

**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**



**LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY STUDENTS OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION  
II, SEMESTER I 2014 BACHELOR IN ENGLISH TEACHING TO DEVELOP  
THEIR WRITING SKILL, DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR.**

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**FINAL RESEARCH REPORT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF  
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH WITH EMPHASIS IN TEACHING**

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing has been one of the most effective resources to communicate since a long time ago. Nowadays writing has become as important as speaking is. Students of the English Major develop their macro skills in English (speaking, writing, reading and listening) while they are getting more knowledge about English. As students who already finished the subjects required during the five years of the major, the team was looking for learning strategies that helped us to develop our skills: that is why we decided to make a short research about "the strategies that students use to develop their writing skill". In addition, this topic called our attention since we took several subjects related to writing, we heard that most of the students try to develop their speaking skill and after researched in the main library of the University of El Salvador and in the library of the Foreign Language Department we found out that just one research report about this topic was done in 2014.

The research project addresses the development of the writing skills of students who are learning English as a foreign language. It investigates the strategies that students use to write an essay and the progress they had during the composition II course. As such, it aims to study what writing strategies help English Composition students at the Foreign Language Department to write better/well-structured essays.

The analysis was founded on a quasi-experimental research carried out by the means of an non experimental method. The former was conducted in the University of El Salvador, to students of the Licenciatura en Idioma Ingles who were taking composition II course in 2014, making interventions of the strategies on how to write an essay, and also, a questionnaire where students stated the strategies they use to write their essays. It was completed by observation of the grades obtained during the course. At its turn the observation of the grades, interventions and questionnaire were analyzed.

Altogether the aim was not only to study what writing strategies help to write well-structured essays but also to propose writing recommendations to students, in the composition course II, who want to learn how to write well-structured essays. But, most importantly, the research team wanted to highlight how important are the strategies to develop the writing skills in order to write a well-structured essay.

## I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The writing skill difficulties are one of the most significant problems that affect not only native English speakers, but also students that are learning English as a foreign language. It is often difficult for teachers to identify the writing skill weaknesses until students hand in papers or take exams. Then writing deficiencies are obvious such as spelling problems, sentence structure, grammar errors etc.

In the Foreign Language Department, students take two composition courses. In the first course, students learn the basic components that make up an essay, how to write topic sentences, how to add details and supporting ideas into a paragraph. And in the second course, students learn to write different kinds of essays such as descriptive essays, argumentative essays or academic essays in a coherent and cohesive way.

However, students still have problems to write well-structured essays. This is so, because of a lack of guidelines that could lead them to write better. These guidelines are strategies that are very effective tips to develop the skill of writing: those guidelines provide a better explanation about the writing strategies with detailed examples, instruction in writing processes, rules and exercises in order to improve student's writing to make them persist in the effort to improve their writing skill. These strategies help students to improve their writing performance while they are learning how to write cohesive, coherent and well-structured essays.

In addition, not only self-strategies influence students' performance but also the effectiveness of the methods and techniques that teachers apply in their English composition courses. There are methods that work with some students but do not work with others, so teachers must take into account other strategies if they want their students to develop effective writing skills. Only in this way, students will be able to have good results, writing cohesive, coherent and sustainable essays.

That is why the following research question has been proposed:

- A. Research Question** What are the main writing strategies that can help improve English Composition II students of the University of El Salvador to write well structured essays?

### **Subsidiary questions**

1. Are strategies taught in Composition I to students to write well –structured essays?
2. Are students given exercises to write well- structured essays?
3. Can students organize their ideas with an outline?
4. Are students able to use structure sentences and vocabulary correctly in an essay?

### **B. Objectives**

#### **General Objective**

- \* To study what writing strategies help English Composition students at the Foreign Language Department to write better essays.
- \* To propose writing recommendations to students in the composition course II who want to learn how to write well-structured essays.

#### **Specific Objectives**

- \* To identify the writing strategies that work better for students to write good essays.
- \* To determine the main factors for Composition students low writing quality.
- \* To recommend some writing strategies that can make students write well-structured essays

### **C. Justification.**

The writing skill is one of the most important parts of communications. Through writing people can communicate researches, reports, essays, curriculum vitae, resume, or just an idea in a blog, all of them with no spelling or grammatical mistakes. However, it is seen in the web and in printed texts the poor writing that people have. When others read something they have to get a good first impression and readers should have an immediate positive reaction, but if they find a spelling or grammatical mistake this reaction will be negative, besides that, the idea of the writer has to be clear and well organized throughout the text.

As the team experienced while learning the process of how to write a text, the writing skill is developed by planning and following processes called writing strategies which are used before starting to write and checking the writing before printing it or publishing it. These strategies are divided in three steps to follow: free writing, drafts, and revision and correction: which include free writing, mind mappings, outlines, and corrections among others, though to get an effective writing skill it is important to take into account the coherence and cohesion, and how a paragraph and/or essay is divided in topic sentence, supporting ideas and conclusion sentence.

The team, as students who already finished the subjects required during the five years of the major, was looking for learning strategies that helped to develop the writing skill; that is why a research about “the strategies that students use to develop their writing skill” was decided. In addition, this topic called team’s attention since the major requires taking several subjects related to writing, it is heard that most of the students try to develop their speaking skill and after having researched in the main library of the university of El Salvador and in the Library of the Foreign Language Department was found out that a research report about this topic has not been done yet in the University of El Salvador. This research is addressed to know which of the strategies students take into account in order to practice and develop their writing English skill, and which are the most effective.

To learn writing strategies is very important to improve the writing skill; it helps to have an order in what is being written. The writing strategies give ideas about what to do before and after writing since it is important to be aware of the topic and the ideas

people want to write about. The writing skill can be developed by putting in practice the writing strategies; following instructions and be guided step by step will take the writer to have a better text that other people will easily understand, and not to get confused because there are different unclear ideas. This will help the team as future teachers of English and make students practice the writing strategies more to get better understanding at the time they are writing a piece of language.

#### **D. Delimitation.**

This investigation Project was developed from March up to June 2014. This research took place at the Foreign Language Department of University of El Salvador, in the Composition II course. The research was addressed to know how writing strategies help students to write well structured paragraphs and essays.

Since students have a previous knowledge about writing an essay as they have already taken English Composition I where they studied such as Brainstorming, Editing, Mapping, Free writing, etc. Students were guided with some tips about how to use these strategies to write academic essays, how to apply them to make summaries as a way to show their understanding of a text or article and how to use supporting details to support what they want to convey in their pieces of writing.

Through this research Project the team analyzed those writing strategies that students studied during Composition I and in order to develop or improve their writing skills. The team did not pretend to provide or teach new writing strategies to students, but to develop writing strategies they already know in a better way.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

From generation to generation communication has been very crucial for everybody. According to Webster dictionary, Communication is “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior”. However, it is known that those symbols, signs and behaviors change in every country. Less Brown stated that the ability to communicate is an important tool in your pursuit of your goals, that is why people learn another language and facilitate exchanging information through the two communicative competences; written and oral competence, and even though most communicative only, the written communication is also important.

Del Hymes in his book “Communicative Competence” (1995), says that communicative competence concerns with having knowledge and make use of syntax, morphology and phonology. According to this author communicative competence has to deal not only with grammar structures, but also has to deal with the context in which the person uses the sentences. Also, communicative competence is very important because when people are learning a second language, they use it for communicating with others, then the way how these people communicate their thoughts, feelings and needs are so relevant and important for people around them, and otherwise they would not be able to understand what they want to express or say. (Dell Hymes and Michael Canale, 1995. P.129)

The team focused on written competence and how to develop writing skills in order to create well-structured essays. According to Edda Wigand, *Language as Dialogue: from rules to principles* and John Benjamin 2009, coherence and cohesion can be used in both communicative competences: oral and written, but the team emphasized on written form. Cohesion refers to the presence or absence of explicit notes in the text that allows the reader to make connection between the ideas in the text (Teun A, Dijk, P.93). Whereas cohesion refers to the explicit cues in the text, coherence refers to the understanding that the reader derives from the text.

An essay has coherence when the writer focuses in one topic and sets for this topic a logical form. A text must have only important information concerning with the topic, otherwise readers will not understand what it is the main topic or the purpose of the text. Coherence also involves a logical order. College writing: from paragraphs to essays; Dorothy Zemach and Lisa A. Rumisek, 2003 (P. 82). The ideas and details must be written logically, for that reason many people write outlines before writing the original text, this helps them to have a better idea of the order they will write the main ideas or details, and also helps to not lose track of their main topic. Besides that, it is important to write an introduction, body and conclusion not forgetting that every paragraph must have a topic sentence, supporting ideas, and a concluding sentence.

Cohesion, as well, must be used in writing, so that it helps the reader to understand the topic or the main aim of the text. Isenderg says that cohesion is the main principle that provides the good writing on a text, which means that a text should have logic connections or to be linked in a logical way to be understood by the reader. Ulla Connor says that we have to know about the cohesion devices which are words and phrases that linked sentences and paragraphs to create fluent ideas. Among the cohesive devices we have logical devices divided into 12 main groups to take into consideration. In this group there are connectors or conjunctions that everybody uses to join two or more phrases or words in the same sentence. If someone does not make use of these logical devices or cohesive devices readers are likely to misunderstand the true meaning of the writing.

Richard Hudson asked “does training in formal grammar improve a child’s ability to write?” so he concluded that at one time it was considered, and for that reason teachers emphasize or grammatical analysis to reach an improvement on their writing (Richard Hudson, Dept. of Phonetics and Linguistics, UCL Gower Street, London) However, many agree that writing is not only improvement of grammar, but also improving other writing skills before to really get a well-structured essay.

Critical thinking is not about something you choose to do, any more than a fish chooses to live in water. Just the fact of being human is to think. But while thinking might come naturally, awareness of how you think does not. Basically it means to take control of your conscious thought processes. If you do not take control of those

processes, you risk being controlled by the ideas of others. The essence of critical thinking is thinking as it is defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, 1987.

A statement by Michael Scriven & Richard Paul presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual international Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform, Summer 1987 says that it is a technique to evaluate the information and ideas to decide what to believe and accept, good thinkers have the skills to strongly think about a specific idea, however what makes them to move on is that they have motivation, attitudes, values and intellectual habits which develop key roles on critical thinking and these factors largely determine whether students use their thinking skills when appropriate. Reading and experienced develop critical thinking. (Tishman Shari, 12, 2007)

One of the main problems among students is the fact that many of them cannot develop their writing skills, mostly the ones who are making compositions in a foreign language. This has become very difficult not only for students but also for professors, because all of them are looking for good results in every single step of the learning process.

Writing has long been considered a “support skill” for learning grammar in foreign language instruction, as in the Grammar Translation Method, or to support the memorization of language structures, as in the Audio-lingual Method. Until recently, even the Communicative Approaches with their emphasis on oral proficiency, have tended to de-emphasize writing. Consequently, writing skill is not developed.

With the shift towards audiolingualism, oral language took precedence in the classroom over all the other skills, including writing. On these approaches, writing, when it is used, is mainly for purposes of transcription. Even with the current shift towards a more communicative view of language, writing is still not emphasized in most foreign language classes.

