

COMMON STRATEGIES USED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS TO PROVIDE
WRITING INSTRUCTION

By

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Submitted to the School of Human Sciences in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of B.A. in the Department
Of Linguistics and Languages
University of Nariño
May, 2008

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, we would like to thank teacher Ana Clara Sanchez for her support during the realization of this research. Her help has been essential in order to conclude this stage of our lives.

Special thanks to Gabriel Obando for all his guidance throughout the development of our professional career. Without his collaboration it would not have been possible to overcome the difficulties we underwent in order to obtain this accomplishment.

We also like to thank teacher Magda Caicedo. More than a teacher, you are a good friend. We admire her for her compromise with her students because she is always willing to listen; and she has become a role model for us by being an excellent teacher.

Thanks to our parents because of all the spiritual, economical and emotional support they have provided us during the course of our lives. We will always be in debt with them.

Isabel and Luis Gerardo, without your constant encouragement I would not have been able to pursue my goals. Dear daughter, remember that everything I do, I do it for you, I want you to be proud of me. I love you with all my heart!

Maria Teresa, you are the best mom I could ever have and I sincerely appreciate all the things you have done for me. Thanks from the bottom of my heart for being there for me all the time. I love you so much!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to identify the most common strategies in writing instruction taught by the teachers and applied by the students of the different semesters in the Linguistics and Languages Department of the University of Nariño. For this research it was mentioned that the teachers' use or preferences of some strategies to give writing instruction was not established. For that reason one survey format was applied to teachers and another one to students to find out their preferences about the use of writing strategies in relation to the effectiveness, importance and frequency of use of them.

The results from the surveys applied to teachers and students showed that the teachers prefer to use strategies such as freewriting, questioning and outlining to give writing instruction. In contrast to teachers' opinion, students affirmed that the strategies commonly used by them were brainstorming and outlining. These results demonstrated that the writing instruction given is based on teachers' preferences without taking into account students' opinion. This situation can be improved in order to make of writing instruction a more useful and reliable process not only for the teachers but also for the students.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Introduction to the problem

Teaching a language involves many important skills that need to be developed accurately. The oral skill has been emphasized for many years because it is considered as the way to communicate in any language, but skills like listening, reading and writing have been neglected despite of their importance. Without listening, the oral skill would be useless, and without writing who could be able to read?

Writing has an importance on its own as another way to communicate, in fact, several tests and international exams like Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the First Certificate in English (FCE) to name only a few, take into consideration the written part as a percentage of the final score. Colombia also has the "Examen de la Calidad de la Educación Superior (ECAES) that inside its format has a written part, specifically of thousand word essay. These kinds of tests prove that the writing skill is important and learning it involves to acquire different strategies in order to write in a clear and a comprehensible way, in other words to write accurately.

Problem Statement

Writing is one of the skills an English learner should study in order to acquire the knowledge s/he needs to master

a foreign language. Most of the teachers focus their instruction on the final product but pay little or no attention at all to the process the learners are requested to carry out to achieve those results.

The task of putting coherent organized ideas on paper is a very difficult job for students because many difficulties in expressing themselves in a written form can take place during the process. Therefore, learners need to follow the correct guidelines and use the right tools to become competent writers.

The only way to achieve a good performance in written composition is to have instructors use the adequate strategies and techniques that students need to facilitate learning.

Teachers have the responsibility of applying appropriate strategies which allow students to recognize the stages involved with the production of a piece of writing and to encourage them to develop and improve their writing potential while choosing the most effective tools for them.

Unfortunately, the perfect system for teaching the process of writing does not exist, so it is necessary for us, as former English students and current teachers, to establish the common techniques instructors know and apply to provide writing training, and also to verify that

students are being motivated and assisted adequately in the topics they are to write.

To sum up, the present research attempts to identify the most common strategies used by English teachers at the University of Nariño to provide writing instruction. Moreover, the intention is to establish the reasons for which teachers use determined techniques and whether they think they are effective in their classrooms.

Research Question

Which are the common strategies used by English teachers to provide writing instruction in the Department of Linguistics and Languages at the University of Nariño?

Justification

Written language allows people to surpass time and space. This is one of the reasons why learning to write is an very important experience, not only to native English speakers but also to EFL learners. Writing has occupied a considerable position in teaching and learning approaches for many years given that it is an essential component in language acquisition. However, learning this skill is a delicate issue. Since learners employ writing as a way of communication and expression of feelings and thoughts, it is important to make a conscious effort thinking of the way to arrange words and pieces of discourse together.

The importance of this research is based on the idea that teachers of writing composition must be familiar with the strategies and techniques related to this subject. Otherwise, students are not going to be able to develop writing skills.

According to Celce-Murcia (2001) "not knowing where or how to begin causes inexperienced writers to waste time that could be better invested in working to improve a draft of a paper in progress; there can be no paper in progress, however, if the writer does not have a way into the topic or assignment". This means that since the writing composition process involves several approaches and stages such as prewriting and drafting, it is also relevant to notice that none of them can exist without the other. For instance, if students are not capable of generating ideas they are not going to be capable of expressing their thoughts on paper and writing a high-quality draft either.

Therefore, it is vital for students to learn to feel "comfortable with pre-writing techniques, multiple strategies for developing and organizing a message, a variety of strategies for revising and editing, and strategies for preparing products for public audiences and for deadlines." (Writing process, n.d.)

Teachers must give their pupils an adequate framework to encourage them to start the process of writing. They are also in charge of looking for new strategies, if possible, that enhance the conditions for the development of this skill.

This research will offer information about how EFL teachers train learners in writing in our setting and how those strategies are perceived by them, this means that the effectiveness of the techniques used is going to be described and analyzed through this work.

In conclusion, the present study will permit to identify the most common strategies to develop writing that could help other teachers to make educative decisions about the most appropriate techniques they should apply in their professional practice to improve this important subject. This is an attempt to find out the teaching level in writing composition at the University of Nariño and to set the stage for further research in this field.

Objectives

General Objective

To identify and establish the most common strategies used by English teachers at the University of Nariño to teach writing considering the teachers preferences and the effectiveness perceived by the students.

Specific Objectives

To identify the writing strategies used by English teachers at University of Nariño.

To establish the reasons why teachers prefer and apply the strategies identified.

To determine which writing strategy is the most effective one according to the students' opinions.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Terms

Writing strategies is a wide field and understanding it is related to the meaning of words like instruction and strategy, which are the terms considered as important in this research in the same way some descriptions of the strategies taken into account are.

Instruction

It is a form of communicated information that is both command and explanation for how an action, behavior, method, or task is to be begun, completed, conducted, or executed.

Instruction in an ESL/EFL setting is based on principled teaching, that is, people teach according to certain principles and beliefs of an overall approach to language learning and teaching. (Instruction Defined n.d.)

