become independent, be comprehensible and fluent. Since writing is a communication tool, it is important not only because of what you can convey through it but because it can say a lot of the person who writes.

Writing difficulties are not an exclusive issue for second language, it is also an issue in the first language. "Learning to write in either a first or second language is one of the most difficult tasks a learner encounters." (Richards, 1990) Richards also expresses that "learning to write well is a difficult and lengthy process" (p. 101). This is because in some schools, students are not expected to write much or the requirements for writing are not so strict. There is also the belief that if a student does not have good writing skills in L1, their L2 writing skills will also be weak, besides of having different writing issues which vary according to their L1. Writing in a FL is more challenging.

According to Silva (1993), there is also the misconception that there is no difference between L1 and L2 writing. This makes no sense at all because there are L1 differences that can affect L2, such as vocabulary, syntax and

grammar to mention some. The results from his study show that although composing patterns are similar, in L2 written texts are more difficult to write because they require more effort, the text is less effective, shorter and of lower quality. Students have more difficulties to generate and organize their ideas. What Silva's (1993) research concluded was that although at first glance L1 writing is similar to L2 writing, there still are big differences in the language use and the writing style. He illustrates this by stating "Clearly, L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing. Therefore, L2 writing specialists need to look beyond L1 writing theories, to better describe the unique nature of L2 writing, to look into the potential sources (e.g., cognitive, developmental, social, cultural, educational, linguistic)." (Silva, 1993, p. 669)

For Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2001, p. 146) "there is good reason to believe that having a good foundation in writing in one's first language can help one eventually become a good writer in a second language". This statement from Celce-Murcia supports my belief that it is important to have good writing skills in L1 in order to be able to a good writer in L2. This is because they will bring the writing structure in their mind which will make writing easier in L2.

Therefore, some strategies to help students improve their writing are: first of all to provide an environment that makes them feel comfortable. Secondly, provide students with examples so that they know what is expected from them. Finally working writing as a process giving students the opportunity to review and correct their work before handing in the last draft.

Nowadays, there is another reason that has affected writing: technology. Its immediacy and the requirement of short texts and messages causes people to start using abbreviations and to shorten words in an inappropriate way. There are many reasons why college students often do not have college level writing skills. Some of my coworkers, teachers teaching English and Comunicación Oral y Escrita, believe that one of the reasons why writing has decayed in our time is the use of email but especially text messaging, in which briefness often is more relevant than grammatical accuracy. What teachers fear is that many students fail to distinguish between situations in which good writing does not matter, and those in which it is very important. There is also a common belief among students, they think that writing is not very important and they will not need this skill in their future professional lives (Simkin, Crews, & Groves, 2012).

c. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a support for English writing

In order to help students overcome their writing issues, several strategies have been proposed. One of them is the type of feedback the teacher provides the student. Students expect feedback to know if they have succeeded in their writing tasks and what they need to improve in future writings. In order to accomplish this and to ensure follow up and development, it is necessary to make use of an instrument that will help make this work easier. The instrument that is going to be in this case study is electronic portfolios.

There are different types of portfolios (Burner, 2014; Barrett, 2007; Shlayer, 2000; Paesani, 2006; Song & August, 2002): performance portfolio, best work portfolio, writing portfolio, literacy portfolio and student anthology portfolio. Each portfolio is differentiated by the type of work students are asked to do. The performance portfolio is used for students to demonstrate what they are capable of doing over a period of time. This type of portfolio could be used in a course where students need to show their learning progress, for example in a designing course. The best work portfolio is the one where students get to select between four and six examples of their best work. This type of portfolio can be used in those courses where we want students to collect what they consider their best work. This type of portfolio can be useful in a writing class as well as in an art or design class. The writing portfolio is the one which contains work that shows students writing development. This type of portfolio is intended to help students develop their writing and reading skills as well as to improve their grammatical competence. This is the type of portfolio I recommend and the one I will continue using. The literacy portfolio is where students save the work that shows their development as a reader as well as their personal development as critical readers. Finally, the student anthology portfolio is the one where students find a global theme for the anthology and save pieces of literature that they like. (Shlayer, 2000). These last two types of portfolios are better for courses where reading and reading reflection is a major component. For example, they could be used in a literature course where students are expected to write summaries and critical analysis of the pieces they read.

Portfolios are also classified as formative or summative. A formative portfolio is when it is used as a report for parents and to provide information

concerned with the process of learning, strengths and weaknesses. A summative portfolio focuses on the learning outcomes instead of the process. This type of portfolio is usually graded using a rubric and is usually structured using goals and standards (Khoosf & Khosravani, 2014) (Barrett, 2006).

“An educational portfolio contains work that a learner has collected, reflected upon, selected, and presented to show growth and change over time” (Barrett, 2007, p. 1). Portfolios have been used to keep track of students’ progress during a course. It is a collection of writings kept in a folder. It can also be used to prepare to collect information for longer writing projects. These portfolios are usually kept physically and either the student or the teacher stores them. The use of portfolios is helpful because it can help the teacher keep track of the students’ progress and to help each student with their individual needs and writing issues. A portfolio focuses on process and progress. There are nine characteristics that a writing portfolio has: “collection of texts, range of performance, delayed evaluation, promoting time for revision, selection of texts, student centered control, reflection, self-assessment, growth along specific parameters and development over time which provides evidence of progress.” (Burner, 2014, p. 2) All of these are characteristics that portfolios foster.

Collection of texts refers to saving all the papers to keep track and to reflect progress over time. By range of performance it means to follow and to check the improvement of the work. Delayed evaluation means giving students more time to revise and edit which is beneficial because it helps overcome

the anxiety students feel when they have to write. Promoting time for revision, reflection and self-assessment refers to the opportunity students have to revise and think about their work over time, promoting interactive feedback, and ends up in student's growth. Portfolios also allow the promotion of student centered control, because it puts the student in the center of the learning process. This last characteristic is one of the greatest value because in building them, students become active participants in their learning process.

A number of authors (Chang, Wu, & Ku, 2005; Khoosf & Khosravani, 2014; Song & August, 2002; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 1993) state and agree that portfolios require planning, lots of work and are very time consuming. Another issue these authors mention is the validity of portfolios. To this, Shlayer (2000) says that the validity of portfolios is if they meet the following criteria:

- Reflect work that students are doing in class
- Students have free choice of what they put in the portfolio.
- Students are aware of the weight the portfolio has in their overall assessment.

The validity of portfolios, along with design decision, logistics and interpretation can be considered as disadvantages of the use of portfolios. In order for portfolio usage to be successful, it requires teachers to include the portfolio in the syllabus, prepare lesson plans that use the portfolio, orient

students on their drafts, give feedback and evaluate the portfolio. All these activities are labor intensive (Song & August, 2002).

An e-portfolio (electronic portfolio) is an electronic collection of evidence that shows learning process over time. Evidence may include writing samples, photos, videos, research projects, observations by mentors and peers, and/or reflective thinking. For Barret “an electronic portfolio is not a haphazard collection of artifacts (i.e., a digital scrapbook or multimedia presentation) but rather a reflective tool that demonstrates growth over time.” (2000).

From the above, it can be said that besides benefiting students in their writing process, portfolios can also make “the language learning process more visible to learners, developing their capacity for reflection and self-assessment, and thus enabling them gradually to assume more and more responsibility for their own learning.” (Khoosf & Khosravani, 2014, p. 506)

From the above, I can see there are several types of portfolios and different ways of doing assessment with them. According to my course and student’s needs, the best type of portfolio for my case is the writing portfolio.