Dvorak claims that foreign language textbooks in the last twenty five years have linked written composition to advanced Grammar or to Conversation rather than focusing on compositional skills such as organization, clarity, and manipulating functions (describing, informing, persuading). Dvorak also draws two important conclusions about writing in a foreign language: 1) “writing improvements are unrelated to Grammar study”, and 2) “Intensive correction of student writing, which has a negative effect on writing in terms of student attitudes and motivation, has little positive effect at all”, and how writing fits into Krashen’s language acquisition / learning model, and writing as a developmental process.

According to Barnett, both students and teachers are commonly frustrated over the number of errors and the lack of improvement in student writing. She looks at how teachers traditionally assign and react to student writing. She claims that students may become more involved in editing their own work if the teacher does less correcting. She suggests that teachers look at writing as a process, or a series of drafts, including prewriting, writing and rewriting. Less attention to correction of grammatical errors, together with real attention to content leads ultimately to better student compositions. Barnett claims that the advantages to both students and the teachers of process writing and writing for communication include higher student motivation and more efficient use of time.

Moreover, Roger Brown discusses the role of writing and maintains that writing must be kept in its place, His two rules on writing in the Foreign Language classroom are: 1) keep it short and 2) prime students before they begin to write. One strategy that Brown finds particular productive is the “summary”. However, he claims that any extensive independent writing, such as free composition, should be postponed until advanced levels and should be strictly limited. This shows the resistance many Foreign Language teachers had (and may still have) to teaching writing in the Foreign language classroom.

Some other theorists like Joan Carson and Dona Leki examine the interrelationship of second language reading and second language writing. They say that the composition teacher must know strategies of reading in order to successfully teach students to write. This indicates that better writers tend to be better readers, better writers read more than poorer writers, and better readers produce more mature writing than poorer writers. In this directional model, skills acquired in one modality can be transferred to the other. This hypothesis claims that reading and writing are interactive, but also independent.

However, research also indicates that this transfer of skills is not automatic. Teachers can help their students use their first language skills in learning a second language by making clear the interrelationship between reading and writing strategies in both the first and the target language.

There is very little research on what teachers actually do when they teach writing. Cumming’s study is unique that it provides information about the characteristics of successful writing teachers; he found that there are certain types of teaching routines that can be observed. He lists six fundamental routines: 1. attracting students’ attention, 2. Assigning tasks, 3. collectively constructing interpretations, 4. establishing criteria, 5. providing individual feedback, 6. guiding individual development. Besides, he adds that writing strategies play an important key in commanding writing skills.

Writing (in any language) can be a difficult experience, most of the times because the writer does not know what to say or does not have linguistic elements to express. This feeling is worse when we deal with writing in English. It is necessary that students are shown strategies for warming up before starting to write, that is called the pre-writing stage. This pre-writing stage is aimed to guide students and make them think, talk, take notes and work on the topic before writing it. This provides them with something to say, prevents them from getting stuck, allows them to write better essays, and in sum, helps them to overcome the psychological suffering that usually appears at the beginning of a writing task.

Krashen discusses the research and theories on writing and their applications to pedagogy. He begins by summarizing the research on writing in several areas organized around the following questions: 1) Does reading help develop writing ability? 2) Does writing practice help develop writing ability? 3) Can writing be deliberately taught? 4) Do good writers go about the act of writing differently from poor writers? And 5) Do good writers have different concerns in writing? Krashen states that comprehensible input is an important part of writing acquisition. Krashen suggests that “good writers consider writing a process, have low affective filters, are aware of their audience, and concentrate on content rather than accuracy.

Krashen argues that concerns for grammar should only appear at the final stage of the composing process that is editing. He states that very little is known about writing in a second language, but that similarities are sure to exist between writing in the students’ native language and second language. Similar to composition courses taught in the native language, Krashen calls for two important pedagogical techniques: 1) increased reading for the acquisition of written language and 2) writing strategies in order to develop the writing skill. He lists several strategies for facilitating the process of writing. These include invention strategies (prewriting strategies such as brainstorming, clustering, free-writing, and mapping), syntactic analysis and sentence combining.

Another important theorist, Jack Richards states that the nature and significance of writing has often been underestimated in language teaching, and has often been synonymous with teaching grammar and sentence structure. The Audio-lingual method of language teaching where speaking is primary leads to a product-based approach where writing is a means of reinforcing the appropriate grammatical and syntactic forms of spoken language. Richard points to the shift in roles for the teacher from evaluator to facilitator. He provides a very useful list of instructional activities appropriate to each phase of writing: rehearsing/ prewriting, drafting/ writing and revising.

However, not all theorists consider writing skills important. Deeply rooted in the audio-lingual tradition, Troyanovich maintains that there is no place for writing in the Foreign Language classroom. Writing, he states should not be a part of the Foreign language Curriculum for two reasons: 1) students are often incapable of writing well in

their native language and 2) students preparing compositions or dialogues try to translate vocabulary and concepts from their native language, in other words, Troyanovich advocates an audio-lingual structured classroom based solely on the spoken word.

Some useful writing strategies are:

### **Brainstorming**

This is a good beginning task for writers, as it does not require any special handout or much practice. During a brainstorming session, students are given a topic and they generate a list of words or phrases in a group. This can be done either in small groups at the students' desks or as a whole class activity. In a brainstorming session, it is easy to guide students, if necessary, by steering students towards ideas and vocabulary they may not have otherwise considered by asking specific questions, like **who** or **what** or by providing words or phrases with which they may not yet be familiar. For instance, to generate or review vocabulary through brainstorming for free time activities, the instructor writes the phrase on the board or projects them on the screen via an overhead projector and allows the class to offer any item that they may think of related to the topic.

### **Dyads and Triads**

Sometimes students need the opportunity to talk about their ideas before they begin their writing task. Dyads and triads are small discussion groups that allow students to express themselves verbally in order to bring out ideas and details. Students are grouped together in pairs or sets of three. The small grouping forces the students to talk, since participation is mandatory and they cannot hide behind the large number of students found in a full class discussion. After everyone in the dyad or triad has spoken, students quickly write the details that they remember from the discussion. Others in the group can be encouraged to take notes to help the writer record his/her thoughts as they are spoken aloud.

### **Free Writing**

This writing strategy works quite well for more advanced writers and generally needs to be conducted for a minimum of five minutes. By "forcing" students to write for a minimum of five minutes, ideas and connections can emerge from their long-term memory because students are concentrating deeply on the assigned topic. Traditionally, to provide focus, students write the topic at the top of their paper. Next, students write

nonstop, generating ideas for their topic, while disregarding spelling or grammatical errors. If the writers cannot think of a new word or phrase, they simply re-write the last idea they had until they are able to move on to another idea or concept.

### **Graphic Organizers**

Historically, this is a category of writing strategy that provides the students with some type of visual worksheet to bring together their ideas. Many, however, can be produced with blank paper and guidance. The graphic organizer ideas provide students with a framework to identify patterns in reading/writing assignments and generate and/or organize ideas. (Novak, 1998).

### **Narrative Strips**

This writing strategy works extremely well with sequential or chronological writing (Col, 2003). Narrative strips are a series of blank boxes on a sheet of paper with spaces between them that provide students the room to write words and phrases that supply the details for a sequential writing task. Thus, in the first strip, the student writers provide the information for the first action/event in their writing project. The second strip is for the second action/ event and so on until details for all the actions/ events are provided. Teachers can help guide students' writing by providing transition words, like "first", "second", "next" or "last of all" in the strips.

### **Drafting**

The first attempt at writing should not be considered the final product but just a draft. Sometimes more than one drafting is required before handing in the written assignment. Drafting has to do with revision and rewriting, since after each revision a new draft can appear. The first draft usually concentrates on content. As Hedge states "the drafting strategy focuses primarily on what the writer wants to say, while redrafting progressively focuses on how to say it most effectively. In a classroom context, students write a draft and give it to the teacher, who comments on content and organization first of all. The student writes a second draft incorporating those comments. That second draft is again read by the teacher, now including comments about formal aspects such as: spelling, punctuation, word forms, article use, verb forms, concordance, word order, linkers and other grammatical issues). After that- a third probably last draft is written.

## Editing

Lewitt calls this strategy the last stage or final touch. The writer should be ready to put everything together, to polish his/her previous attempts through the incorporation of the suggestions received and to hand a final written product to the reader. In this part of the writing process, the writer improves the way he/she expresses his/her ideas. There are changes in words, sentence organization or punctuation to make writing more vibrant and exciting, clearer, more specific or more direct. The writer finds a more effective way to say what they want to say.

All of the previous strategies are some among others that theorists acclaimed are of great usefulness when applied correctly by writing and composition teachers. Answering the question why students cannot write, Greenia writes: “students cannot write because we have not trained them to”. Greenia maintains that the intermediate-or advanced-level writing classes for foreign language students usually do not concentrate on writing. Composition courses end up as either a topics course (i.e., focusing on literature or civilization) or as a grammar course. Greenia provides a list of guidelines that gives writing the attention it deserves in the Foreign Language curriculum:

- 1) “The writing course should have its own place in the curriculum, but it should not stand alone as the sole undergraduate writing experience in the second language” ;
- 2) “Writing in the foreign language in itself has not proved an effective vehicle for learning grammar...” ;
- 3) “A foreign language writing course is a valuable language course in and of itself; it is not a service course to prepare students for something else” ;
- 4) “Second-language writing should not be conceived of as primarily a literature course in another form...” ;
- 5) “A focus on writing for exchanging and engaging ideas puts students with varying language strengths on a more nearly equal footing...” ;
- 6) “All discourse generated in a writing class should be public rather than private” ;  
and
- 7) “A well-developed oral component can enliven the initial exchange of ideas, help define topics... and generally serve as a platform for prewriting activities” .

Greenia’s article summarizes the recent research and theory on writing in the foreign languages, discusses process writing using peer review and co editing, and provides clear goals for developing writing strategies in the foreign language composition course.

### **Writing prompts**

Sometimes when students are asked to begin writing, they have no idea what to write. A list of prompts (maybe 3-5 at a time) can be provided to help them begin their writing.

### **Make a list**

This follows on from the previous point. But rather than providing the list, students have to create their own list/s. A heading is provided as the stimulus, then students jot down their thoughts on the topic. These can just be key words and short sentences that come to mind. These ideas can be used later as a platform for writing. Some examples of topics could be:

Things I Like/Things I Dislike

Places I've Been

Favorite Sports

Foods I Like/Foods I Dislike

### **Record writing**

Sometimes it's much easier to orally share a story, idea, feelings and thoughts (rather than writing about these things). Students can record their ideas. They have then listened to the recording and written down what was said.

### **Graphic organizers**

**Graphic organizers** are a really good way to get students planning what they're going to write before they actually begin the task of writing. **Graphic organizers** are a visual representation of the information they would like to include in their writing. Some examples include:

- **Venn diagram** – These show relationships between 2 or more things. Venn diagrams are great for showing similarities and differences.
- **T-Chart** – Explores a topic with opposing views. Examples could include: likes/dislikes, before/after and advantages/disadvantages.

- **Y-Chart** – Explores a topic through 3 different senses. The most commonly used senses in the y-chart include: ‘looks like’, ‘sounds like’ and ‘feels like’. But you could also add: ‘smells like’ and ‘tastes like’.