Strategy

It is a compound of activities developed by teachers to expand the "storage, retrieval and use of information". They are specific actions which are characterized by directness, effectiveness, and the ability to transfer knowledge to new situations. (Oxford, 1990)

In the field of TESOL, learning strategies are related to all kinds of activities that students perform

successfully in a classroom with aims of developing control, goal-directedness, self-efficacy and autonomy (Oxford, 2001)

Learning strategies are operations or steps used by learners to facilitate the acquisition, storage, or retrieval of information to their students. (Rigney, 1978 as cited in O'Malley, Chamot, 1988).

Language Learning Strategies

"The term strategy was first used by Jerome Bruner in Cognitive Psychology in 1956 in a paper related to the formation of concepts from a cognitive perspective, document presented along with a preliminary paper by Chomsky on his theory of language. Since the late 1970s applied linguistics has turned more and more to cognitive science to provide the theoretical framework for language learning and this has led to valuable research into a whole new range of strategies used in vocabulary learning tasks, reading comprehension and writing, to name only a few". (What are Learning Strategies? n.d.)

During the years, the words "Language Learning Strategy" have been defined and stated by a great variety of researchers. For example, Richards and Platt (1992) define them as "intentional behavior and thoughts used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn or remember new information". Wenden and Rubin (1987), on

their own, established that learning strategies are a combination of the operations, plans and routines used by learners during the process of obtaining, storing, retrieving and using the knowledge acquired. And Stern (1992) states that "the concept of a learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional direction learning techniques". (Hismanoglu, n.d.)

According to Rebecca Oxford (1990) "foreign or second language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques students use often consciously to improve the progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the L2" (as cited in Online Resources: Digests, 1994).

Even though each of the researchers and authors has his/her own point of view concerning learning strategies, they all agree with the fact that they are essential tools in the acquisition of a second or foreign language for students to engage in the learning process, develop different skills and facilitate their own tasks achievement.

Since learning strategies are used by instructors to help students learn in a successful way, a lot of research has been carried out across the years to prove their

effectiveness. Regarding language strategies for writing, for example, Chamot and Kupper (1989, as cited in Oxford, 1994) found out that "certain cluster of strategies are linked to particular language skills or tasks... L2 learning, like L1 writing, benefits from the learning strategies of planning, self-monitoring, deduction and substitution", and they also discovered that "successful language learners tend to select strategies that work well together in a highly orchestrated way, tailored to the requirements of the language tasks"; and O'Malley and Chamot, in 1990 revealed that "these learners can easily explain the strategies that they use and why they employ them" (Oxford, 1994). This is an important aspect which is going to be considered during the production of this study given that the subjects are asked which strategy or strategies are currently used by their writing teachers and to what extent they think they are effective for their learning and their accomplishment of writing composition activities.

As well as the terms previously explained, it is important to define writing and to make a review of its history. These two aspects are fully explained in the following pages.

Definition of writing

According to Byrne (1988) writing is a combination of graphic symbols organized in a determined way according to different rules and structures, which allow us to produce words and sentences in adequate sequences to compose coherent texts. Arapoff (1967), on the other hand, describes writing, not only as a joining of symbols and letters that represent a speech but also a join of many thoughts, experiences and situations acquired through direct contact with the world put in a piece of paper. It is not an activity established to use and organize symbols, but it is the main artistic tool EFL learners and people in general have to select and put in order ideas with aims to obtain "a comprehensible and coherent composition".

As a result of the investigative reports carried out through the history of writing and the work of the authors mentioned throughout this study it can be said also that writing is a communicative skill characterized by complex strategies and processes that allow learners to express ideas, feelings and thoughts on paper. Unlike speaking, writing is considered a formal means for communication stated mostly in essays, research papers and letters. While speaking is a natural ability, writing requires an adequate

training. This idea has been previously established by Ann Raimes (1983) in the following passage:

“Learning to write is not just a “natural” extension of learning to speak a language. We learn to speak our first language at home without systematic instruction, whereas most of us have to be taught in school how to write that same language” (p. 4).

In addition to this comment and considering that the Present study is related to the writing composition in foreign language settings, Arapoff (1967) states that although students take their ideas and experiences in order to learn how to write, they are going to think and express those ideas and emotions using the native language structures. For this reason, when they try to write in English as the target language, they are expected to make a lot of mistakes.

Considering these aspects, writing must be encouraged and taught in order to reinforce structures, vocabulary and grammar for the target language, as well as to develop and improve the students creativity, critical thinking and imagination (Ann Raimes, 1983).

History of writing

Although composition in ESL classrooms had a vast influence on the teaching of writing to native speakers of English

(NES), it integrated different methods, practices and principles since 1945 (Silva, 1990).

According to Reid (2001) before 1970, when the audio-lingual method was still in its zenith, writing in L2 pedagogy was not considered a skill to be fully developed. The only purpose of writing, at that time, was to facilitate the development of speech. Later, in 1980, teachers started to implement guided writing, however, it was limited and it was only focused on small parts of discourse.

As years went by, in 1990, learners began to compose short pieces of writing. This became the so-called writer-based approach. It consisted on the use of writing to refer about and express emotions, without considering the audiences, because the students wrote just for them and external audiences were neglected. At that time, individual development was more important than the final product (reader-based). After that, in the twenty-first century, a new trend was established. The teacher was no longer the center of the teaching and learning process, instead, students' actions became the most important part of it. Writing became a "communicative social act" and it was focused on the relation between the author and the audience.

Currently, writing teaching has evolved to be a vital part of language proficiency. This has been demonstrated in

the TOEFL and MELAB tests and many courses about the instruction of this skill as well as the introduction of new materials that have been recently developed (Reid, 2001, p. 28).

Approaches to Teaching Writing

Byrne (1998) stated the four main approaches in teaching writing in order to consider the factors related to grammar, fluency, content and the reason to write:

Accuracy Approach

This controlled-to-free approach is related to the importance of writing control. Teachers give learners all the tools needed in order to combine sentences and write efficiently to avoid making mistakes; for instance a structured model. The amount of control is gradually reduced, until students improve their composition.

Fluency Approach

Students are asked to write as many ideas as possible without considering the making of mistakes, so that they are able to put their ideas and thoughts on paper. Students are free to write whatever they want to with the structures and form they need, using their own ideas. Although this approach does not correct the students' particular mistakes, they enjoy the feeling of composing instead of completing an exercise.

Text Approach

This approach focuses on the construction and structure of the paragraphs as a basis for writing. The teacher provides part of the content and the form of the sentences that the students have to employ through different techniques and strategies. For example, learners are asked to write paragraphs based on texts previously presented.