A writing portfolio assessment is an assessment that continuously needs to be questioned and needs to grow in response to new findings. It provides

the means for the students to be aware of the process they are going through, to collect data about the process itself and to make any necessary change. Hamp-Lyons & Condon also believe that “setting up a portfolio-based assessment requires a great deal of planning and work. It is also by its nature a highly contextualized operation, an aspect that we see as a strength rather than a weakness.” (1993, p. 177). Aydin (2010) also concluded in his research that portfolios in EFL writing have positive effects in terms of grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing and research skills helping students advance in their language acquisition and in the rhetoric of the target language culture.

d. Benefits of using a Portfolio

One of the major benefits in the use of portfolios is that it helps reduce writing anxiety. In the research developed by Ozturk and Cecen (2007), they found that portfolio keeping improves writing skills because it creates more instances of writing practice and more time which gives them the chance to be more prepared. Since students get more writing practice, they feel like better writers and thus the level of anxiety reduces. The reduction of anxiety also helps students to be more accurate in their use of L2. They also concluded that “portfolios provide evidence of knowledge, disposition, and skills. They offer authentic information about the progress of students.” (2007, p. 231) The most important finding in their study is that portfolios can be used as a means of helping students to overcome their writing anxiety in L2.

Portfolios are thought to be especially suitable for non-native English speaking students because they provide a broader measure of what students can do (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 1993) and they can serve as mirrors because it is where students can see how much they have progressed. Portfolios should show how students have learned through their response to their work revision and feedback (Shlayer, 2000). This is one of the reasons why the use of portfolios is recommended with non-native speakers of English.

Additionally, portfolios are very useful is because they allow for self-revision. Self-revision besides helping students with self-awareness also helps students notice more their mistakes and hopefully learn in a more conscious way. As Srichanyachon says, “Self-revision provides students with an opportunity to look reflectively at their own writing in order to improve its quality. This process can raise students’ responsibility and motivation for their own learning. In addition, when students can correct their own writing, it reduces teachers’ workload in correcting students’ papers. Therefore, self-revision should be regarded as a vital tool in achieving success in writing.” (2014, p. 61)

Khoosf and Khosravani (2014) list the following as advantages of portfolios:

- Can be an efficient tool for demonstrating learning

- Can develop awareness of own learning
- Can improve motivation and involvement in learning
- Can give a profile of various learning abilities
- Can provide opportunities for student-teacher dialogue
- Can match assessment to instruction

E- portfolios also allow for a much more objective grading and assessment. This because through the use of e-portfolios, the assessment can be easily done by third parties who can be English teachers of the same or different level. Additionally, e-portfolios provide a broader view of what students have achieved and the process they went through to achieve it.

According to the different authors cited here, besides having different types and uses for the portfolios which depend on the purpose we want to achieve, they agree that implementing a portfolio is beneficial for students, especially L2 learners. It gives students an anxiety-free environment and helps them build confidence in what they are doing because the portfolio allows them a continuous revision of their work. These authors also agree that using portfolios in class empowers students and fosters responsibility in own learning.

IV. Methodological proposal

a. Student characterization

This will be a case study, developed with a group of students from level eight, the last level English course at Icesi. Icesi's students come from Cali's different social strata and therefore from public and private schools as well. In the Language Department there were 2048 students taking English in the second semester of 2014. Of those students, 319 were in level VIII divided into 14 groups. Each English level has to complete 64 hours of classes during the semester.

The group that was part of this project was composed of 21 students: 12 boys and 9 girls who were enrolled in English VIII group 15. This group of students was diverse because not all of them were in eighth semester as one could expect. This course had students who were studying their first semester of the university, as well as from other semesters, up until tenth semester. They were 21 students who belonged to different study programs at Icesi, and therefore had different backgrounds: 2 from Business Administration program, 3 from Biology, 3 from Accounting, one from Law School, 3 from Economy and International Business, one from System Engineer, 3 from Industrial Engineer and 5 from International Marketing and Advertising.

Some of the students that belong to this group had the opportunity to participate in an exchange program or to study English in language institutes

before they entered the university. One student lived in the United States and even served in the military in Afghanistan.

b. English program characterization

The Language department has an eight level English program which starts in A1 and ends in B2, according to the Common European Framework. Each English level has an intensity of 64 hours, distributed in four hour weekly classes. The department and the university have many resources to develop and enhance the English learning. Some of the resources are the e-learning platform [Moodle], the computer labs, Rosetta Stone as the lab software where students can practice the four skills, books that come with different resources such as videos and workbooks. Also the classrooms are equipped with a computer, video beam, and a sound system.

However, English courses do not have academic credit nor a numerical grade and the grade in English courses does not add up in the GPA. This causes high levels of absences, low motivation in some students, little work outside of class, high levels of course retention and low levels of withdrawals. Low levels of withdrawals are because students rather not go through the paperwork and expense of it and they rather fail the course because it will not affect their GPA. The language department has the highest rate of course failure at the university, approximately 18%. Due to all of the above, English is not a very important course for students. It can be

even noticed when midterms begin, students stop coming to class or they leave early because they have “important” courses to study for.

c. Type of research

This research is a case study applied to my own group of students. The work carried out was the one established in the syllabus (see Appendix A). The only changes I made were to implement more of process writing in the writing assignments, such as feedback formats, more peer revisions and the use of an electronic portfolio. The process writing aimed to help them improve their writing through feedback received from their peers and from the teacher. The electronic portfolio was the place where students could access all their versions and keep track of the feedback received.

d. Data collection instruments

The written activity of students during course constitutes the data for this study. Documents from all process were collected in this way:

- Essays and narratives: For this course, students had to write at least 4 papers, but 2 of them were considered the most important and were categorized as projects. For each one of these two projects, students were required to write at least two drafts before the final version.

- Comments and feedback: Each draft had to be turned in through Moodle, and I saved my comments and feedback in the Dropbox folder. I also scheduled as a class activity a peer revision of the draft. For this class, students had to bring a hard copy to class and it was shared with a peer to receive their feedback. For peer feedback, students were given a set of questions or parameters (see Appendix B) that the paper had to comply with. Here, peers were expected to complete the questions or check if the paper complied with the requirements and also to write their comments. With the peer revision questions, I was also looking to increase students' awareness of their own paper. At the end of the class, each student left with their peer evaluation and ideas on how and what to improve in their essay.

The instruments that I used were the two projects that students wrote during the semester. The first project was developed in the first unit and it was a Musical autobiography. The second project was done in unit 3 and it was an argumentative essay.

Activity 1 – The Soundtrack of Your Life: Musical Autobiography Project

This project's objective was to be able to convey in both written and spoken form a personal narrative of the connection between life events and music using descriptive language to describe setting, events, and emotions. The final product for this project was three personal narratives between 3 and 4 paragraphs each. The writing process for this project took place during the following 6 classes.

During the first class, the topic was introduced and in the second class, students created a timeline of seven events/stages and the music connected to them. In this timeline they were expected to include the title of the song, the name of the artist, date of the event and title of the event. This activity is considered a pre-writing activity. For the third class, students were asked to select their three most significant events/stages and they were given a set of questions to help them start writing the story. The fourth class was scheduled as a writing class in which peer revision took place. For the peer revision students were given a worksheet with guiding questions to help them on their peer assessment (see Appendix B). Afterwards, students had to make the corrections their peers suggested. Parts of the fifth and sixth classes were also writing classes where students again had the opportunity to share their writing with a different classmate. In the seventh class of that unit, students had to give their oral presentations and with the feedback they received that day and from the questions asked by their classmates they had to edit and finish their final draft of the Musical Autobiography.

Day 1 Brainstorming- create a timeline of events/stages and the music connected to them (see Appendix C)

Day 2 *Planning*- answer questions about the events/stages and music

What was the event/stage?

When/where/with whom did it happen?

What happened?

What was the music connected with the event/stage?

Why is the music connected to the event/stage?