### **Pass it on**

This is an activity that can be done in small groups. Each student has a turn to write an introduction. They then pass this on to the next student in the circle. He/she reads the introduction and then writes the middle of the text. Finally with the last pass around the circle, each student reads the introduction and middle and then writes a conclusion. The writing is passed back to the original writer to read and share with the group.

### **Proofreading and editing**

Once students have finished writing it is always important to go back through the text to proofread and edit. Some students find this particularly difficult as they have spent a great deal of effort just putting their ideas down on the paper. Sometimes by breaking a task down into manageable chunks, students can have more success.

### **Word processor and spellchecker**

Students are allowed to type their writing in a word processor (such as Microsoft Word). Students are taught how to use the spell checker and grammar checker to assist in editing the writing.

### **Rapid/Rocket writing**

The idea behind this is to get students to write down as much information as they can on a topic in a given time, without focusing on fixing spelling, grammar or other mistakes. Students are provided with a time limit (such as 5 minutes). This could be the beginning of a series of lessons where then they focus on different parts of the rapid writing, such as cohesion, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **Framework**

Provide students with a framework for their writing, which can be used as a first form of a draft. This is a guided approach that assists in students organizing their ideas. Frameworks for different forms of writing could include: recount, report, narrative, explanation and procedure.

**Visual representation** Depending on the type of writing it is being completing, students can first draw or paint a picture of the idea. This could then be expanded on to write a description of the drawing.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The team used a non-experimental method since the relationships were studied by making observations or measures of the variables of interest. In contrast, the experimental method involves direct manipulation and control of variables.

Among the non-experimental methods the most common ones are: survey research, observational research and analyzing existing data sets. The team used the quasi experimental research in order to get information about the variable of interest. In this type of research, the team requested students to cooperate by responding some items provided in the Composition class.

The researchers decided it would be a quasi-experimental method: it consists in selecting a group of people upon which a variable is tested. The group to be studied was selected without any random selecting process. The aim of this method is to evaluate interventions and demonstrate casualty between an intervention and an outcome that is reached by making a pre-test which is passed before manipulating the group, the pre-test is followed by an intervention or manipulation of the group, in this case the intervention consisted in giving tips about the writing strategies to students of Composition II course, and finally a post-test was passed to students in order to evaluate the intervention.

The instrument was two tests run out to 20 students in Composition II course: one test was passed at the beginning of the semester and the second was passed at the end of it. In the first test students had to identify the parts of an essay and in the second test students had to write a paragraph. In order to get a diagnosis and measurement of the two variables the team used statistics for those tests.

### **A. Assumption**

According to Professor Dean Dreank “many students as writers have difficulty discovering issues within a topic or formulating thesis statements that take focused positions on issues”. Some students who are taking composition courses are practicing the writing strategies in order to improve their writing skill, even though there are many of them that have some troubles putting into account the tips they learn in composition classes because they do not know how to identify the main parts of an essay. In order to get a good and strong essay this must have: introduction paragraph, body paragraphs and concluding paragraph. Also, an essay must be coherent and cohesive in order to be understandable and easy to read for the audience. This will be reached through practicing writing strategies and exercises, the more students practice the more they will improve their writing skills.

### **B. Sample**

**Population:** Students of: Licenciatura en Idioma Ingles opcion Enseñanza

**Sampling frame:** Foreign Department in the University of El Salvador. Composition II class, Group 02.

**Sample:** it was addressed to 20 students out of 60 students from English Composition II course, group 02: The research team decided that 20 students were chosen as a sample of the study because this is the amount of students in each group, but the team worked with the group # 02 because the researchers could attend to this group in order to provide the students the tips and exercises about the writing strategies. Also, the group had the cooperation of the professor in charge of this group. The professor checked the material that the students were going to work with, so the professor could verify the quality of the instrument given.

The research project was done in the University of El Salvador due to the researchers are more familiar with the methods used to teach composition courses and also the researchers have more access to information at the university and help of the professors so the group requested to have a short intervention during their class.

### C. Data Collection

The overriding purpose of this research project was to study what writing strategies help English Composition students at the Foreign Language Department to write better/well-structured essays, and to propose writing solutions to students in the composition course II who want to learn how to write well-structured essays. To accomplish that goal it became necessary to reach some prerequisite goals. Determining what strategies mean and how they are connected with the development of writing well-structured essays. Related to that effort, it became necessary to reach an understanding about the writing strategies and how would be a successful and well-structure essay. It was important to pass a pre-test and to plan some tips about writing strategies that were shown to students in order to practice them in a short intervention during their composition classes. Once these fundamental steps were achieved, this research was able to go forward.

The team requested permission to the teacher in charge of the group # 02 of Composition course, given during the first semester of 2014, to have an intervention of 15 minutes in order to provide some tips and exercises to students so that they improve their writing skills. Those interventions were performed in 7 classes. The team though about taking 20 students into account for their sample however, not all the students attended to classes, the intervention consisted of giving tips on how to improve the writing strategies and then to provide to the students exercises to practice what the team just showed them about the tips.

1. **Pre-test.** The first intervention was done on April 28th. The team introduced themselves before the students and then gave students a 4 paragraphs essay named "Working Mothers" this essay was taken from the TOEFL test. Students had to read the essay and then write an outline about it. Also, they had to identify and underline the thesis statement of each paragraph as well as the controlling idea of each one. This pre-test was done with the objective of knowing if this group of students from Composition II was able to write coherent and well structured essays.
2. **Practice with supporting ideas.** This was the intervention number 2 done on May 5th in which the team explained what a supporting idea is, gave an example and explained

part by part the example given. The exercise for this intervention was to read 5 topics, each topic had 4 ideas, and students had to find the idea that did not support the topic.

3. **Checking paragraphs for supporting ideas.** The third intervention was done on May 12. For this intervention the research team explained how to create supporting ideas that support the main topic in a paragraph. After that, the students had to read two paragraphs and then to find the idea which did not support the main topic.
4. **Practice with details/adding details.** The fourth intervention was done on June 2nd, the research team provided the students 4 supporting ideas followed by its own different type of detail (detail facts, detail examples, detail experience, detail description) after shown that, the team gave them an exercise in which students had to choose 4 ideas and then to write a sentence that supported the idea for each one.
5. **Writing supporting ideas.** This was done on June 19. Students had to write 4 supporting ideas for each topic sentence.
6. **Test: Writing supporting ideas in a paragraph.** This was done on June 26. The test was addressed to see the progress students had during their composition course. For this test students had to choose one out of ten topics, then they had to write four supporting ideas and at the end they wrote a paragraph. The team wanted to pass a final test where students write an essay but little time was provided to pass the test for students in the Composition II course. However, the team was able to compare and notice the development students had in their writing skill. 13 out of 20 students attended class that day. The team could notice with this test that most of the students wrote a well-structured topic sentence, with coherent ideas and details that support the main topic and the topic sentence.
7. **Questionnaire.** It was passed out of the classroom to 15 students of Composition course II, group# 02 2014.

well-structured topic sentence, with coherent ideas and details that support the main topic and the topic sentence.

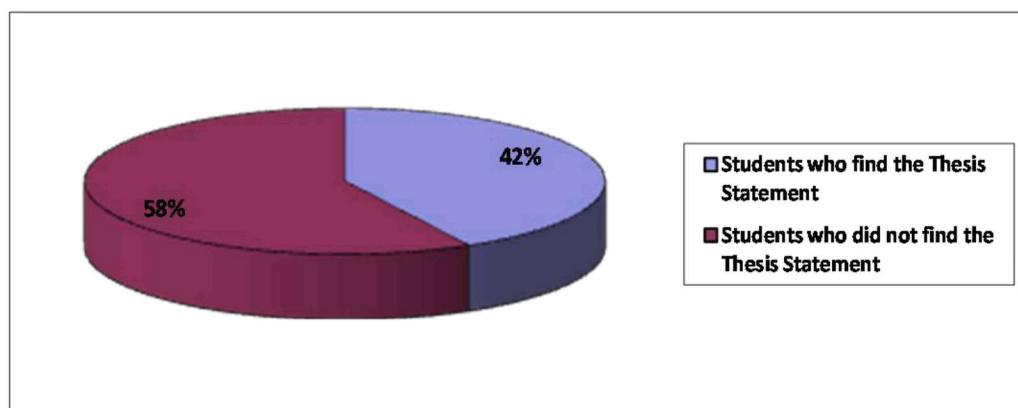
**7. Questionnaire.** It was passed out of the classroom to 15 students of Composition course II, group# 02 2014.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

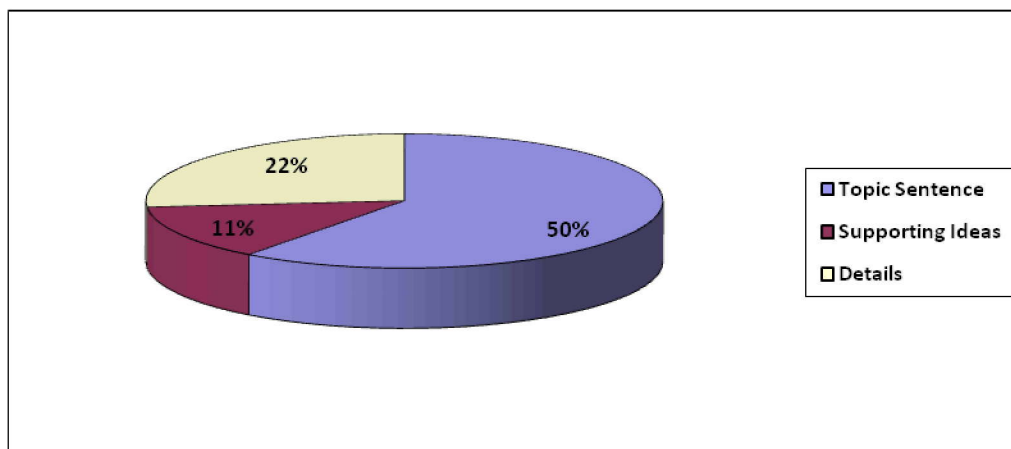
##### 1. Pre-test

Read an essay and write an outline according to what you read.