Purpose Approach

The emphasis given by the writers is the audience and the reason to write. Therefore, before and during writing students must take into account the appropriate content to write about, the language used and the levels of formality that have to be considered.

Once the types of approaches are established, it is necessary to take into account all the concepts and features related to the process of writing in order to continue with this research.

Writing Process

The process approach pedagogy states as its main principle that writing is the outcome of a highly individualized and very complex process. Before process pedagogy existed, writing classes did not pay much attention to the writing process itself. Teachers used to assign papers, evaluated them, and then handed them back to the students. Therefore,

instructors focused only on the final results: they assessed the learners' text clearness, creativity, and accuracy. However, they did not attend to the writing process or to the learners themselves. (Pedagogy Process, n.d.)

Writing is an action which allows to create meaning and identify and recognize the main characteristics involved in the process of learning to write (composition instruction) such as production, formulation and the refining of a person's ideas. (Zamel, 1982)

As a result, writing is composed of different stages that will help a person to generate ideas, organize them and evaluate them. White and Arndt (1991) describe those stages so that people may be able to follow each step and improve their writing. The first three stages are related to prewriting, which means that during these steps, the purpose, audience and topic have to be identified. Prewriting is the stage when writers are getting ready to write. The last three are directly connected to the presentation, revising, correction and rewriting of the final product.

Generating is the most important aspect that a person needs to consider when writing.

The Generation of Ideas

The generation of ideas initializes the process and enables the development of further propositions. Long-term memory is one of the tools used to achieve this first stage. It is divided into 3 groups: episodic memory, which is related to experiences; semantic memory, which refers to information and behaviors; and unconscious memory, which is associated to feelings.

By many educators prewriting is now considered the most crucial of the stages in the writing process, although it was previously the most neglected.

The information related to the generation of ideas can also be taken from books, articles, interviews, scientific investigations and facts.

Focusing

Focusing is next stage. Here, the writer needs to establish the main idea of a composition in order to expand it and clarify it when s/he starts to write. There are two techniques used to discover the main idea: fastwriting, which consists in "developing and relating" ideas at a large speed; and loop writing, which consists in the production and enlargement of the text, relating to previous thoughts and connecting them until the writer finds the right ideas to be developed.

Structuring

The stage of structuring consists in re-organizing the sentences in adequate sequences, combining the ideas coherently. It can be started with an outline or a sketch which may help to readjust the original plan. The information can be structured through the grouping and classification of ideas.

Drafting

Drafting is the first official composition after completing the pre-writing stages described previously. Generally, the first draft is based on the combination and the result of both fast writing and loop writing. Since this stage, learners need to make the transition from writer-based, which includes the pre-writing stages, to organizing and presenting the ideas to a certain audience or a reader. In this case, writers have to consider different aspects such as the purpose of the composition, the intention, and how to attract the reader. After these procedures are put into practice, the draft must be presented to the particular audience in order to make further adjustments, correct mistakes either in content or form and improve writing overall. This technique is called "write-revise-rewrite", and it can be applied as many times as needed, according to the number of drafts the writer decides to make.

Evaluating

Evaluating consists on the analysis of the outcomes in accordance to the former aims. This means that the writer assesses the final product of the composition considering the process involved in it and realizing if the objectives the person stated before writing were reached when s/he finished writing. This assessment is usually carried out by the writers and they must consider the main aspects of correction which are related to accurate and effective writing.

After learners have written and corrected their papers by themselves, it is time to hand them in to the teacher so that the final evaluation officially takes place. Correction processes include grammar, punctuation and spelling. These procedures can be divided, according to Byrne (1988) into the following:

Correction of all the mistakes makes reference to the traditional way to identify possible faults by marking a sheet of paper. This process does not seem very effective for both teachers and students since teachers need to spend a lot of time reading and correcting the papers and learners usually lack interest on the former stimulus to write and improve their writing. Therefore, it is crucial that the

teacher corrects the mistakes during the students work in the engagement phase and not after they have completed it.

Correction of mistakes selectively takes place when a teacher decides to focus on certain faults to be improved by the students, such as particular aspects of grammar and spelling. For this purpose, it is necessary to follow a pattern. Although teachers can implement their own ways to identify these faults, generally, pre-established samples are applied.

Indicating mistakes so that students can correct them occurs when a teacher marks determined faults classifying them into several categories according to symbols or special features to catch the learners attention and to identify them and correct them by themselves, either in pairs, in groups or individually. Even though the present procedure does not solve every single problem the students may have with determined writing points, this approach helps students become aware of the mistakes they make and to increase the knowledge they are acquiring. The model used in the previous correcting process can also be used with this procedure.

These procedures allow students to identify and correct their own mistakes. These actions can be used sporadically and with earlier preparation when the teacher decides to leave the correction work to the students. In this case,

learners feel motivated, curious to check their classmates work and excited to detect their own faults. Despite the fact that this procedure can be appealing to the students in certain occasions, teachers need to consider that this procedure is not prudent to be carried out frequently because students require explanations for their mistakes.

Re-viewing

Re-viewing, the last stage in the composition process that a writer must undergo is mostly related to the checking of context, connections, and opinion statements, among other aspects. Since the writing tasks never end, with the aim to establish the final product, it is sometimes necessary to read the composition carefully one more time after focusing, structuring, drafting and evaluating in a final scrutiny before presenting the paper to the audience. In order to analyze the composition, White and Arndt (1991) state some considerations in a basic "re-viewing" checklist:

The main idea, topic or focus of the text has to be clear and coherent.

The levels of formality used by the writer must be appropriate for the audience considering the intention and the form.

The writer is responsible for choosing the most adequate degree of directness.

It is also important to choose the right vocabulary and the correct structures with the objective of stimulating the emotional responses the writer wants to obtain from the audience.

The writer has to consider the divisions of the text into appropriate segments and in the suitable order and organization to avoid confusion among the readers.

The connections between the ideas and the text need to be clear and well structured considering the form of composing, if it is written explicitly or implicitly.

The grammatical structures have to be used appropriately along with the word order and punctuation to help the audience receive the meaning of the text in the way the writer expects.

The writer has to keep in mind all the time the adequate edition and the proof-reading of his/her text to self assess errors of grammatical structure, word order, word form, punctuation and spelling.

The last consideration is related to the final presentation of the text. The writer has to check

his/her text for legibility and clarity, and has to consider the conventions of the written language according to what he wants to convey to the audience.

These reflections will easily help a writer to carry out the last inspection in the re-viewing phases effectively to expose their composition to the reader.

In order to understand the process of writing it is important to rely on the stages mentioned before. This will be very useful when learners need to compose special pieces of writing.

It is also necessary to consider the activities or strategies that teacher and students perform in the classroom according to the pre-writing stage which includes the generation, focusing and structuring of ideas.