How did you feel at the moment/time?

How do you feel when you listen to the music now?

Writing- write a draft of one of the stories based on the information in the answers to the questions

Day 3-*Editing-* peer evaluation and editing of drafts

Writing- write a draft of one story

Day 4- *Editing-* peer evaluation and editing of draft

Writing- write a draft of one story

Day 5- *Editing-* peer evaluation and editing of draft

Writing- write final draft of all stories

Day 6- turn in final version of musical biography

oral presentations

Activity 2 – Argumentative Essay

For the second project students had to write an argumentative essay. The objective of this project was to be able to convey in written form a five paragraph argumentative essay in which the student took a side on a topic related to a family trend or job trend. The topic of their selection had to be about something that they could create arguments to defend their stance. For this project, students had to base their arguments on research.

Unlike the first project, this second project did not have a description nor a writing progress planned. For this reason I used the same progress writing plan from the first project but included small changes to adjust to the new type of assignment. Since this project required research, I considered it was important to invite Icesi's Library to come in and teach my students how to use databases to do research, how to cite properly and how to do bibliographies. Since the instructions of the project stated that students had to support their arguments with evidential support, I planned for a training class which was given in a computer room so that students could be able to research at the same time in their own topic. Students would learn how to search in reliable sources like databases available in the university's library. This project also went through process writing, so students had the chance to write drafts and receive feedback from me and from their peers.

For this second project, students had to choose an argumentative topic about a family trend or a job trend. My hope here was that since they had to select a topic they liked, that their writing would be much better. In this unit the writing work was planned similarly to the one planned for the first project. In the first class, students were introduced to both topics: family trends and job trends, so that they knew what they were about and that they could start thinking about their topic. In the third class, they were given an outline organizer to help them organize their ideas for the essay.

Day 1 Introduction to family trends and job trends

Day 2 *Planning*- answer questions about the topic you selected (see Appendix D)

Day 3 *Library training*- class in computer room to learn how to research in databases and how to cite references.

Find resources for topic.

Day 4 peer evaluation of the thesis statement and questions of day 2

Writing first draft

Day 5 *Editing*- peer evaluation and editing of draft

Connectors review

Writing second draft

Day 6 *Editing*- peer evaluation and editing of draft

Writing- write second draft of all stories

Day 7 turn in final version of argumentative essay

To collect students' assignments I used Dropbox as an e-portfolio. An e-portfolio is a document repository which is archived in an electronic format. I selected Dropbox as my e-portfolio because it allows sharing, organizing and editing. In my Dropbox account I created a folder for each of my students. Then I shared their folder with each one of them giving them editing permissions. Each student had access only to their own folder. To turn in their assignments, students had to do it through Moodle, because this way I could control easier that they complied with due dates. But the revision, feedback and rewriting process was all done in Dropbox. Once I had corrected their assignment, I would save it in their folders, including the grading rubric (see Appendix E) if used.

After reading and giving feedback on the first draft, I addressed common issues in class by giving short explanations on the errors and how to correct them. I also gave them extra material for review. For particular errors I included in those students' portfolios links with explanations on how to correct them.

The feedback I gave each one of them was general. In the master's program I have been taught that it is not good to mark all the paper. Instead we should ask questions and mark only what is relevant because it is confusing or because it does not communicate well what is intended. In some cases, and when I noticed that the error was very common throughout the essay, I made marks in the essay correcting or highlighting the errors. I think that because of all the peer revision and my feedback, students were able to improve a little in their final version of the Argumentative Essay.

Additionally to these instruments, I interviewed my students to find out how they handled English written assignments. I also built a survey which I asked them to answer at the end of the semester. This survey (see Appendix F) asked them among other questions, how they felt with the activities done in class and which activities helped them the most to improve their writing.

e. Analysis instruments

In order to determine whether or not my students improved their writing skills during this course, I had to set a starting and ending point. This was to be done by using the first draft as an entrance evaluation and the final version of their second project as an exit evaluation. These two projects were compared to analyze students' writing evolution and if the implemented changes helped them improve their writing skills. The comparing criteria I used were the amount of errors and the type of errors students had.

I used Shah's (2014) error classification to classify my students' errors. According to his research, he found that the errors can be classified as punctuation errors, grammatical errors, lexicon errors, preposition use errors, articles use errors, omission errors, sentence anomalies errors, spelling errors, coherence errors, use of connectors, and use of paragraphs. For Shah (2014), punctuation errors refer to the use of punctuation marks such as periods, commas and semicolons. In this section he also included the use of capital letters. By grammatical errors he means the use of verb tenses, the use of infinitives, gerunds, conditionals, verb – subject agreement, use of pronouns, the use of singular and plurals. The lexicon errors category includes errors with connector, wrong word form, incorrect word translation, L1 interference and the use of Spanish. In the preposition errors category he included the errors of unnecessary use of preposition, lack of use of preposition and the use of article instead of preposition. In the article use category he included the errors of unnecessary use of articles, lack of use of articles or the incorrect use of articles. The omission error category classifies the lack of use of connectors, verb-subject, subject, verb or lexicon. The sentence anomalies errors category includes all the crazy

sentences that students write where it is very difficult to make sense of the general idea. This usually refers to a combination of run-on sentences, incorrect punctuation and incoherence. The spelling errors category includes how students write a word in English. The coherence category includes lack of clarity, fragment incoherence, incoherence between ideas and ideas that are not easy to follow. Finally, in the use of paragraphs category he refers to the use of blocks of ideas written in independent paragraphs adequately, semi-adequately or inadequately.

V. Results

Some general results of this first project were that some students who did not understand the instructions or did not have the ability to build the document as a narrative. This was evident because the work they turned in was not written in a narrative form. They just answered the questions, even after the feedback. Regarding their writing, the majority of students had problems with punctuation. Their major problem was the omission of punctuation or inappropriate use of it. This results in the use of long sentences with different ideas in them.

The most common errors found in my students' writing were: omission of punctuation or incorrect use of it, use of long sentences with different ideas in them, errors in the use of or in the omission of pronouns, prepositions and articles, sentences with ideas that were not easy to follow, errors in word order, incorrect form of the word, wrong word translation, wrong verb tense

and errors in the use of paragraphs. Table 1 shows the amount of errors students had in each category in the first essay.

Table 1 Errors in first project

Student / Error	omission of punctuation or incorrect use of it	use of long sentences with different ideas in it	error in the use of or in the omission of pronouns, prepositions and articles	sentences with ideas that were not easy to follow	errors in word order	incorrect form of the word	wrong word translation	wrong verb tense	errors in the use of paragraphs	Spelling
A	4	5	3	1	2	0	0	3	4	3
B	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	3	4	0
C	4	3	3	0	0	1	0	2	7	3
D	10	6	4	2	2	1	2	3	2	5
E	15	5	5	0	6	3	1	14	8	6
F	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	2	4	0
G	20	10	8	5	4	5	1	5	4	3
H	4	3	3	3	0	1	2	2	7	3
I	15	5	5	2	2	3	1	5	4	3
J	15	6	5	2	6	3	2	14	8	6
K	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0
L	4	3	3	0	0	1	0	2	7	3
M	22	5	5	0	3	3	2	6	7	6
N	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	3	4	0
O	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	2	4	0
P	13	10	3	1	3	3	2	13	3	2
Q	4	3	3	0	0	1	0	2	7	3
R	9	9	5	5	5	1	2	0	2	5
S	4	3	3	3	0	1	2	2	7	3
T	4	3	3	0	0	1	0	2	7	3
U	4	5	3	1	2	0	0	3	4	3
Total	161	88	74	25	35	31	17	90	106	60

In addition to showing the number of errors students had in their first paper, here are some examples of these errors.