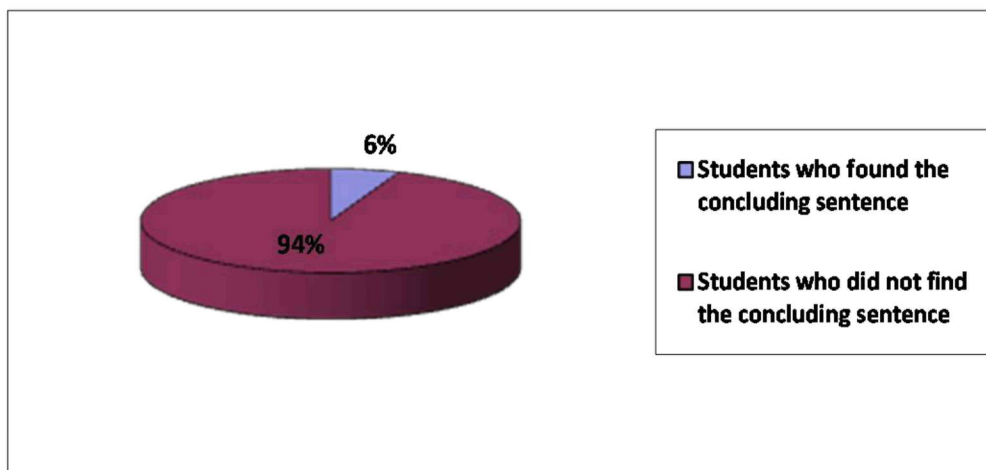
<b>PART OF AN ESSAY</b>	<b>Students who found the Thesis Statement</b>	<b>Students who did not find the Thesis Statement</b>
INTRODUCTIVE PARAGRAPH (Paragraph 1)		
Thesis Statement: But first she should carefully consider the many problems that she might encounter.	8	11



<b>PART OF THE ESSAY</b>	<b>STUDENT S WHO FOUND IT</b>	<b>STUDENT S WHO DID NOT FIND IT</b>
<b>PARAGRAPH TWO</b>		
Topic Sentence: The major problems a working mother faces concern her children.	8	9
Supporting Idea 1: child care	3	14
Detail A: Finding a reliable person to be at home with the child	6	11
Detail B: Finding a day-care center where the child can go	5	12
Supporting Idea 2: Sick children	2	15
Detail A: Special arrangements	3	14
Detail B: Mother must skip work	0	17
Supporting Idea 3: Raising children	0	17
Detail A: Who is teaching mother's values	1	16
Detail B: How smaller children attend activities after school	2	15
<b>PARAGRAPH 3</b>		
Topic Sentence: Even though a mother is frequently forced into working for economic reasons, she soon discovers that there are added expenses.	8	9
Supporting Idea 1: child-care expenses	4	13
Supporting Idea 2: Cost of transportation	7	10
Detail A: to work	2	15
Detail B: To day care	2	15
Supporting Idea 3: Clothes to work in	5	10



<b>CONCLUSION (Paragraph 4)</b>	<b>PARAGRAPH</b>	<b>Students who found the concluding sentence</b>	<b>Students who did not find the concluding sentence</b>
Concluding Sentence: In conclusion, it is a woman`s right to make this choice, and only the woman herself should decide this matter.		1	16

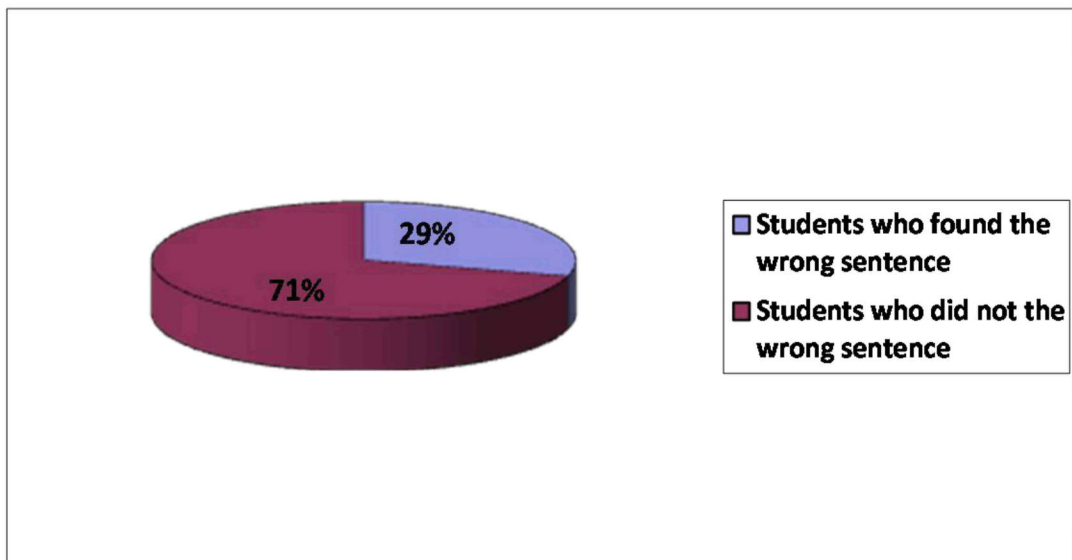


According to the data obtained with the Pre-test, 42% of students found the Thesis Statement in a paragraph, the 50% found the topic sentence of each paragraph, 22% found the supporting ideas, the 11% found the details that support the topic sentence and 6% of students found the concluding sentence. Students have an idea of how to write an outline; however, most of them could not identify the main sentences that support the thesis sentence.

## 2. Practice with supporting ideas

In this exercise students had to underline the one sentence that did not support the topic.

Students who found the wrong sentence	Students who did not find the wrong sentence
5	12

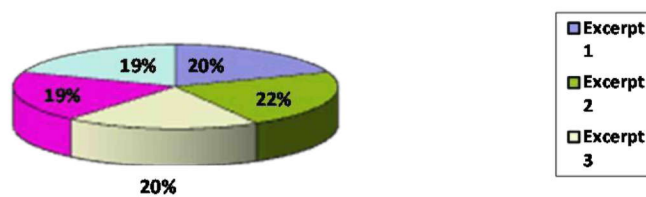


According to the exercise done on May 5th, 71% of students did not identify the sentence that did not support the main topic, and 29% of students found the wrong sentence. There is a difference of 7 students between those percentages. It shows that students need to practice more about how to support the main topic in a paragraph or essay.

3. **Checking paragraphs for supporting ideas.**

Students read 5 excerpts from outlines and underlined the idea that did not support the topic.

	<b>EXCERPT 1</b>	<b>EXCERPT 2</b>	<b>EXCERPT 3</b>	<b>EXCERPT 4</b>	<b>EXCERPT 5</b>
<b>Number of students who found the wrong idea</b>	7/16	8/16	7/16	7/16	7/16

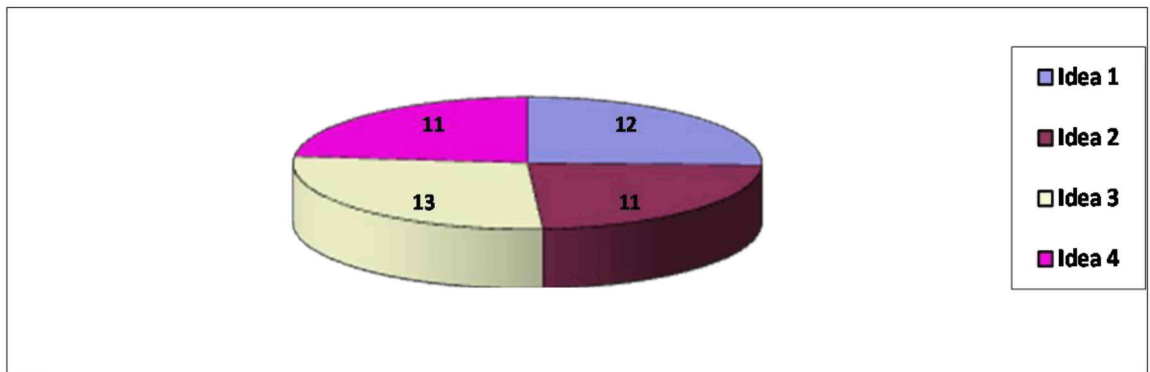


From the exercise passed to students of Composition II course about finding the idea that did not support the topic 20% found the idea in the first excerpt, 23% of students found the idea in the excerpt two, in the excerpts 3, 4 and 5 a 19% of students found the idea that did not support the topic.

#### 4. Adding details

Write one sentence that adds details to each of the following ideas. Use fact, examples, personal experiences, or descriptions.

	IDEA 1	IDEA 2	IDEA 3	IDEA 4
Number of students who wrote a sentence that added a detail to the topic	12/17	11/17	13/17	11/17



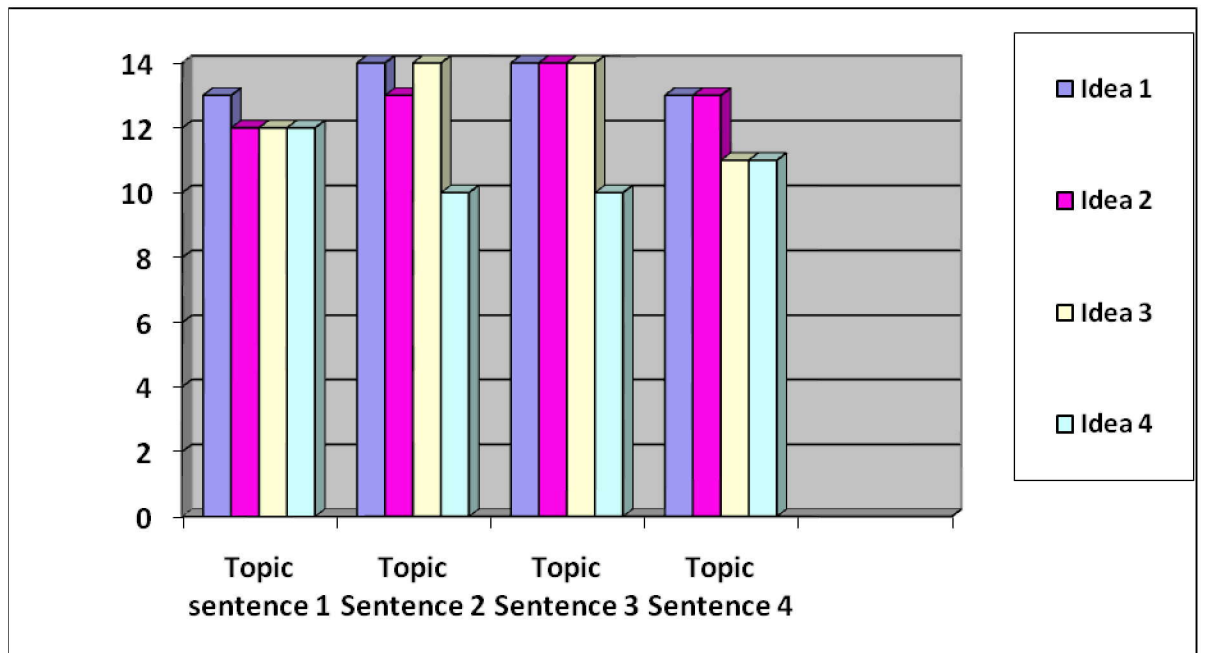
From 16 students who attended classes that day, 15 of them wrote a coherent detailed sentence to the first topic, 11 students added a coherent detail sentence to the second and fourth topic; for the third idea, 13 students wrote a sentence that support the topic.

As seen, a significant part of the students are able to add details to a paragraph.

5. **Writing supporting ideas.**

Eight topic sentences were provided so that students chose four of them and then write four supporting ideas for each topic sentence.