Writing Strategies

As it is mentioned along the paper, there are different strategies used in the writing process, however, the techniques that are going to be defined in this section are those related to the first stage of writing, the well-known prewriting strategies, and the point at which the learner discovers and explores his or her initial ideas about a given topic.

Prewriting is the stage when writers are getting ready to write. In preparing for writing, writers have to decide

on a topic, identify an audience and purpose for writing, determine the appropriate form for the piece, and gather ideas and data. Prewriting helps writers to get their ideas on paper, although they may not usually be in an organized way, so that they can "brainstorm thoughts that might eventually make their way into their writing". Instructors and students must become familiar with these strategies and figure out the ones that work best for them. (Pre-Writing Strategies, n.d.)

Since the writing composition process cannot be limited to one single procedure, the teacher has to expose students to a variety of techniques or strategies in order to make them start and develop a writing task (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Therefore, in order to carry out this process adequately, it is essential to consider the strategies involved with pre-writing composition. For this reason, listed below are some of the most common types of prewriting techniques.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming "allows students to work together in the classroom in small groups to say as much as they can about a topic. The teacher does not have to monitor grammar or pronunciation except when the speaker cannot be understood" (Raimes, 1983). After doing the mentioned exercise orally,

students are usually asked to put those ideas on paper, so that they are able to develop complex compositions.

Brainstorming is a collective strategy which was created to develop a greater number of ideas in order to solve different issues. It has its origins with Alex Faickney Osborn, an advertising executive who designed this technique to improve the creativity of his employees (Brainstorming Definition, n.d.)

The strategy can also be a natural process for certain people with creative backgrounds, however, as it was mentioned before, it can also be taught in the classroom so that students organize their ideas in a better way.

After the concept of brainstorming was established, not only people of education or teaching fields, but also people of all fields such as management, marketing and advertising, have been using it. (Brainstorming History, n.d.)

How to Use Brainstorming

In order to apply this technique during a class of writing composition, the instructor, in the first place, needs to identify the topic clearly so that the brainstorming session can be focused only on the ideas they are going to use.

After that, it is necessary to consider all the input given by the students without correcting it, although they have flaws in the language. Otherwise, the students will

feel inhibited and will not participate with new ideas. When the learners have finished sharing their thoughts to the class, correction can be made and then they are going to choose collectively the most appropriate opinions in order to start writing.

The instructor must motivate the students in order to get contributions from each one of them. In this way, learning to write and generate ideas will be a process that involves the active participation of all the students without any exceptions.

Finally, it is important to assign a person to write all the input given by the learners on the board. Generally, this person can be the instructor or if the group agrees to, they can choose someone else from the class.

("Brainstorming Process", n.d.)

Example of Brainstorming ("writing strategies", n.d)

Topic: Things to do when you feel sad or depressed

- Go visit a friend
- Eat
- Do something for somebody else
- Watch a funny movie
- Buy some new clothes
- Get some exercise
- Sleep

- Read a book
- Buy some flowers
- Go for a walk

Clustering

Clustering is also known as diagramming or mapping. It can be used to produce material for a paper. This strategy is helpful for people who like to do their thinking in a visual way. In clustering, writers are able to use lines, boxes, arrows and circles to show relationships among the ideas and the details stated.

Therefore, besides helping learners to generate material and develop ideas, clustering offers an early, but essential sense of how ideas and details can be related to each other. (The Process of Writing, 2005)

How to Use Clustering

This process involves the selection of a determined topic by the instructor or the person who is going to write. Like the brainstorming technique, it can be applied collectively in a classroom or it can be done individually.

Clustering, according to Celce-Murcia (2001) "begins with a key word or central idea placed in the center of a page around which the student or the teacher using student-generated suggestions, quickly jots down all of the free-

associations triggered by the subject matter, using words or short phrases".

After taking the main subject idea, a circle must be drawn around it. Then, the writer has to draw lines outside the circle connecting the subordinate ideas to the main topic. It is also possible to add more lines to extend the ideas that are related to thoughts around the circle. Finally, the subordinate proposals have to be completed with new ideas related to each one of them. (The Process of Writing, 2005)

Example of clustering ("The writing process", n.d)



Outlining

An outline is a flexible organizational tool for writing that consists of making a list of topics which are going to be established in a written composition.

Outlining is central to writing a good paper. An outline lets you see and work on the actual plan without any drawn distractions. It develops the writer's ability to think clearly and logically.

This plan presents the order of the different topics, their importance and their relationship. It usually starts with a general idea and continues with specific details to support the topic adequately. In this way, the paper can be unified and organized either chronologically or spatially.

There are two kinds of outlines: the topic outline and the sentence outline. In the first one, the headings are stated in single words or summarized phrases; while in the second, the headings are written in complete sentences.

One key to effective outlining is the ability to distinguish between major ideas and details that fit under those ideas. (How to Write an Outlining, n.d.)

How to Use Outlining

An outline has to begin all the time with a thesis or a summarizing sentence. This sentence states the main idea of the paper. It must always be a complete grammatical sentence

which expresses the opinion and attitude the writer intends to have according to the topic.

The way to write the plan is using subdivisions in each one of the topics with numbers or letters, followed by a period. Example ("The writing process", n.d)

A. _____

(1) _____

(2) _____

B. _____

(1) _____

(2) _____

C. _____

(1) _____

(2) _____

It is important for the writer to divide each of the subordinate ideas by at least two parts in order to develop the topics adequately and provide the text with support.

The instructor or writer must remember to be consistent and coherent with the organization of sentences, the selection of main and subordinate ideas, as well as the outline model to apply; s/he has to use either whole sentences or brief phrases but not both. (How to Write an Outlining, n.d.)

Example of outlining:

Thesis: My high school had three problem areas.

Involved with drugs	a. _____
Leaky ceilings	(1) _____
Students	(2) _____
Unwilling to help after class	b. _____
Formed cliques	(1) _____
Teachers	(2) _____
Buildings	c. _____
Ill-equipped gym	(1) _____
Much too strict	(2) _____

Free writing

Free writing is probably one of the best known prewriting strategies and also one of the most useful.

The strategy of free writing is related to jotting down in rough sentences or phrases everything that comes to mind about a possible topic.

Popularized by Peter Elbow, the goal of free writing is to get words on paper, to fill up a page without worrying about grammar, spelling, or even coherence.

Free writing is an excellent tool to make learners familiar with the act of composing. It is a way to break through mental blocks about writing. The initial ideas and impressions that the writer may have will often become clearer after s/he has gotten them down on paper, and they may lead to other impressions and ideas. (Samuel Se, n.d)

Peter Elbow (2006) states the following benefits of free writing:

It makes writing easier by overcoming the blank page problem.

It is a good way to warm up before drafting.