In the following example we can see that student R has several errors in one paragraph: omission of pronouns, incorrect use of punctuation and wrong tense use.

“Remember that the first class the teacher showed us a beautiful song and I like a lot, in this moment I don’t ask the name of the song but I remember that all days in my house I said –today I have ask the name of this song-, but all days I forgot, some years after I listen this song in an event and now I know the name of the song.”

In this example, student M has punctuation errors and she also has several ideas in the one sentence.

“On the road trip, we met a lot of people who went to the same event, we became friends and had a great time with them not only on the train but we also met at the concert.”

The following example from student E, illustrates de use of Spanish, spelling errors, errors with the verb tense and punctuation errors.

“I heard this song because of a friend, and since the first momento I listened to it couldnt stop played. This song brings me memories of the most

important moments of my last year in school, my Friends, my crush in that time, the teachers even some stuff that i learned in the clases.”

In the following example from student P, there are verb tense errors, use of pronouns, and errors of omission.

“I known all the songs so I songs everyone, my favorite was salvame, and when played this songs everybody took out the cellphones and illuminate the stadium, it was beautiful, and I never can forget this concert.”

In the following example from student I, there are punctuation errors and using many ideas in one sentence.

“On October 31st of 2000 my dad was driving a taxi, when he was assaulted by men who threatened to kill him because the car was blocked by removing the bodkins,”

Other errors I found in their first project were: errors in the use of or in the omission of pronouns, errors in the use of prepositions and articles, sentences with ideas that were not easy to follow, errors in word order, incorrect form of the word, wrong word translation and wrong verb tense. The following examples illustrate these types of errors.

Example from student G.

“Every first of November is my birthday, November 1, 2002 was my birthday number 8, this year was the first time that my parents organized me a little party because I was shy and I didn’t like that kind of celebrations, but this year I decided that my parent made me something to feast.”

Example of error in the use of pronouns from student E:

“When i play this song I feel that I’m traveling in time and makes me feel like if i was in the school again, it makes me feel that i got nothing to worry about that all the problems will be solved by itself and makes me revive the dreams that i have in that age.”

This example from student I has wrong word translation:

“It is not surprising that people talk about the end of the world, it has always been, likewise the date June 6, 2006 known as the 666, but the particular feature of this course end, many people took it very serious and committed follies ever made for, they say, to die well lived, without having wasted anything featuring the beautiful life.”

In this example, student P has errors in word order:

“The song makes me think about all the crazy stuff that we did in our 10 years together and the important person that was he in my school life.”

In the following example from student J, we can see errors in word order, errors in word translation, among other errors:

“There were much food, wine, aguardiante, beer and my cake was delicious because my aunt prepared it specially for me, it had much wine and many nuta and had three floors. The salon was decorated with pumps and intro there were flower petals, silk curtains silk, and the centerpieces was decorated with vase with flowers and illuminations. Them, got up moment to the dancing with my father and my brothers, in this moment I was anxious but I felt more happiness.”

One last error was the use of paragraphs. The majority of students had problems identifying when to start a new paragraph. For most of them, a paragraph was one very long sentence. For others it was composed of two or three sentences. This error occurred even though the project instructions clearly stated that each paragraph had to have at least 5 sentences.

The following is an example of a paragraph from student J:

“When I started to dance with my father, rang the song “waltz time” the author is Chayanne. I felt very energetic but I felt a little melancholic because my family admired me.”

For the second project, students turned in their final version after we did our last peer and teacher feedback exercise. In this project, I was surprised with the quality of the writings received. There was a big improvement, especially

from those students who had bigger problems with their writing. The evidence to prove their improvement was the lower number of mistakes which can be seen in Table 2. If you compare the number of errors for students E, G, I, J, M, P, Q, R in Tables 1 and 2 you can see a big difference. In the argumentative essay I was able to see that they made big improvements in their paragraph structure and the use of long sentences. They also improved their use of connectors, of punctuation, the use of prepositions and pronouns. In general, their writing improved a lot. Some errors still persist, but they occur less frequently.

Table 2 Errors in second project

Student / Error	omission of punctuation or incorrect use of it	use of long sentences with different ideas in it	error in the use of or in the omission of pronouns, prepositions and articles	sentences with ideas that were not easy to follow	errors in word order	incorrect form of the word	wrong word translation	wrong verb tense	errors in the use of paragraphs	Spelling
A	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E	4	0	2	0	2	0	0	3	0	0
F	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
G	10	5	3	0	0	2	0	3	1	0
H	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
I	5	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
J	7	2	2	0	2	1	0	5	2	0
K	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0
L	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
M	5	2	5	0	0	1	0	3	2	0
N	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
O	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

P	6	3	3	0	2	0	0	5	1	0
Q	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
R	4	3	3	0	2	1	0	0	1	5
S	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	3	0
T	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
U	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	60	21	34	1	8	7	1	27	25	5

Here are some examples of how students improved. These examples are of the same students as chosen above.

This is an example of student G. Here we can see that he improved in his paragraph structure, he has improved in the use of punctuation and verb tenses.

“Television is one of the most important inventions in the history of mankind, because through it people can educate, inform and entertain. With the passage of time and advances in technology, television programs have changed, and now the image quality is better, the special effects and sounds are much more realistic and offer a range of subjects for each age. On children, watch television is not bad, but if father have control about the time that their sons spend in front of the television and the programs that they watch, because if they don’t do that, children could have disorders and health damage, changes in their mental development and have misconceptions of reality.”

In this example from student M, we can see that now he has better sentence structure. His sentences have only one idea and therefore they are clearer but he still needs to improve in punctuation:

“If establishing the death penalty in Colombia, corrupt politicians would have the possibility to legally kill who clog, I say kill legally because we saw that you can't blame someone for something he is not guilty, and may be paying a jail sentence being innocent, then a corrupt politician could blame anyone who stands in his way to commit a massacre or a heinous crime to death penalty and get rid easily of it.”

Although in student's J example, we see she improved in her paragraph structure, punctuation and sentences with only one idea, we can still observe errors of omission of prepositions and word form.

“In a globalized world of today, in which daily connect countries together to exchange ideas, services and products is vital importance that the general public has access to all this information source to understand the world around us. Also, offers different opportunities to interact with people from other cultures to expand our business, develop new business or also for social work.”

In the following example we can see student's E improvement. He has no spelling errors and he improved his use of verb tenses and punctuation.

“In a globalized world with rapid economic changes and developing world powers like The United States, Japan, China and Germany, people in Third world countries want to search for a better economic lifestyle. Migrating to the big countries in search for this progress seems like the only solution, but in most cases the situation is worse,”

In this last example, student R shows her improvement in the use of punctuation and the use of pronouns. But we can observe she still has problems with word forms and some omissions.

“The claim of the farmers is about the good employ, the free send of the natural products, the struggle against contraband; reduction in the cost of raw materials; control of mining and protection of the environment. Actually the agricultural dignity movement is proclaiming to the government that they will continue with the strike if the minister of agriculture doesn’t anything about this.”

Another way to see students’ improvements is through their grades. Table 3 shows students grades for both projects. Once again, notice the grades for students E, G, I, J, M, P, Q, R.

Table 3 Project grades

Student	Musical autobiography	Argumentative essay
A	3,3	3,7
B	4,2	5,0
C	3,8	4,4
D	4,2	5,0
E	2,8	4,4
F	3,1	4,8
G	3,3	4,4
H	3,8	4,2
I	3,5	4,0
J	2,5	3,9

K	4,4	4,5
L	3,9	4,4
M	2,8	4,2
N	4,3	4,8
O	4,0	5,0
P	3,5	4,2
Q	4,2	4,8
R	3,1	3,8
S	3,8	4,4
T	3,1	4,6
U	3,7	4,4

VI. Analysis and discussion

If we refer to Shah's (2014) previous investigation, we can see that these errors are among the ones that he identified. Shah classified the errors he found in the following categories: punctuation errors, grammatical errors, lexicon errors, preposition use errors, article use errors, omission errors, sentence anomalies errors, spelling errors, coherence errors, use of connectors, and use of paragraphs. According to this classification, my students' errors are found in all these categories.