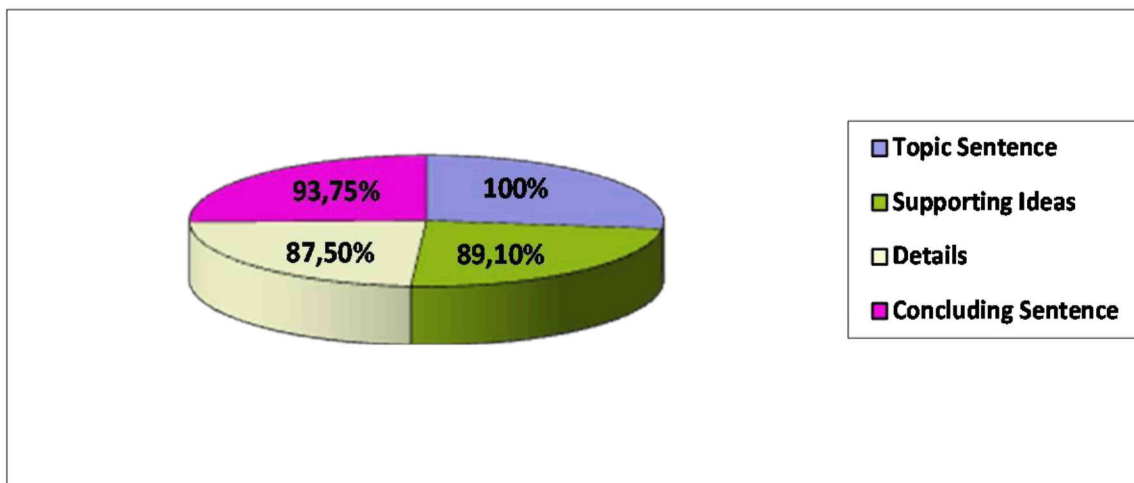
	<b>Supporting Idea 1</b>	<b>Supporting Idea 2</b>	<b>Supporting Idea 3</b>	<b>Supporting Idea4</b>	<b>Media</b>
<b>Topic Sentence 1</b>	13	12	12	12	12
<b>Topic Sentence 2</b>	14	13	14	10	13
<b>Topic Sentence 3</b>	14	14	14	10	13
<b>Topic Sentence 4</b>	13	13	11	11	12



According to the results obtained in this exercise, it can be noticed that more students are increasing their writing skills. For the first topic sentence 12 out of 16 students, who attended class that day, wrote the four well structured and coherent supporting sentences requested for topic one and four, and 13 students wrote the four well – structured supporting ideas in the topic two and three.

6. Writing supporting ideas in a paragraph

Part of the paragraph	Students who wrote a coherent sentence	
	Results	Percentage
Topic sentence	16/16	100%
Supporting idea 1	15/16	93.75%
Detail	13/16	81.25%
Supporting idea 2	14/16	87.50%
Detail	14/16	87.50%
Supporting idea 3	13/16	81.25%
Detail	14/16	87.50%
Supporting idea 4	15/16	93.75%
Detail	15/16	93.75%
Concluding sentence	15/16	93.75%



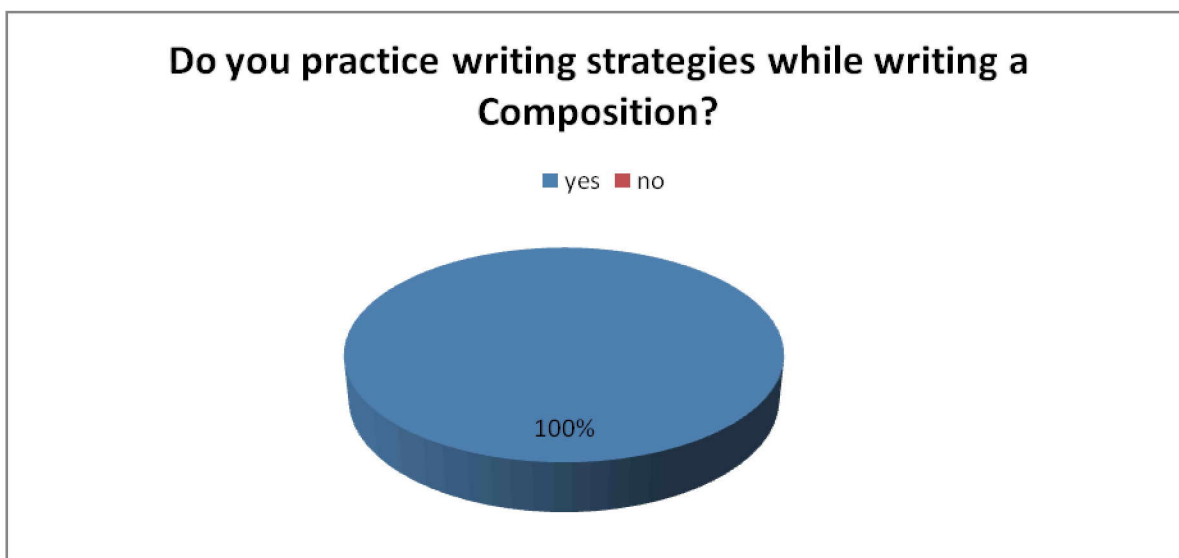
The last test was addressed to seeing the progress students had during their Composition course. In the last test students had to choose 1 out of 10 topics, then they had to write four supporting ideas and then write a paragraph. The team wanted to pass a final test where students wrote an essay but little time was provided to pass the test for students in the Composition II course. However, it can be seen, through the data gathered with the exercises, the development students had in their writing skill. 16 of 20 students attended class that day. In this exercise 100% of students wrote a well structure Topic Sentence, 89.10% wrote well – structured and coherent supporting ideas, 87.50% wrote

well-structured and coherent details and 93.75% wrote a well-structured and coherent concluding sentence.

### Analysis of survey

#### 1. Do you practice writing strategies while writing a Composition?

<b>Yes</b>	15
<b>No</b>	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

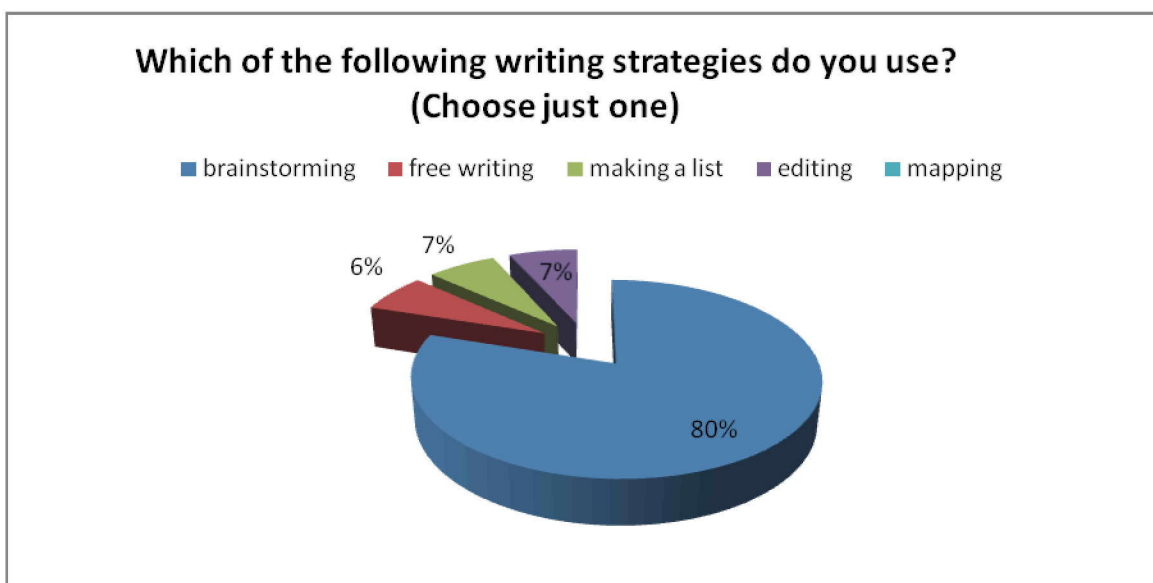


Source: Results taken from the survey addressed to the group 03 of English Composition II

The 100% of the students stated that they practice writing strategies while they are writing a composition.

**2. Which of the following writing strategies do you use the most? (Choose just one)**

<b>Brainstorming</b>	12
<b>Free writing</b>	1
<b>Making a list</b>	1
<b>Editing</b>	1
<b>Mapping</b>	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

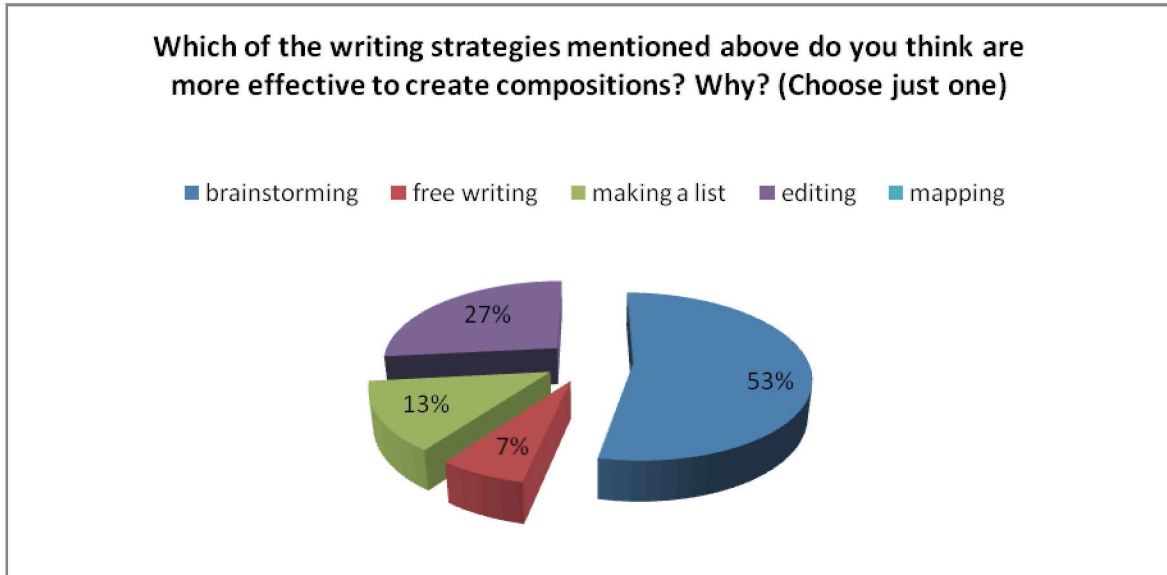


Source: Results taken from the survey addressed to the group 03 of English Composition II

The results show that 12 students said that the strategy they use the most is the brainstorming. Only one student chose free writing and for editing and making a list only one student chose it as well. And nobody uses mapping the most.