It can help to student start writing when s/he does not want to write.

It can help learners come up with topics to write about.

How to Use Free writing

This strategy can either be used by the students alone or using a slight guidance from the instructor. First of all the writer has to think of what is going to be written about a certain topic. Any ideas will be useful. Then, s/he needs to write nonstop for ten minutes or more without worrying about spelling or punctuating correctly, about erasing mistakes, about organizing material, or about finding exact words.

Learners are supposed to explore an idea by putting down every single thought that pops into the writer's head.

If the writer does not know how to keep on writing and gets stuck during writing, s/he can repeat the exercise until more words come to mind.

There is no need to feel inhibited, since mistakes do not count and learners do not have to hand in their free writing, since this is a pre-writing stage, as it is mentioned several times along the paper.

Through continued practice in free writing, learners will develop the habit of thinking as they write. And they will learn a technique that is a helpful way to get started on almost any paper. (Samuel Se, n.d)

Example of free writing ("The writing process" n.d)

There are lots of things I get annoyed by. One of them that comes to mind is politishans, in fact I am so annoyed by them that I don't want to say anything about them the last thing I want is to write about them. Another thing that bothers me are people who keep complaining about everything. If you're having trouble, do something about it just don't keep complaining and just talking. I am really annoyed by traffic. There are too many cars in our block and its not surprising. Everyone has a car, the parents have cars and the parents are just too indulgent and the kids have cars, and theyre all coming and going all the time and often driving too fast. Speeding up and down the street. We need a speed limit sign but here I am back with politiks again. I am really bothered when I have to drive to the movies all the congestion along the way plus there are just so many cars there at the mall. No space even though the parking lot is huge it just fills up with cars. Movies are a bother anyway because the people can be annoying who are sitting there in the theater with you, talking and dropping popcorn cups and acting like they're at home when they're not.

At this point, the writer reads over his or her notes and s/he may realize that s/he had several potential topics.

Therefore, it is important that the writers ask themselves: "What point can I make that I can cover in a piece of writing? What do I have the most information about?" After that, they are able to decide that they could narrow the topic down, for instance, to the annoyances involved in going to the movies because maybe they would have more details for that topic. The writer, after revising the exercise, can accumulate details for a paper related to the problems with movie going:

I really find it annoying to go see movies anymore. Even though I love films. Traffic to Cinema Six is awful. I hate looking for a parking place; the lot isn't big enough for the theaters and other stores. You just keep driving to find a parking space and hoping someone will pull out and no one else will pull in ahead of you. Then you don't want there to be a long line and to wind up in one of the first rows with this huge screen right in front of you. Then I'm in the theater with the smell of popcorn all around. Sitting there smelling it trying to ignore it and just wanting to pour a whole bucket of popcorn with melted butter down my throat. I can't stop thinking about the chocolate bars either. I love the stuff but I don't need it. The people who are there sometimes drive me nuts. Talking and laughing, kids running around, packs of teens hollaring, who can

listen to the movie? And I might run into my old boyfriend—the last thing I need. Also sitting thru all the previews and commercials. If I arrive late enough to miss that junk the movie may be sold out. ("Free writing Notes", n.d.)

Questioning

In questioning, learners generate ideas and details by asking as many questions as they can think of about a subject. This strategy is also known as the journalistic technique due to the fact that journalists, generally, have six important questions they need to answer about any story they report: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

By answering these questions, journalists can be certain that they have provided the most important information about an event, issue, or problem to their readers. Therefore, when learners compose a piece of writing by using this strategy, they can be confident as well, that they have included all the necessary elements when writing stories. (Asking Questions, 2005)

How to Use Questioning

Questioning is a writing strategy designed to help students ask themselves a series of story-grammar questions to generate narrative text. They can be adapted from the previously mentioned essential questions. For example "Who is the story about?", "What are they trying to do?", "What

happens when they try to do it?", and "What happens in the end?". The strategy consists of the following steps:

First of all, the writer must start by answering each one of the questions according to the story or piece of writing s/he is intended to compose.

Next, the learner writes down story part ideas for each part to complement the answered questions.

After that, s/he ought to organize the answers into small paragraphs.

Finally, the writer needs to organize the sections by using connectors and transition paragraphs in order to make sense.

Example of questioning ("the writing process" n.d)

Questions	Answers
<u>Why</u> don't I like to go to a movie?	Just too many problems involved. Could be any time—when a movie is popular, the theater is too crowded; when traffic is bad, the trip is a drag.
<u>When</u> is going to the movies a problem?	On the highway, in the parking lot, at the concession stand, in the theater itself.
<u>Where</u> are problems with movie going?	I do by wanting to eat too much. The patrons do by creating disturbances. The theater owners do by not having enough parking spaces and showing too many commercials.
<u>Who</u> creates the problems?	I can stay home and watch movies on video or cable TV.
<u>How</u> can I deal with the problem?	

CHAPTER 3 METHOD

Design of the Study

Considering that this study belongs to the category of descriptive type, a qualitative research was applied.

According to G. E. Gorman and P. Clayton (1997, as cited in Muela, 2004), a qualitative research is a process of investigation which allows to obtain data from the context in which events happen, in an attempt to describe these phenomena, as a means to determine the processes in which the participants involved make use of the induction to originate possible explanations based on the facts observed.

In this way and considering the definition provided before, it can be interpreted that the qualitative research tries to identify the profound nature of realities taking into consideration their structure and giving reasons for their behavior and manifestations.

Miguel Martinez (2006) stated that the two main centers of action during an investigation are: a) the collection and gathering of the necessary data in order to achieve the previously determined objectives and b) the organization of the found data in a logic and coherent way in order to produce a theory which integrates that information.

Research Type

In this research we applied a descriptive study since the data obtained throughout the surveys was analyzed without applying any treatment.

This type of investigation allowed us to gather the necessary information according to the opinions of the teachers and students who completed the surveys in order to determine the current state of the writing process instruction at the University of Nariño and discover which one of the pre-writing strategies is the most common.

Besides, a concluding explanation was provided after analyzing the collected data.

Subjects

Our target population was constituted by English teachers and students of the Linguistics and Languages Department of the University of Nariño in Pasto.

There are 93 students and 5 teachers for a total of 98 subjects. Their ages fluctuate between 19 and 25 years old in students and 30 and 50 in teachers.

Setting

Our research study was carried out with different semesters of the English and French, and English and Spanish Programs, in which writing composition is taught in the Linguistics and Languages Department of the University of Nariño.

Procedure

First of all, a bibliographic study was undertaken to define and determine the characteristics of each one of the pre-writing strategies in order to better understand the process of writing and gather the information to design the surveys.

For this research we asked five English instructors of writing composition in the Linguistics and Languages Department of the University of Nariño to participate in the study by answering the previously structured surveys.