Shah (2014) ranked the errors according to the number of occurrences of each one reflecting how often each type of error occurs. He found that punctuation errors, article errors, incoherence errors, omission errors, lexicon errors, and preposition errors, grammatical errors, spelling errors and sentence anomalies errors. This order means that at Icesi, the most common error is punctuation and the least common one is sentence anomalies errors

according to the author. Using Shah's findings, I see that level 8 students are amongst the students with highest errors. For Shah, one of the possible reasons for this result could be that in this level students are expected to write more extensive texts than in lower levels. The longer the texts the more possibilities to find more errors. Although this is not completely established because the length of some written texts in lower levels are sometimes longer than those in higher levels.

With my students' essays, I think that there are several reasons why they have these types of errors. First of all, they are not used to writing in English. Since they don't live in an English environment, they don't use the language very much outside of the classroom, at least in written form. They usually have to read a lot in English for other courses, but the only course for which they have to write in English is this one. Secondly, I found that many of the errors were due to L1 interference. I found this by talking to my students and asking them how they approached their writing assignments. Two answered they wrote first in Spanish and then they translated the text. The majority said they wrote as the ideas appeared in their mind, they write as they speak, and they translate what they think before writing it down. These errors can be seen in the sentence structure. In Spanish, people are used to having long complex sentences. Lastly, the fact that students do not write much in their L1 is also reflected in their L2 writing. I know that my students do not write much in English because I asked them. In other courses they have to read articles in English, but this is the only course in which they are expected to produce in English both in oral and written form.

Comparing students' results, I can say that there were big improvements. Errors did not completely disappear, but the number of errors

did diminish. I believe improvements were achieved due to several factors, including possibility they had to work on different drafts of their paper before turning in the final version. Second of all, students had the opportunity to receive feedback from both their teacher and their classmates. They were able to reflect on their own writing and it also helped them become aware of their errors and misunderstandings. Lastly, they were given verbal explanations or extra material so that they could make the corrections they required.

The use of e-portfolios benefited and favored process writing which at the same time was reflected in student's essays and narratives. We can say that the revision step was one important factor in this achievement. As Desmet, Church Miller, Griffin, Balthazor, and Cummings (2008, p. 25), found in their research done the University of Georgia, "using an ePortfolio method of assessment will improve the scores of approximately half their students". The results of their studies demonstrated that revision, at least within the context of e-portfolios, improves students' writing. This is due to one of the benefits of e-portfolios, as mentioned earlier e-portfolios allow multiple revisions of documents. Portfolios reflect how students have learned following the process, especially by revising their work through the comments received in feedback (Paesani, 2006). This result follows the same line as Aydin's (2010) research. Using an e-portfolio with EFL/ESL benefits student's language skills and knowledge, and helps them with their rhetorical skills. E-portfolios allow multiple revisions, receiving feedback from peers and teachers, and most important of all is a great tool to accompany the writing process. I am not sure if the improvement was completely due to the use of the e-portfolio, but I am very sure that the process and the possibility of counting on a tool

that seemingly supports the process makes things much easier for students and teachers as well.

Regardless of the potential benefits, students were not too eager to use e-portfolios. They thought that it required too much time. They also believed that at some points, it got boring because they had to go over the same essay several times and at the beginning, some students had problems giving feedback. They felt uncomfortable because they thought that their comments would affect negatively their classmates.

However, e-portfolios are not easy to implement. To successfully implement them, you need time, patience and hard work.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

This case study was developed to analyze the impact that e-portfolios had over the writing skills of English VIII students. My research question was how will the use of an electronic portfolio benefit the development of writing skills of students in English level VIII at Universidad Icesi? The answer to this question is that an electronic portfolio was a useful tool because it helped both students and teacher to centralize the information and avoid losing any part of it. Although at the beginning of my research my belief was that the use of an electronic portfolio was going to have an impact in my

students' writing skills, my results showed me differently. The process taken in my research showed that what was really important and created a bigger impact in my students' improvement was the use of process writing. This was even noticed by my students, who said that process writing was the most helpful thing they did this semester to improve their writing (survey question 12, Appendix F).

Identifying my students' errors was not difficult. The most difficult part was to find a way to classify them. Luckily there was a research project that dealt with the same issues in all English levels and my findings were aligned with the author's classifications. What was interesting here was to see that my students follow the same pattern. Another interesting finding was to realize that level 8 students have more writing errors than other students.

Having had the opportunity to develop this research during one semester and to be able to evaluate its efficacy was interesting. I was surprised on how my students' writing started to improve draft after draft, even though they were not happy because they considered it was too much work. I can say that the exercise was successful because 20 out of 21 students, who used the portfolio, did show improvements in their writing. The improvements were seen not only in a decrease of amount of errors but how they approached each essay. At the end of the semester, they were more willing to do the peer review and they were more critical and objective while doing it.

Although from the literature review I found that e-portfolios have many characteristics, I consider that the main ones for my students' improvement were ease to use in process writing, the possibility to keep all documents in one place making it possible for students to go back to previous versions and read feedback and verify their own progress.

Therefore I can say that the use of the e-portfolio had a positive impact on student's writing skills. The main reason behind this was the management of the drafting versions and the ease to go back and read the feedback every time they needed to. The possibility of writing several drafts and receiving feedback from peers and teachers helped in students' improvement.

I would also recommend to those people interested in implementing e-portfolios to take a careful look at the following aspects that need to be considered. First of all, e-portfolios have to be included in the syllabus and have specific objectives. Second of all, the teacher must plan teaching and learning activities with the e-portfolios and establish the content standard. Thirdly, the teacher needs to be prepared to give support to students in the use of the e-portfolio. They should be given a set of guidelines for the use of the e-portfolio. Fourthly, teachers must prepare students to give feedback. Lastly, assessment should be changed in order to include a grade for both the process as well as the final product.

Additionally, and to gain more out of the e-portfolio, it is important to consider reflection. Reflection is an important aspect of process writing, and teachers

should make students aware of it and of its importance in their evolution. In order to achieve this, it is important to encourage reflection and have students document their thought process and their critical thinking capabilities. This activity will give teachers more insight into students' learning process.

VIII. References

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IX. Appendix

Appendix A- Course syllabus



FACULTAD DE DERECHO Y CIENCIAS SOCIALES

DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS

Código- Materia: 07008 – Inglés VIII

Requisito: Inglés VII

Intensidad semanal: 4 horas

Intensidad semestral: 64 horas

Programa – Semestre: Idiomas

Período académico: 2014 – Semestre

2

Créditos: 02

INTRODUCCIÓN

Para los estudiantes de Icesi es importante desarrollar las habilidades necesarias para que sean eficientes en el uso y manejo del inglés. En el mundo moderno de la globalización del conocimiento, es imprescindible tener acceso a la información actualizada que circula a través de todos los medios: audiovisuales, orales y escritos. Por ser el Idioma Universal, la mayoría de los textos, materiales y avances científicos y tecnológicos en todo el mundo, se socializan en esta lengua, a través de publicaciones especializadas. Un profesional competente debe ser capaz de acceder a esta información para mantenerse al día en los avances de su profesión, e incidir de manera crítica y creativa en los desarrollos propios de su campo de trabajo.

El nivel VIII de inglés, corresponde con el nivel B2 del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas.