**3. Which of the writing strategies mentioned above do you think are more effective to create compositions? (Choose just one)**

Brainstorming	8
Free writing	1
Making a list	2
Editing	4
Mapping	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

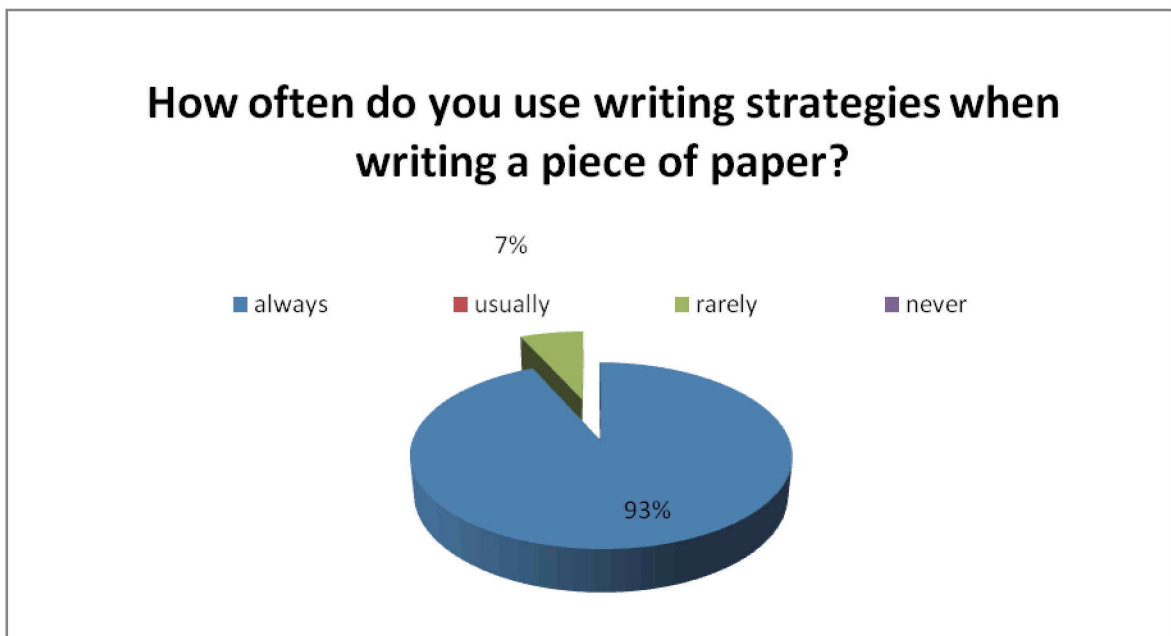


Source: Results taken from the survey addressed to the group 03 of English Composition II

Most students, 8, said that “Brainstorming” is more effective to create a composition, while 4 students said that “editing” is more effective. 2 students stated that “making a list” is the most effective and only one said it is “free writing”.

**4. How often do you use writing strategies when writing a piece of paper?**

<b>Always</b>	14
<b>Usually</b>	0
<b>Rarely</b>	1
<b>Never</b>	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

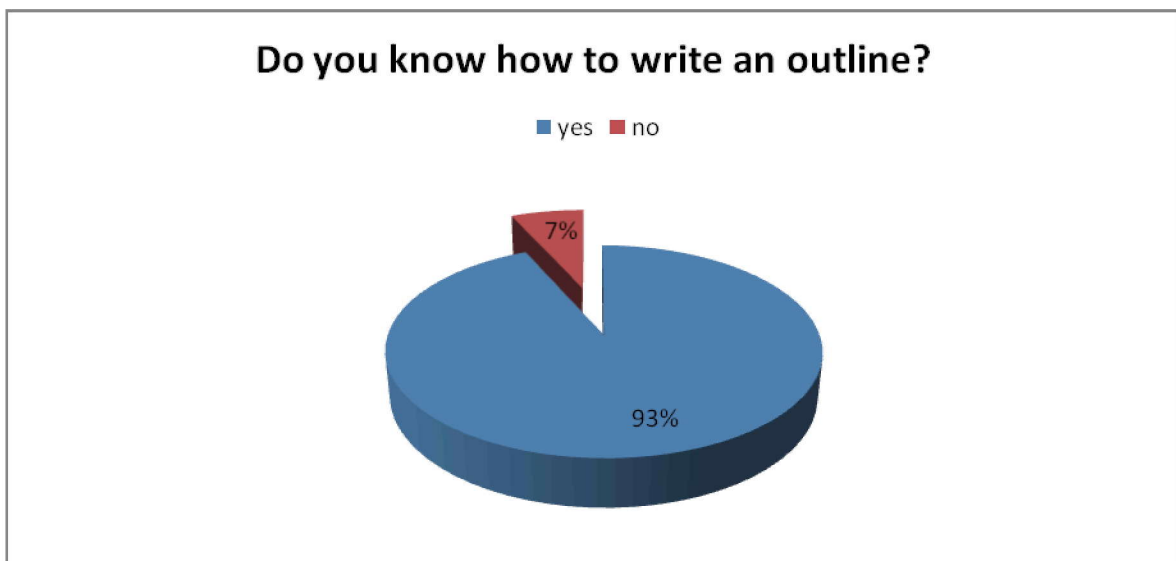


Source: Results taken from the survey addressed to the group 03 of English Composition II

Most of the students of Composition II always use writing strategies in order to create a composition, the 93% said they always use writing strategies, and only 7%, 1 student said that he rarely uses writing strategies to write a piece of paper.

**5. Do you know how to write an outline?**

Yes	14
No	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

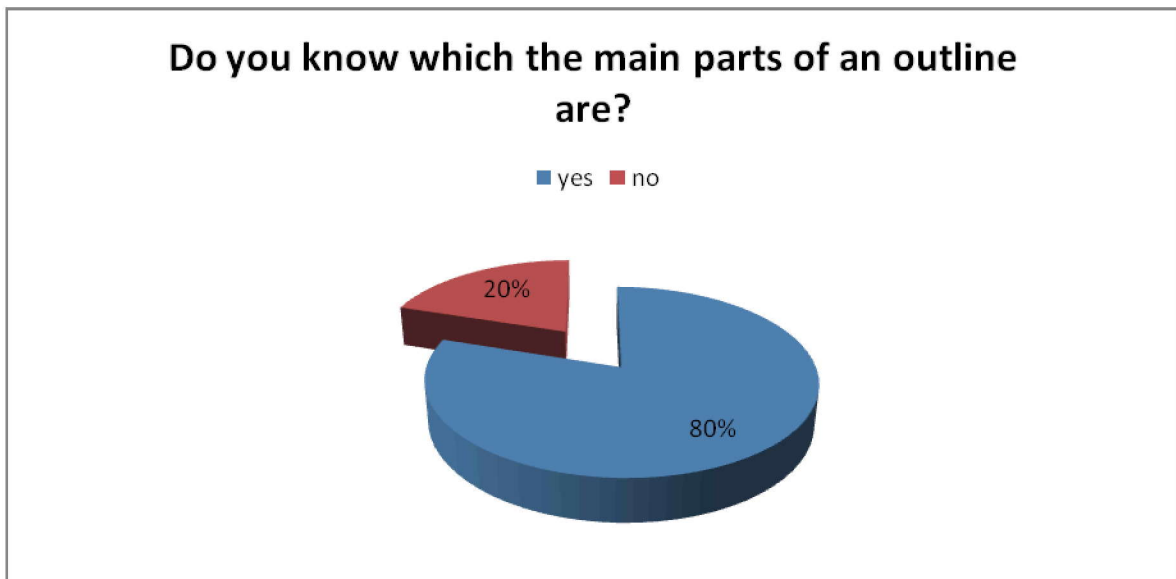


Source: Results taken from the survey addressed to the group 03 of English Composition II

At the end of the course 14 students said that they know how to write an outline and only 1 said that he/she cannot write an outline.

**6. Do you know which the main parts of an outline are?**

Yes	12
No	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

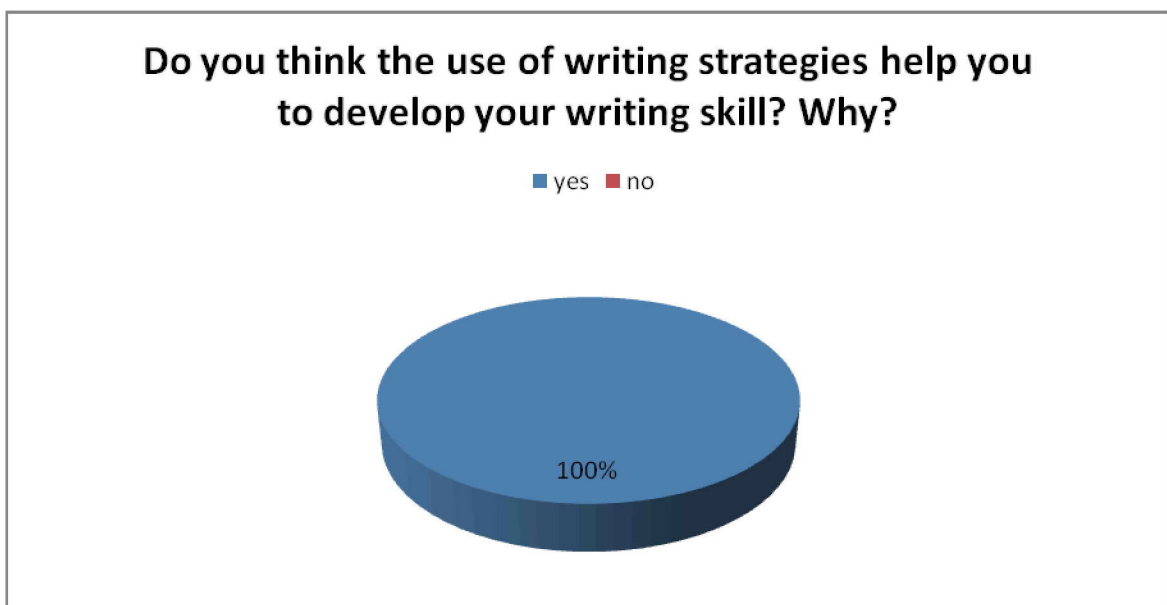


Source: Results taken from the survey addressed to the group 03 of English Composition II

12 students from Composition course stated at the end of the course that they know the parts of an outline and only 3 students said that they do not know the parts of an outline.

**7. Do you think the use of writing strategies help you to develop your writing skill?**

Yes	15
No	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>



Source: Results taken from the survey addressed to the group 03 of English Composition II

For this, all students agreed that the use of writing strategies help them to develop their writing skills.

### Analysis of students' grades

According to the English Composition II Syllabus used during the Semester I, 2014 in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador, the evaluations were done as follows:

4 Essays

1st Essay 20%

E-magazine 10%

2nd Essay 20%

Class engagement and active participation 10%

3rd Essay 20%

4th Essay 20%

There were 9 evaluations during this semester in Composition II. Four essays were written during this semester in Composition II course, those essays were divided into two grades:

Essay (20%)	
Step one and two (10%)	Step three (10%)
Planning and drafting	Editing/final version

The first evaluation consisted of planning (step one) and drafting (step two) which was 10% of the grade, and the other 10% of the grade was editing and final version (Step three).

The team decided to take into account the grades that the twenty students got during the semester in their composition II course, since it is a way to see the progress students had while they were learning and practicing the writing skill at writing an essay.

Below are the 9 evaluations of each student, also the average of each essay and the average of all the evaluations at the end of the course. The table of those grades was provided by the teacher in charge of the group #3 of Composition II course where the sample was taken.

In order to know if the students were able to identify the parts of an essay, the students were given an essay called “working mothers”. This was the diagnostic test which 17 students took.