In the same way, we applied the questionnaires to the advanced students of the Linguistics and Languages Department who have been exposed to a higher level of writing process.

Once the surveys were applied, we proceeded to register and verify the answers given by the subjects. This was done through the codification of all the components involved in the surveys.

Finally, the data results were used as the basis for the analysis.

Materials

In order to carry out this study, a computer and internet resources were used to register the information and the content. Also, different bibliographic sources and the students' and teachers' questionnaires were utilized.

Instruments

The instruments used for this research were the two different survey formats, one for teachers and the other for the students, designed in order to obtain information about the strategies used by English teachers to provide writing instruction at different levels within the Linguistics and Languages Department.

Data Gathering and Analysis

In order to find the information needed to undertake this research, two survey formats were designed. One format applied to the teachers of writing composition and the other to the students of the same subject matter. Students answered the survey and the results obtained from those answers were compared to teachers answers in order to corroborate them, and to establish a relation between what teachers claim to teach and what students perceive they had being taught.

Since a questionnaire is intended to extract feelings, beliefs, experiences, perceptions, or attitudes of a number of subjects in a determined setting (Key, 1997), the surveys' main objective was to find out the subjects' preferences about pre-writing strategies.

There are two types of questionnaires: structured or unstructured. Structured formats contain fixed alternative

questions in which the subject is asked to choose one of the given options, whereas unstructured questionnaires define few parameters for the subject. They are designed to elicit extensive responses, for this reason, the subjects' answers to the question may vary from a word to a sentence, a paragraph, or even an essay. However, in any given investigation, it is crucial to consider that surveys must be preplanned and structured at some extent. ("Degree of Structure in Questionnaires and Interviews", n.d.)

The surveys in this research are structured questionnaires with specific objectives that consist of three parts. The first part was intended to find out the type of instruction received by students or given by teachers in terms of class schedule, use of writing strategies and teachers' methodology. The second part is constituted by three tables related to frequency of use, importance and effectiveness of the previously established pre-writing strategies (brainstorming, clustering, outlining, free writing, questioning). The third part included two open questions whose answers give information related to the conclusions of the whole survey. A structured survey was designed in order to provide more reliable and objective data about pre-writing strategies.

In general, it can be suggested that questionnaires can measure both qualitative and quantitative data. Therefore, in order to measure the survey results in a quantitative and qualitative way, the first two segments of the questionnaire were designed with close format questions, which are answerable by choosing only one of several predetermined answers. ("Close-Ended Questions", n.d.).

The third segment was designed with open format questions, or open-ended questions which require unprompted opinions and do not have a predetermined set of responses, so the participants are free to answer whatever they choose. ("Open-Ended Questions", n.d.)

Once the surveys were administered, the results obtained were systematized, analyzed and described. All this process was carried out using descriptive statistics analysis.

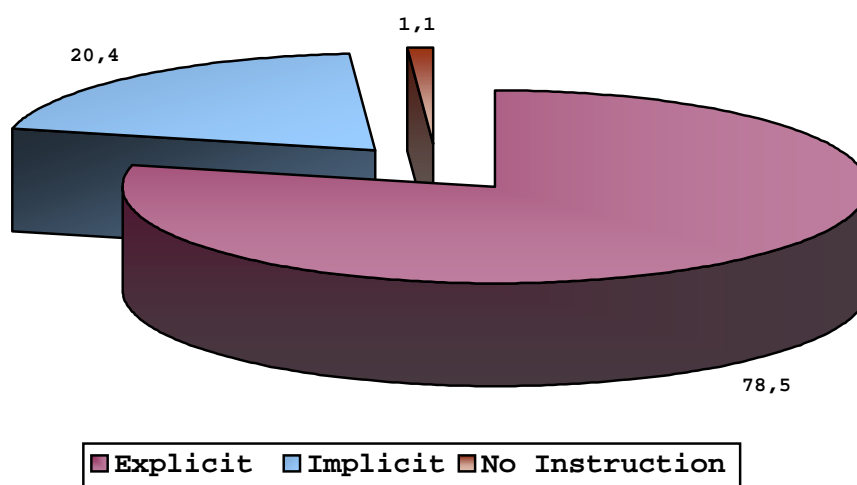
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research intended to describe and identify the most common pre-writing strategies applied both by teachers and students from the Linguistics and Languages Department at the University at Nariño taking into account their preferences found in the questionnaires administered.

Results and Discussion

Results of Students' Surveys

Figure 1. Type of Writing Instruction Received

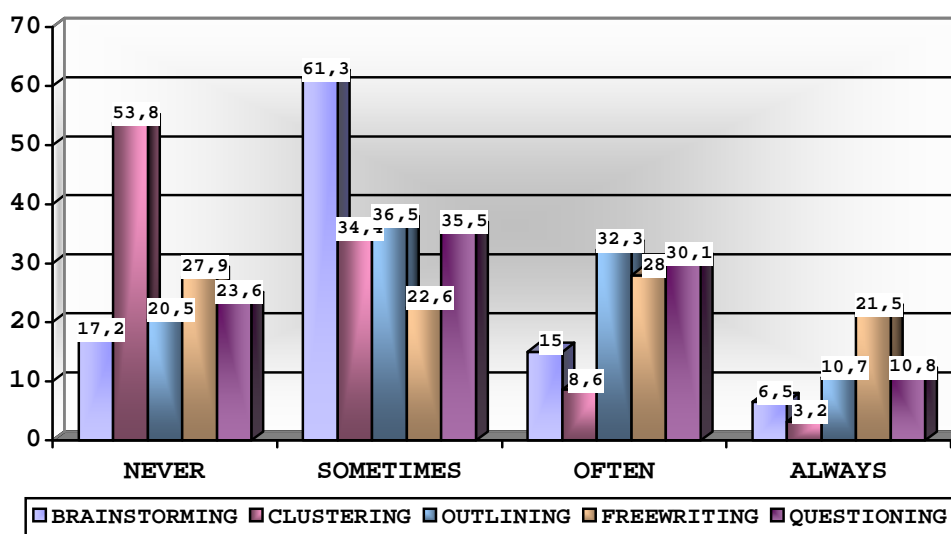


In this figure it can be observed that the highest percentage of the students have received explicit writing instruction which corresponds to a 78.5%, while the implicit instruction that the students have had has a lower percentage in this case it is a 20.4%: In the same way it is

identified the lowest percentage, 1.1%, which corresponds to lack of a writing instruction. This is a good indication that all students have received writing instruction at the University.