OBJETIVOS

General:

Los estudiantes estarán en capacidad de entender las ideas principales de textos complejos en temas tanto concretos como abstractos, incluyendo discusiones académicas. Adicionalmente, estarán en capacidad de interactuar de manera fluida y espontánea con hablantes nativos, sin encontrar mayores dificultades. También estarán en capacidad de producir textos claros y detallados en una variedad de temas y explicar su punto de vista exponiendo las ventajas y desventajas de diversas opiniones. Asimismo, los estudiantes se harán conscientes de su forma de hablar e interactuar, a través de escucharse en grabaciones y presentaciones y de la retroalimentación entre pares.

Terminales

Al finalizar el semestre el estudiante estará en capacidad de:

- Demostrar comprensión auditiva de lo que ha escuchado en una conferencia o un discurso, siguiendo argumentos con cierto grado de complejidad.
- Analizar textos escritos relacionados con problemas contemporáneos en los que el autor exponga un punto de vista concreto; así como entender textos académicos.
- Presentar explicaciones claras y detalladas sobre una amplia variedad de temas relacionados con asuntos académicos. También podrá explicar y expresar su propia perspectiva sobre diferentes temas comunicando ventajas y desventajas, así como diversas rutas de acción relacionadas con el tema en cuestión.
- Escribir textos claros de manera detallada sobre una amplia variedad de temas académicos. Podrá escribir transmitiendo información y proponiendo ideas que validen o refuten un punto de vista presentado en un texto escrito.
- Ser consciente de sí mismo como hablante de inglés, identificando sus propios errores y siendo partícipe de su propio proceso de aprendizaje.
- Utilizar el vocabulario relacionado con los temas vistos de manera adecuada y eficaz en contextos apropiados.

Específicos

El curso abarca cuatro (4) unidades, y cada una contiene: un tema específico; ejercicios de escucha, lectura y escritura; vocabulario, un punto de gramática y su función.

Unidad 1 Tema: **Music**

Objetivo: El estudiante estará en capacidad de:

- De forma oral, presentar sus puntos de vista sobre asuntos relacionados con música y prácticas culturales, música y emoción, música y otros campos de estudio y música y memorias personales.
- Demostrar comprensión auditiva, a través de la resolución de preguntas y participación en discusiones, de conferencias y videos relacionados con música y prácticas culturales, música y emoción y música y memorias personales.
- Demostrar comprensión de lectura, sobre textos y artículos referentes a música y prácticas culturales, música y emoción, música y otros campos de estudio, obteniendo insumos para participar en discusiones y actividades de escritura.
- Escribir una biografía musical detallando sus memorias relacionados con música.
- Usar en contextos adecuados vocabulario relacionado con música y prácticas culturales, música y emoción, música y otros campos de estudio y música y memorias personales.

Unidad 2 Tema: **Money**

Objetivo: El estudiante estará en capacidad de:

- De forma oral, presentar sus puntos de vista sobre asuntos relacionados con el manejo de las finanzas personales y del hogar, exponiendo argumentos a favor y en contra.
- Demostrar comprensión auditiva, a través de la resolución de preguntas y participación en discusiones, de conferencias y videos relacionados con las finanzas personales, como ir a un banco y pedir información en él y finalmente sobre el costo de vida en diferentes lugares del mundo comparados con Colombia.
- Demostrar comprensión de lectura, sobre textos y artículos referentes al tema estudiado, obteniendo insumos para participar en discusiones y actividades de escritura.
- Usar en contextos adecuados vocabulario referente a ir a un banco y pedir información en él y sobre el costo de vida en diferentes lugares del mundo comparados con Colombia.

Unidad 3 Tema: **Global Trends**

Objetivo: El estudiante estará en capacidad de:

- De forma oral, presentar sus puntos de vista sobre asuntos relacionados con tendencias globales.
- Demostrar comprensión de lectura, sobre textos y artículos referentes al tema de la unidad.
- Demostrar comprensión auditiva, a través de la resolución de preguntas y participación en discusiones, de conferencias y videos relacionados con las tendencias mundiales estudiadas.
- Escribir un ensayo comparativo sobre las tendencias mundiales que se están revisando en el curso.
- Usar adecuadamente el vocabulario estudiado sobre tendencias mundiales.

Undad 4 Tema: **Professional Life**

Objetivo: El estudiante estará en capacidad de:

- De forma oral, presentar sus puntos de vista sobre asuntos relacionados con la vida profesional incluso viajando en un intercambio, estudiando un posgrado y buscando y consiguiendo trabajo
- De forma oral, demostrar su fluencia, precisión y pronunciación participando en una entrevista.
- Demostrar comprensión de lectura, sobre textos y artículos referentes a la vida profesional incluso viajando en un intercambio, estudiando un posgrado y buscando y consiguiendo trabajo.
- Demostrar comprensión auditiva, a través de la resolución de preguntas y participación en discusiones, de conferencias y videos relacionados con la vida profesional incluso viajando en un intercambio, estudiando un posgrado y buscando y consiguiendo trabajo.
- Escribir una hoja de vida, carta de presentación personal para acompañar una hoja de vida y documentos necesarios para la admisión de un programa de posgrado.
- Usar adecuadamente el vocabulario sobre la vida profesional incluso viajando en un intercambio, estudiando un posgrado y buscando y consiguiendo trabajo.

METODOLOGÍA

- 1) La filosofía del curso sostiene que un idioma se aprende mejor cuando el estudiante tiene la posibilidad de utilizarlo de manera real para comunicarse y resolver sus necesidades. Para lograr lo anterior es necesario que los estudiantes realicen las siguientes actividades:

- a) Antes de clase: estudiar los temas a cubrir en la siguiente clase, ya sea mediante de lecturas o ejercicios asignados previamente.
 - b) Durante la clase: trabajar con el profesor y los compañeros de clase en resolver dudas sobre el tema estudiado previamente. Participar en talleres, conversaciones y otras actividades o dinámicas propuestas por el docente.
 - c) Después de la clase: repasar el contenido tratado en clase y conectarlo a los temas que se cubrirán en las siguientes clases.
- 2) El curso se desarrolla mediante el enfoque de Aprendizaje Activo (cada estudiante es el directo responsable de la construcción de su conocimiento), y tiene en cuenta los diferentes estilos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes.
 - 3) El profesor debe seguir el plan de trabajo recomendado por el Departamento de Idiomas. Si lo considera necesario, puede ampliar y profundizar los contenidos con ejercicios extras.
 - 4) Los estudiantes, de manera individual, deben realizar en casa los ejercicios del libro de trabajo, y practicar los ejercicios en los CDs que acompañan el texto.
 - 5) Los estudiantes desarrollan una o varias actividades de producción oral especificada por el docente al inicio del semestre. Los temas van de acuerdo con la vida diaria y están relacionados con el contenido gramatical de las unidades del texto guía.

EVALUACIÓN

Las evaluaciones parciales abarcan cuatro componentes del idioma a) escucha b) vocabulario c) escritura d) comprensión de lectura. Estas evaluaciones se presentan por escrito. Durante el semestre, las habilidades orales del estudiante serán evaluadas por medio de proyectos y presentaciones individuales y/o grupales.

- A)** La evaluación tiene dos componentes, la nota de exámenes y las notas varias; sin embargo, esta última, sólo se tendrá en cuenta para el cálculo de la definitiva de aquellos estudiantes cuya nota de exámenes sea mayor o igual a 3.0.