An essay is made up of paragraphs and the parts of it are: the topic sentence that states the topic and a controlling idea concerning that topic. While the topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph is about, the ideas stated in the rest of the paragraph should all refer to the given topic, these are called supporting ideas. These supporting ideas are the body of the essay that supports it in the form of paragraphs. To make a more fully developed paragraph, details need to be added to the supporting ideas. These details help improve a paragraph; otherwise the essay would be weak.

At the moment of finding a topic sentence 8 students were able to find it (47%), whereas 9 of them could not find it ( 53%). This shows that one more student was not able to find the topic sentence compared with those students that found it. There is a small difference to find the most basic part of an essay, in spite of the previous knowledge they have about the parts of an essay. Admittedly, the results about finding a topic sentence showed little difference between students who found the topic sentence and those who did not.

On the other hand, the Diagnostic Test showed that the students had serious difficulties to find the supporting ideas. The second paragraph of the essay had 3 supporting ideas and the third paragraph also had 3 supporting ideas. Each supporting idea has details that help to strengthen the paragraph. The second paragraph had 6 details, two for each supporting idea; the third paragraph had 2 details, 1 for each supporting idea.

There is a considerable tendency on the students’ part of not finding the supporting ideas, which is somehow a significant part of them. Thus, for the supporting idea 1 in the second paragraph related to child care, 3 students found the supporting idea ( 17%) 14 did not, that means that the 83% of them were not able to find it .

The same tendency is shown with the supporting idea 2, only 2 students could find it (11%) 13 students could not find it (89%) , even worse were the results with the supporting idea 3, not even a student could find the supporting idea (100%)

In the first supporting idea of the third paragraph 4 students found the supporting idea (23%) while 13 students did not find it (77%), 7 students were able to find the supporting idea 2, this means 41% of the students while the other 59% did not find it.

For the last supporting idea of paragraph 3, five students found it (29%) and 12 did not (71%). Even some details are not stated explicitly, they can be understood from the other details that are stated. The details stated in the chart are:

For the last supporting idea of paragraph 3, five students found it (29%) and 12 did not (71%). - The results about finding a topic sentence showed little difference between students who found the topic sentence and those who did not.

- The students have serious difficulties to find the supporting ideas in an essay.

What is not stated but must be understood?

It can be inferred from the data that students from composition are not either given a thorough explanation of these contents (to find the parts of an essay) or are not given at all.

This is an opinion the group forms based on information the team already has, so it is valid and reasonable to make these inferences from this sample.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

After seeing the results for the pre-test passed, it can be noticed that the strategies that students learned during the Composition I course are not enough to write a well-structure essay due to they did not know how to write an outline, which as known it has all the parts of an essay. However, during the composition II course they developed other their writing skills and were able to write well-structured essays through learning the structure of an essay, the types of essays and also due to practicing at writing essays, together with what they learned in Composition I course. At the beginning of the course students could not organized an outline from an essay taken from the TOEFL, Cambridge, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, due to they did not know the structure of it. This showed that students could not recognize the main parts of an essay and paragraphs, therefore it can be inferred they could not write a well-structured essay at the beginning of Composition II course but at the end of it, as you can see in the student's grades and how their grades were getting higher.

Students not only learned to write essays but also they developed skills to write well-structured sentences and use vocabulary correctly, which is something very important too, since readers will understand better what the writer wants to say or express with their essays. The development of writing skills through the use of writing strategies was determined in response to the issues students have to write well-structured essays. When considered by all students' responses and grades an improvement and development during the semester in the composition II course was shown through practice and use of writing strategies.

After the interventions the research team had in the Composition II course and after this course ended, the research team got to the following conclusions:

- The writing strategies in the Pre-Writing phase are not enough to help students to develop their writing skills in order to write a well-structured essay.
- The most used writing strategy during the Pre-writing, for students of Composition II course, is the “brainstorming”.

- The strategies taught in Composition I are not enough to write well-structured essays due to students need to know the parts of an essay, the types of essays and develop other writing skills to put in practice during the writing process.
- The exercises/essays written during the Composition II course are effective for students but as it is shown in their grades those exercises is not enough practice for all the students to get well-structured essay at the end of the course.
- Through the Composition II course and the interventions done during the class, students were able to develop the use of structured sentences and the correctly use of vocabulary in an essay.
- Besides the writing strategies in the pre-writing process the writing strategies during the writing process are helpful to write well-structured essays.
- Brainstorming is the strategy that works better for students.
- The main factors for Composition students low writing quality are:
  - \*Students do not know the structure of essays.
  - \* Students cannot support their topic sentence through supporting ideas.
  - \* Students cannot add coherent details to the essays.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is always wanted that there are improvements in future research projects, therefore it is recommended for future students that they have interest in their research project. Therefore the following is recommended:

A better organization and longer interventions with students, so that they can create their essays in order to compare better the results at the end of the research.

Writing more essays would be more helpful for students to reach a higher development of their writing skills and so to write a better well-structured essay.

To exchange essays with classmates in order to check if there is any grammar, coherence and cohesion mistakes, so students can reach a better structured essay.

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## VIII. APPENDIXES

### Glossary

**Brainstorming:** Strategy that is considered like a storm in the brain whose goals to collect data and thought as they come into the mind.

**Concluding sentence:** This is the last sentence of the paragraph. It often finishes the paragraph by repeating the main idea or by giving a final comment about the topic.

**Draft:** It is a previous activity students must make to correct all the mistakes they could have before hand in their final compositions.

**Editing:** This is the time to choose which ideas are the most interesting, and which are the most relevant to the topic.

**Essay:** A short piece of writing written from an author's personal point of view about a specific topic.

**Free-writing:** Writing that it is about whatever comes into someone's mind about a selected topic without stopping.

**Main Idea:** The most important or central thought of a paragraph or a text, which tells the reader what the paragraph is about.

**Method:** A systematic process of achieving an end with accuracy and efficiency, usually in an ordered sequence of fixed steps.

**Methodology:** A system of principles or rules from which specific methods or procedures maybe used to interpret or solve different problems in a particular field.

**Outline:** The list of information that students put on their essays in an organized way.

**Paragraph:** It is a group of sentences that give information about a single topic in a coherent and cohesive way.

**Strategy:** A plan chosen with the aim of achieving, improving of something such as a goal or solution to a problem.

**Supporting Sentences:** Sentences that support and give details of the topic sentence inside a paragraph.

**Syntax:** The study of rules where words or other elements of sentence structure are combined to form grammatical sentences.

**Technique:** A systematic procedure by which a task is accomplished.

**Thesis Statement:** Sentence that tells the reader the main idea of the whole essay.

**Topic Sentence:** This is the main idea of the paragraph; it is usually the first sentence and the most general of the paragraph.



**Universidad de El Salvador  
San Salvador, El Salvador.  
Marzo del 2014.**

Estimado **Lic. Miguel Mata**

Por este medio nos dirigimos a usted Jorge Joaquin, Zenayda Quintanila y Coralia Mixco, estudiantes egresados de la Lic. En Idioma Inglés opción enseñanza, quienes estamos realizando nuestro Proyecto de Graduación con el tema “What are the main writing strategies that can help improve the writing skill of the English Composition II students at the University of El Salvador?”.

El motivo de esta carta es para solicitarle autorización para realizar un pequeño taller con los estudiantes que asisten a la materia de Composición II, grupo 02 de 1:00 pm a 3:00 pm. El taller tiene como fin identificar si los estudiantes tienen los conocimientos necesarios para elaborar un ensayo bien estructurado, coherente, y con una tesis clara.

Desde ya agradecemos su disposición y su colaboración, es muy importante para el progreso de nuestro Proyecto de Graduación y para nuestra formación como futuros profesionales.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT.**

**Objective:** To know if the students of Composition II course are able to write coherent and well-structure essays.

**Instructions:** Read the essay identifying and underlining the thesis statements as well as the controlling/supporting ideas of each paragraph. Then, Write an outline about the essay "Working Mothers".

Some people believe that a mother should not work. Others argue against this. Consider the problems that a working mother faces. Do you believe a mother should work?

**Working mothers**

*Nowadays it is very common for mothers to work outside the home. Whether a woman should stay at home or join the workforce is debated by many people. Some argue that the family, especially small children, may be neglected. However, many women need to work because of economic reasons or want to work to maintain a career. I believe that every mother has the right to work, and the decision should be one that a woman makes on her own. But first she should carefully consider the many problems that she might encounter.*

*The major problems a working mother faces concern her children. She must either find a reliable person who will be loving toward that children or a good day care center that the children can attend. If a child gets sick, the mother must make special arrangements for the child to be cared for at home, or she must stay home from work herself. While at work, the mother may worry about her children. She may wonder if they are safe, if they are learning the values she wants them to have, and if her absence is hurting them emotionally. She may also regret not being able to take them after school activities or participate in family activities with them.*

*Even though a mother is frequently forced into working for economic reasons, she soon discover that there added expenses. The biggest expense is child care. Another expense is transportation, which includes not only going to work but also getting her children to school or day care. This may include purchasing and maintaining a car. Yet another expense is clothing, such as uniform or business suits to maintain a professional appearance.*

*After a mother takes into account all the above problems and perhaps other problems unique to her situation, she must decide if a job outside the home is worth it. I believe that even though she faces major obstacles, these obstacles are not insurmountable. Many mothers do work and manage a family very successfully. In conclusion, it is a woman's right to make this choice, and only the woman herself should decide this matter.*

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**Checking paragraphs for supporting ideas.**

**Instructions:** read these paragraphs and underline the one idea that does not support the topic sentence.

Paragraph 1.

*Hobbies are important for many reasons. First, a hobby can be educational. For example, if the hobby is stamp collecting, the person can learn about the countries of the world and even some of their history. Second, engaging in the hobby can lead to meeting other people with the same interests. A person can also meet other people by going to parties. Third, a person's free time is being used in a positive way. The person has no time to be bored or get into mischief while engaged in the hobby. Finally, some hobbies can lead to a future job. A person who enjoys a hobby related job is more satisfied with life.*

Paragraph 2.

*There are several features of spoken English that make it difficult for me to understand. First, many words are not pronounced as they are spelled, so when I learn new words through Reading, I sometimes don't understand them when they are spoken. Second, native speakers contract words and phrases, "what are you doing?" becomes "whatcha doing?" in my opinion people should write clearly. Third, native speakers have a wide range of accents. A British accent is very different from one from Texas. Fourth, there are lots of idioms and slang expressions. These expressions also differ depending on the area a speaker is from. Finally, there are sounds that don't exist in my language that do exist in English and vice versa. These sounds are difficult for me to distinguish.*

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**Practice with supporting ideas.**

Your topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph will be about. The ideas stated in the rest of the paragraph should all refer to the given topic and the controlling ideas. Look at the following example:

*There are many ways to eat peanut butter. You can spread it on a slice of bread like butter, or you can make it into a sandwich with jam. Peanut can be a major ingredient of very tasty cookies as well as cakes and candies. It is delicious in ice cream. Peanut butter was invented by George Washington Carver. My favorite way to eat peanut butter is to lick it off a spoon.*

Our topic sentence tells the reader that we are discussing peanut butter. The controlling idea is “ways of eating it”. All of the sentences should be about ways of eating peanut butter. Are they? No. The sentence “Peanut butter was invented by George Washington Carver” does not refer to ways of eating peanut butter.