Figure 2. Pre-writing Strategies: Frequency

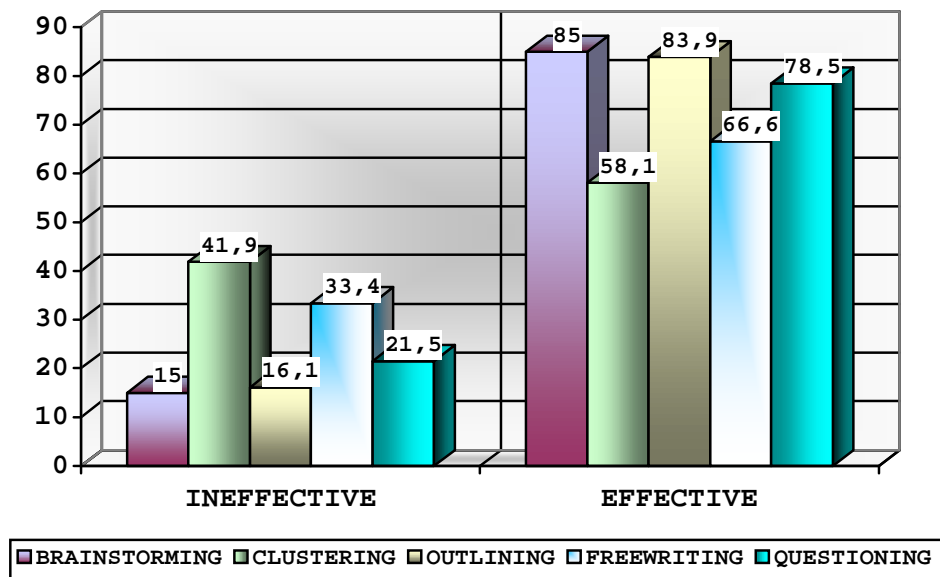
In figure 2, it is possible to identify how often students use one of the following writing strategies. In this particular case; they are: Brainstorming, Clustering, Outlining, Free writing and Questioning.



This figure clearly shows that the strategy with the highest percentage of use corresponds to the *sometimes* category with 61.3% for "brainstorming". This can indicate that there is not an outstanding strategy among those strategies used in class. On the other hand, it can be

identified that "clustering" is the strategy that more than a half of the students (53.8%) *never* use for writing. Besides, it is possible to notice that free writing, outlining and questioning did not present significant percentages and their highest ones were between 28% and 36.5% respectively in the *sometimes* and *often* categories. It is necessary to mention that none of the strategies presented high percentages in the *always* category.

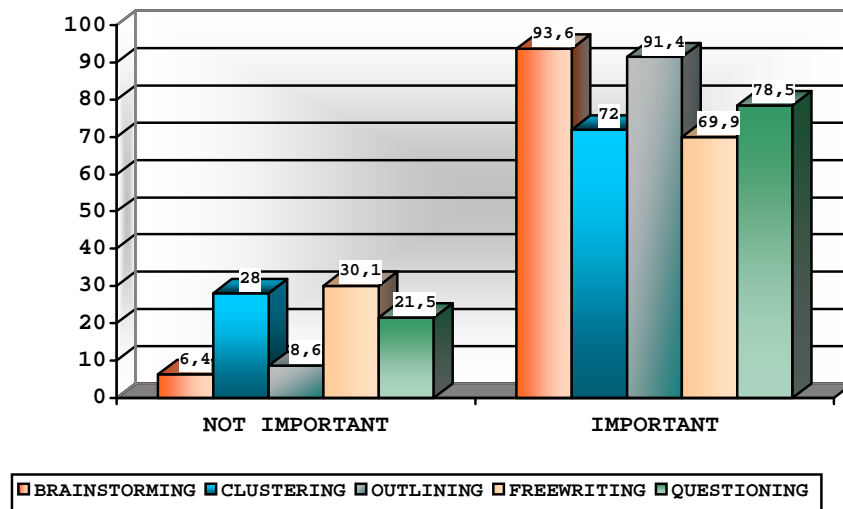
Figure 3. Pre-writing Strategies: Effectiveness Ss



This figure shows that at some point all the strategies are considered very important in writing but "brainstorming" obtained the highest percentage (85%) followed by outlining with 83.9%. Clustering, questioning and free writing also

got high percentages above the 50%. Making a comparison between variables of frequency of use and the effectiveness, we can say that even when students consider as effective the strategies and know them, they do not apply them with the expected frequency.

Figure 4. Pre-writing Strategies: Importance



This figure shows the importance students assign to the writing strategies. As a result of the statistics of students' surveys, brainstorming got 93.6% in the *important* category, being this one the most significant percentage among all the strategies in the two categories (important - not important). As it can be seen in figure 4 almost all the students consider the strategies as important and

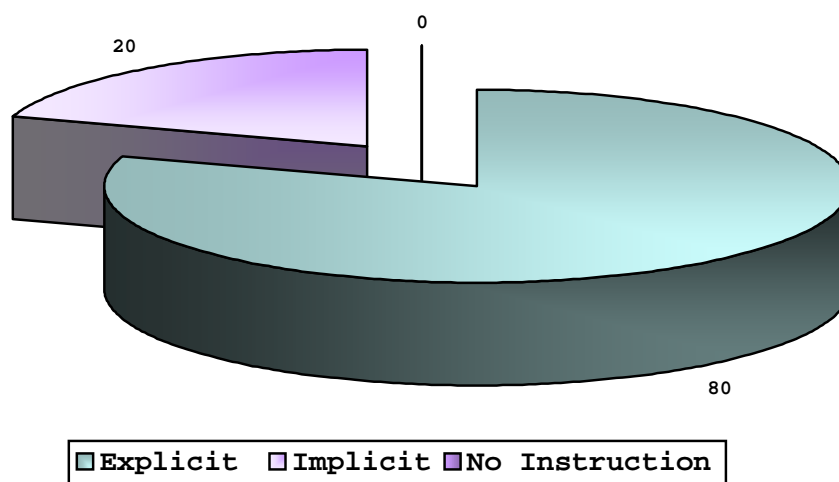
outlining obtained a similar percentage to the one for brainstorming. The other strategies like free writing, clustering and questioning showed that more than a half of the total students asked consider them as important too with percentages that oscillate from 69.9% to 78.5%.

Taking into account the information given in the results of the three variables (frequency, effectiveness and importance) it is possible to establish that even though Brainstorming had the highest percentages in effectiveness and importance students affirmed they only use it sometimes. Again, there is not a clear tendency towards one strategy or the other, but they all seem to be used at some point during instruction.

These have been the results obtained from the interaction with students. Now the results obtained from the surveys applied to teachers are presented so that a contrast can be established and to identify the existing convergence between students and teachers regarding the type of instruction provided and the strategies used to provide that instruction.