Nota definitiva:

Si (nota exámenes < 3.0) entonces:

Nota definitiva = nota exámenes

Si (nota exámenes \geq 3.0) entonces:

Nota definitiva = (nota exámenes * 0.55) + (notas varias * 0.45)

• **Distribución de NOTAS EXÁMENES:**

Examen Parcial 1 = 30%

Examen Parcial final = 30%

Proyecto 1: Escribir y presentar un blog = 20%

Proyecto 2: Ensayo argumentativo = 20%

• **Distribución de NOTAS VARIAS:**

Trabajo en clase = 20%

Producción Oral = 20%

Tareas = 15%

Actividades de escritura = 15%

Comprobación de estudio = 15%

Laboratorio = 15%

B) Fechas de las evaluaciones:

Inglés	Fechas y periodicidad
Primer Parcial	Semana 8
Parcial final	Semana 17-18
Proyecto 1	Unidad 2

Proyecto 2	Unidad 3
Trabajo en clase	Cada unidad
Producción Oral	Cada unidad
Tareas	Semanales
Comprobación de estudio	Según acuerdo con profesor
Actividades de escritura	Para desarrollarse a lo largo del semestre
Notas Finales (Entregadas en el Departamento)	Semana 18

REGLAS DE JUEGO

Los cursos de Inglés están programados para un total de 64 horas por nivel para asegurar que los estudiantes puedan adquirir la competencia esperada en cada nivel. Por lo tanto, es vital la asistencia a todas las clases y el Departamento ha establecido unas reglas claras.

- a) Las clases empiezan a la hora establecida. Los profesores cierran la puerta a los 15 minutos, y una vez que hayan tomado asistencia, el estudiante que no esté presente en ese momento, podrá ingresar pero tendrá falta de una hora.
- b) Todas las faltas se contabilizan desde el primer día de clases, es decir, desde el 26 de Julio. Las excusas médicas, debidamente certificadas, se aceptarán para solicitar un supletorio, reponer un quiz o un parcial, pero la(s) falta(s) no se borra(n). Las excusas de trabajo no son aceptables.
- c) Los supletorios se solicitan al Director de Programa del estudiante. El Departamento de Idiomas NO puede autorizarlos.
- d) Los estudiantes deben asistir al 80% de las clases para pasar la materia. Si faltan a más de 13 horas, pierden por inasistencia.
- e) Inglés no se contabiliza en el promedio académico, pero si un estudiante pierde más de una materia, en adición a Inglés, pierde el semestre.
- f) Para garantizar su asistencia al curso, los estudiantes deben haber matriculado oficialmente la materia a la tercera semana.
- g) Los celulares deben permanecer apagados o en modo silencioso en clase. No se permitirá el uso de celulares durante las evaluaciones y el eventual incumplimiento a esta regla puede ser causal de anulación del examen mismo.

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Appendix B - Peer feedback format



English VIII, Group _____
musical autobiography peer review
Name: _____

author _____

story 1

organization

The story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. _____

The story follows a clear logic and is cohesive. _____

content

the event/period in the author's life _____

the song and artist _____

setting _____

date _____

explanation of why the song is significant _____

description of how the author felt at the time _____

description of how the author feels now _____

descriptive language

uses descriptive words to give details _____

uses descriptive words to convey feelings _____

verb tenses

correct use of verbs for talking about the past _____

comments _____

Appendix C - Timeline



English VIII, Group _____

Unit 1- Writing Activity

Name: _____

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

1. Fill out the general timeline for the Soundtrack of your Life. Make sure you include:

- Event or Period of your life
- Song and Artist
- Date

The Soundtrack of my Life

	Event 1		Event 3		Event 5		Event 7
	Song:		Song:		Song:		Song:
Date							
	_____	Event 2	_____	Event 4	_____	Event 6	_____
		Song:		Song:		Song:	

2. Choose the 3 most relevant songs or events from the timeline and complete the following:

Event 1: _____
Date: _____
Story: _____

Why is the song connected with the event?: _____

How did you feel at the moment?: _____

How do you feel when you listen to the song?: _____

Event 2: _____
Date: _____
Story: _____

Why is the song connected with the event?: _____

How did you feel at the moment?: _____

How do you feel when you listen to the song?: _____

Appendix D - Argumentative Essay Outline



ENGLISH VIII – UNIT 3 - ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY OUTLINE NOTES

Name: _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____ Group: _____

Topic: _____

Title: _____

Introduction: Thesis statement: _____

Body Paragraph #1- Argument

Topic Sentence: _____

A. Supporting idea 1: _____

B. Supporting idea 2: _____

C. Supporting idea 3: _____

Body Paragraph #2- Argument

Topic Sentence: _____

A. Supporting idea 1: _____

B. Supporting idea 2: _____

C. Supporting idea 3: _____

Body Paragraph #3- Counter-argument

Topic Sentence: _____

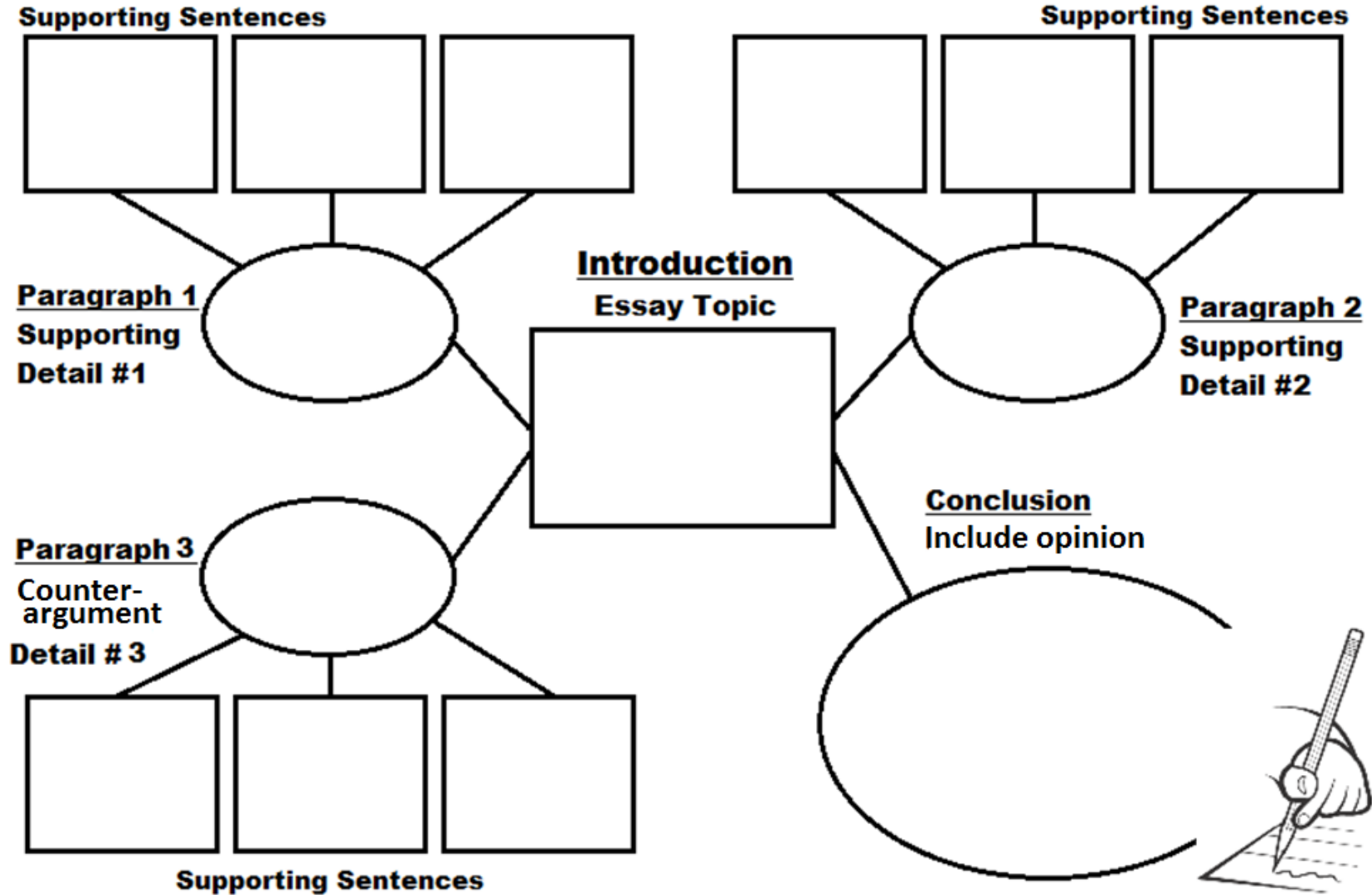
A. Supporting idea 1: _____

B. Supporting idea 2: _____

C. Supporting idea 3: _____

Conclusion: _____

ESSAY GRAPHIC ORGANIZER



Appendix E - Grading Rubric



English VIII Group _____ Musical Autobiography Grading Rubric Name: _____ Teacher: _____
--