**Checking Supporting ideas.**

**Instructions:** Look at the following excerpts from outlines. Circle the letter of the idea that does not support the topic.

**1. Ways to get rid of hiccups.**

- A. breathe into a paper bag
- B. hold your breath to the count of ten
- C. have someone frighten you
- D. Make an appointment with your adviser

**2. Steps for planning a trip.**

- A. Purchasing a map
- B. Working late
- C. Making an itinerary
- D. Reserving a ticket

**3. Reasons for car accidents**

- A. fast driving
- B. Drinking and driving
- C. Not following traffic regulations
- D. Giving signals

**4. Advantages of small apartments**

- A. Good school facilities
- B. easy to clean
- C. Cheaper to furnish
- D. relatively inexpensive

**5. Characteristics of a good restaurant**

- A. efficient waiters
- B. Delicious food
- C. Jacket and tie required
- D. pleasant atmosphere

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**Writing supporting ideas in a paragraph.**

Adding Secondary Support After you have chosen your PRIMARY supports, you need to add supporting details for your supporting details! (no groaning!). You add secondary support by providing additional examples and illustrations to back up your primary support. Now that you have roadmap to guide you, writing the Paragraph is a Snap! - Turn all your points into complete sentences. -Add some good specific details. -Sprinkle in a few transitional phrases. And you now have a ... PARAGRAPH!

**Instructions:** Read at the following example then, on your paper, write out a paragraph by expanding your supporting ideas into complete sentences.

***Example: catching colds***

People can avoid colds by taking certain precautions.

- a. Avoiding people with colds
- b. Getting plenty of sleep
- c. Eating nutritious food
- d. Taking vitamin C

*People can avoid catching colds by taking certain precautions. Perhaps the most important precaution is to avoid people who already have a cold so that they are not exposed to their germs. You should also get plenty of sleep so that your resistance is strong. Eating nutritious food will ensure that you have the vitamins that can help fight cold germs. Finally, you could try taking vitamin C supplements, which may help prevent your catching a cold.*

Now choose one of these topics. Outline 4 supporting ideas and then develop it in a paragraph, like in the previous example.

- a. Large cars
- b. Absenteeism
- c. Living in a remote area
- d. Taking exams
- e. Studying abroad
- f. Computers

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**Practice with details**

To make a more fully developed paragraph, you need to add details to your supporting ideas. Your details can be facts, examples, personal experiences, or descriptions.

Look at this topics sentence:

*The Smithsonian Institute is worth visiting for a number of reasons.*

The topic is “The Smithsonian Institution”; and the controlling idea is “reasons for a visit”.

Look at the following supporting ideas and details:

**Supporting idea 1**

*The Smithsonian Institute is compound of various museums that offer something for everyone.*

**Details-Facts**

*These museums consist of the National Museum of History and Technology, the National Aeronautics and Space Museum, the National Collection of Fine Arts, the National Museum of Natural History, and several others.*

**Supporting idea 2**

*A person can do more than just look at the exhibits.*

**Details-examples**

*For example, in the insect zoo at the National Museum of Natural History, anyone who so desires can handle some of the exhibits.*

**Supporting idea 3**

*The museum provides unforgettable experiences.*

**Details-personal experiences**

*In climbing through Skylab at the National Aeronautics and Space Museum, I was able to imagine what it would be like to be an astronaut in space.*

**Supporting idea 4**

*Movies shown at regular intervals aid in building an appreciation of our world.*

**Details-description**

*In the National Aeronautics and Space Museum, there is a theater that has a large screen. When the movie is shown, it gives the viewer the feeling that he or she is in the movie itself, either floating above the earth in a hot air balloon or hang gliding over cliffs.*

**Adding Details.**

**Instructions:** Choose four ideas and write one sentence that adds a detail to each of the following ideas. Use facts, examples, personal experiences, or descriptions.

1. The capital city of my country

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2. My favorite pastime is Reading.

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3. It is very important for me to score well on the Computer Based Toefl test.

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4. A long vacation at the beach is a nice way to relax.

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5. Habits such as smoking are hard to break.

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6. Many bad traffic accidents could be prevented

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7. Modern architecture has its critics as well as its admirers.

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8. The suburban mall has taken away a lot of business from city centers.

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**Writing supporting ideas**

Strategies for Generating Support -Circle an important word or phrase in your topic sentence -Write about the word you circled for a minute or two. Jot down everything that comes to mind from that word. -Reread your topic sentence and write down your first thought, then the next thought, etc. -Use a prewriting technique – free writing, cluster, list, brainstorm, etc. Narrowing it down -Look over the list or cluster that you made. -Select three to five points that have something in common and get your point across. -Choose the supports that are the clearest and most convincing. - Choose the supports that offer the best examples, facts, and observations.

**Instructions:** Use these topic sentences to outline four supporting ideas. Choose just 4 of them.

Example:

- people can avoid catching colds by taking certain precautions
- A. Avoiding people with colds
- B. Getting plenty of sleep
- C. Eating nutritious food
- D. Taking vitamin C

1. The disadvantages of owning a large car are many.

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2. The reason a person lives in a remote area may be one of the following.

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3. Before applying to a foreign university, one should consider the disadvantages of studying abroad.

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4. Although a person thinks home is a safe place, many different kinds of accidents occur there.

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5. There are several kinds of airports

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6. Absenteeism causes the employer many problems

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7. Taking exams is required of all students, and to do their best, students should use the following methods to prepare themselves.

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**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR  
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**Objective:** To analyze the writing strategies that English Composition II students from the Department of Foreign Language of the University of El Salvador practice in order to create well structured essays.

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions.

1. Do you practice writing strategies while writing a Composition?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
2. Which of the following writing strategies do you use? (choose just one)
  - a. Brainstorming
  - b. Free-writing
  - c. Making list
  - d. Editing
  - e. Mapping
  
3. Which of the writing strategies mentioned above do you think are more effective to create compositions? Why? (choose just one)
  - a. Brainstorming
  - b. Free-writing
  - c. Making list
  - d. Editing
  - e. Mapping
  
4. How often do you use writing strategies when writing a piece of paper?
  - a. Always
  - b. Usually
  - c. Rarely
  - d. Never

5. Do you know how to write an outline?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Do you know which the main parts of an outline are?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. Do you think the use of writing strategies help you to develop your writing skill?  
Why?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

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**ENGLISH COMPOSITION II SYLLABUS.**

**1. GENERAL ASPECTS**

- 1.1 Course Name: English Composition II
- 1.2 Code: CO1214
- 1.3 Pre-requisite: English Composition I
- 1.4 Credits: 4
- 1.5 Major Study Plan: Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza
- 1.6 Academic Year and Semester: I - 2014
- 1.7 Level and Area: Skill Development Area
- 1.8 Academic Unit Teaching the Subject: Foreign Language Department
- 1.9 School Duration of the Semester: 16 weeks
- 1.10 Number of Working Hours and Weeks: 128 hours
- 1.11 Date and Agreement of the C.S.U Study Plan: 70-99-2003 (2.8) August  
17th 2001
- 1.12 Professors:
  - Group 02 Ricardo Garay Salinas
  - Group 03 Miguel Angel Mata

**2. COURSE DESCRIPTION.**

English Composition II is the second course that students from Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza will take. Students will learn to write well-structured essay. It will be focused on two big areas. In the first one we will make a review about the students' previous knowledge about writing an essay as they have already taken English Composition I. in the second area, we will instruct students about how to use research to write Academic Essays. Learners will be guided to make summaries as a way to show their understanding of a text or article. Subsequently, they will be taught how to paraphrase and include quotations as a way to support what they want to convey in their pieces of writing.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

#### *General Objective*

At the end of the course, students will be able to

- Write essays with a strong, clear thesis, body paragraphs, transitions and a conclusion.

#### *Specific Objective*

At the end of the course, students will be able to

- Refine research within a writing process identifying and using rhetorical strategies as well as practicing critical thinking and reading.
- Use quote, paraphrases, and summaries accurately and appropriately to strengthen written arguments and to avoid plagiarism.
- Demonstrate skills in source summarization and in synthesis skills.
- Cite and document information sources in accordance with APA style requirements.
- Use information from resources as structural elements in an academic paper.
- Review and practice the grammatical and rhetorical skills necessary for successful writing. Improve their writing style which involves not only the accurate use of language but also the effective organization of information.
- Select relevant data to support an argument.
- Be aware of the readers' needs both when selecting content and guiding the reader through the written piece of writing.
- Develop proofreading skills.

### 4. CONTENT.

UNIT 1 introduction to the Essay	2 Weeks
UNIT 2 Paraphrasing and summarizing	2 Weeks
UNIT 3 The comparison and contrasting Essay	4 Weeks
UNIT 4 The cause and effect Essay	4 Weeks
UNIT 5 The argumentative Essay	4 Weeks

### 5. METHODOLOGY

In this course, students will be encouraged to write essays, make summaries and support what they want to convey by means of supporting their essays with paraphrases and quotations. Also, they will do peer-assessment in which they will provide constructive feedback to their own classmates. Learners will have some time to make their drafts and revisions and subsequently the writing teacher will provide some direct or indirect feedback or will schedule the learner to attend a conference and talk about their essays. Students will count on sufficient count to do the revision and submit the last version of their essays. The teacher will use a checklist, or a

rubric to revise the final version of the essays and a checklist when students are scheduled to attend conferences.

In addition, students will be encouraged and monitored by their writing teacher to write essays base don a general and some specific topics assigned previously by the teacher. Learners will have the opportunity to public their essays in “The Academic Composition Magazine” sponsored by the writing teachers from the English Composition II Class.

The system of evaluation of this class is formative so students will be graded base don their work as they will be monitored by the teacher along the semester. Writing teachers will give emphasis and importance to the process students follow to develop their tasks as well as the product that will be obtained.

## 6. EVALUATION

4 Essays.

- 1st essay 20%
- 2 essay 20%
- 3rd essay 20%
- 4th essay 20%
- E-Magazine 10%
- Class engagement and active participation 10%

### Evaluation for each essay:

Steps:

- 1.Planning 5%
- 2.Drafting 5%
- 3.Editing/Final version 10%

1 Essay 20%

Step 1: 5% Step 2: 5% Step 3: 10%

2 Essay 20%

Step 1: 5% Step 2: 5% Step 3: 10%

3 Essay 20%

Step 1: 5% Step 2: 5% Step 3: 10%

4 Essay 20%

Step 1: 5% Step 2: 5% Step 3: 10%

**Composition II Timetable.**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>TIME</b>
1	Review. Introduction to Essay.	Chapter 6	Feb 24th - 28th
2			March 3rd - 7th
3	Paraphrase and Summary	Chapter 8	March 10th - 14th
4			March 17 - 21st
5	Cause and Effect Essay	Chapter 11	March 24th - 28th
6			March 31st - April 4th
7			April 7th - 11th
8			April 22nd - 25th
9-10	Classification Essay	Chapter	April 28th - May 2nd
11/12			May 5th - 9th
			May 12th - 16th
			May 19th - 23rd
13-14	Argumentative Essay	Chapter	May 26th - 30th
			June 2nd - 6th
15-16			June 9th-13th
			June 16th - 20th
			Composition II Team