overall grade _____

Story 1	5	4	3	2	1	grade
Content	Text fulfills all 6 of the criteria outlined for the project.	Text fulfills 5 of the 6 criteria outlined for the project.	Text fulfills 4 of the 6 criteria outlined for the project.	Text fulfills 3 of the 6 criteria outlined for the project.	Text fulfills 2 of the criteria outlined for the project or fewer.	
Opening Sentence	Opening sentence is very compelling, effectively catching the reader's attention and introducing the narrative.	Opening sentence is somewhat compelling, catching the reader's attention and introducing the narrative.	Opening sentence is not particularly effective in catching the reader's attention, but does basically introduce the narrative.	Opening sentence is not effective in catching the reader's attention, but does minimally introduce the narrative.	Opening sentence is not effective; it neither catching the reader's attention nor adequately introduces the narrative.	
Cohesion	Narrative thread and details are provided in a logical order that makes following the author's train of thought easy.	Some of the narrative thread or details are not in an expected or logical order, distracting the reader or making the text somewhat difficult to follow	Much of the narrative thread and many details are not in an expected or logical order, distracting the reader or making the text very difficult to follow.	Author has difficulty relating a straightforward narrative as a linear sequence of points.	Author is unable to relate a straightforward narrative as a linear sequence of points.	
Vocabulary	Lexical accuracy is generally high, though some confusion and incorrect word choice does occur without hindering communication.	Shows good control of elementary vocabulary but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts.	Shows some control of elementary vocabulary and makes major errors when expressing more complex thoughts.	Shows minimal control of elementary vocabulary and major errors occur.	Shows little control of elementary vocabulary and understanding is difficult.	
Vocabulary for Emotions	Utilizes a wide variety of vocabulary to effectively convey fine distinctions of meaning in regard to emotions.	Utilizes a variety of vocabulary to effectively convey some distinctions of meaning in regard to emotions.	Utilizes vocabulary to convey emotions, yet utilizes standard vocabulary or sometimes repeats the terms used.	Utilizes little vocabulary in regard to emotions, and often repeats terms used.	Utilizes almost no vocabulary to convey emotions.	
Grammar	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding. Makes 3 or fewer grammatical errors in the text.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used 'routines' and patterns associated with more predictable situations. Makes between 4 and 6 grammatical errors in the text.	Shows a somewhat accurate degree of grammatical control. May make some mistakes which lead to misunderstanding. Makes between 7 and 9 grammatical errors in the text.	Shows a minimal accurate degree of grammatical control. Makes mistakes which lead to misunderstanding. Makes between 10 and 12 grammatical errors in the text.	Shows little grammatical control. Makes a number of mistakes which lead to misunderstanding. Makes 13 or more grammatical errors in the text.	
Story 1 Total						

Appendix F – Survey and answers

Survey:

1. How old are you?
2. What type of school did you go to?
 - a. Public
 - b. Private
3. Which is your social stratum?
4. What are you studying at Icesi?
5. Which semester are you in right now?
6. Where did you learn English?
 - a. School
 - b. Language institute
 - c. Other Which?
7. How long have you been studying English?
8. How do you consider is your writing skills in English?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Good
 - c. Not so good
 - d. Bad
9. Have you participated in an exchange program to learn/improve your English?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
10. If you did, where did you go to and for how long?
11. Do you consider your writing skills improved with the activities done in class?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
12. Which of the following activities done in class helped you improve your writing?
 - a. Connector review
 - b. Paragraph structure
 - c. Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft
 - d. Peer review and feedback

Marca temporal	How old are you?	What type of school did yo	Which is your social stratu	What are you studying at I	In which semester are you
11/24/2014 13:17:39	19	Private school		2 Biology	6
11/24/2014 13:19:29	22	Private school		6 bussines administration	10
11/24/2014 13:21:07	20	Private school		5 Economía y Negocios Inter	3
11/24/2014 13:27:37	20	Private school		6 MIP	4
11/24/2014 13:28:49	20	Private school		3 public accounting and inter	6
11/24/2014 16:35:16	18	Private school		4 International Marketing anc	2
11/24/2014 17:01:15	29	Private school		6 Economía y negocios inter	2
11/24/2014 18:55:49	20	Private school		4 biología	6
11/24/2014 20:14:40	19	Private school		3 Biology	5
11/24/2014 22:13:34	22	Private school		5 Industrial engineer	9
11/25/2014 10:49:39	26	Private school		3 Accountant	10
11/26/2014 8:14:09	18	Private school		5 business administration	2
11/29/2014 9:00:01	19	Private school		6 Mercadeo y publicidad	1
11/29/2014 10:13:15	21	Private school		3 Ingeniería industiral	9
12/1/2014 11:08:17	20	Private school		2 ING INDUSTRIAL	6

Where did you learn English?	How long have you been studying?	Have you taken any specific courses?	How do you consider your English level?	Have you participated in any exchange programs?	If you did, where did you go?	
School	10	No		3	No	to Canada for one year
Icesi	6	No		4	No	one year in australia
Language institute	3	No		4	No	
School	7	No		4	No	USA 1 year
School	8	No		4	No	to England, and more or less
Language institute	4	Yes		3	Yes	I went to New York and I studied
U.S	3	Yes		4	No	
Language institute	3	No		1	Yes	
Language institute	7	Yes		4	No	
School	18	No		4	No	
School	10	No		3	No	Australia
Language institute	5	Yes		4	Yes	Boston 6 months
School	8	No		4	No	I would go to Cape town for
School	3	No		3	No	
Language institute	5	Yes		3	No	

Do you consider your writir Which of the following activities done in class helped you improve your writing?

- Yes Connector review
- Yes How to write a paragraph, c. Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft, Peer review and feedback
- Yes Connector review, How to write a paragraph, c. Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft, Peer review and feedback
- Yes How to write a paragraph, c. Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft, Peer review and feedback
- Yes How to write a paragraph, Peer review and feedback
- Yes c. Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft
- No c. Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft
- Yes How to write a paragraph
- Yes c. Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft, writing my essay
- Yes c. Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft
- Yes How to write a paragraph, c. Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft
- Yes Peer review and feedback
- Yes Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft
- Yes Writing by stages: outline, rough draft, editing, final draft
- Yes How to write a paragraph

Do you have any suggestions on activities to help students improve their writing skills?

Read books in English help to understand how to write.

Maybe with songs, first you choose a song, then you understand what it says, next you can find new words, after that you can sing and finally write the song. This activity allows me to learn new words, practice listening and writing and better improve it.

English should count towards GPA that motivates people. And make them be more proactive

Vocabulary activities can help students to improve their knowledge about writing. Also, activities that have a motivation in students.

Give the opportunity to the student to choose any topic that they want to write about

is a good idea to make more essays for strong grammar

The best tip I can give to them is to read a lot, if you read you will be able to improve your writing skills.