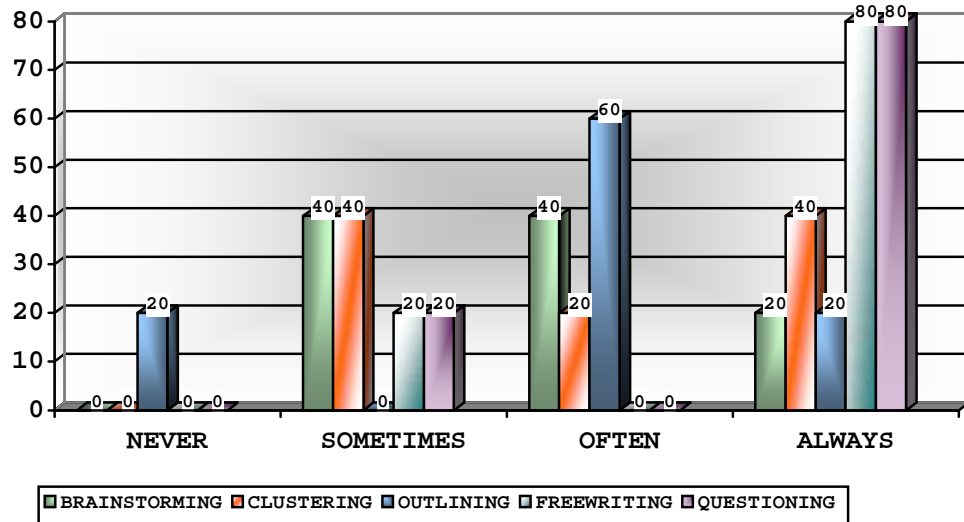
Teachers' Surveys Results

Figure 5. Type of Writing Instruction Provided



It is possible to observe that 80% of the teachers prefer to explain directly all the necessary information to the students; which means that they lean towards explicit instruction. These results are consistent with the answers provided by students. On the other hand, just a 20% of the teachers prefer the students to reflect about the importance of the writing process; that is, using an implicit approach to writing instruction. Finally 0% of the teachers answered that they do not provide writing instruction, what means that all of the teachers are informed and apply some set of strategies or techniques when it comes to helping students gain knowledge in the writing skill.

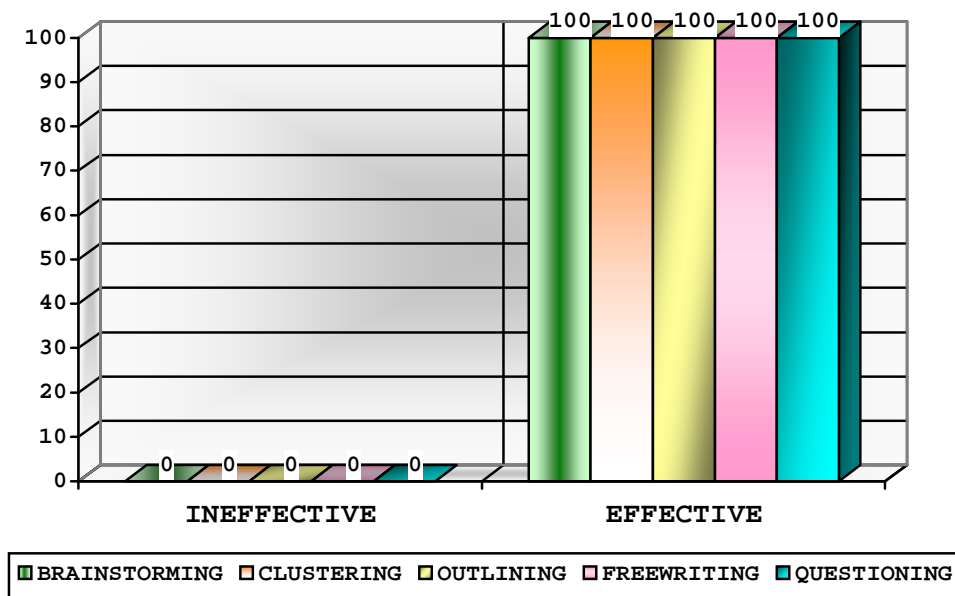
Figure 6. Pre-writing Strategies: Frequency



In this figure it can be identified that 80% of the teachers *always* use "free writing" and "questioning" strategies, showing the highest percentage in this category, and just 20% of the teachers *sometimes* use them. On the other hand, 60% of the teachers *often* use outlining as a writing strategy. In contrast, 40% of the teachers are between the categories of *always* and *never*. Finally it is important to mention that brainstorming has the lowest percentages, it means 40% located in *sometimes* and *often* categories. The same situation is present in the clustering strategy, which has 40% in the categories of

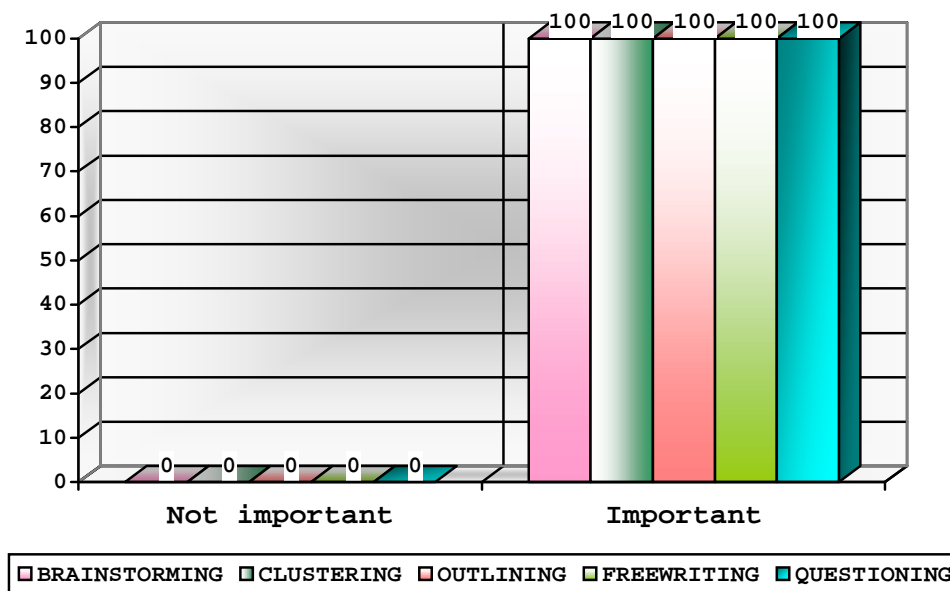
sometimes and *always*. According to this information it can be said that the most frequently used strategies are free writing and questioning followed by outlining with a 60% of preference in the *often* category.

Figure 7. Pre-writing Strategies: Effectiveness



As it can be seen in this figure, all the teachers assert that all the strategies proposed in this paper are effective.

Figure 8. Pre-writing Strategies: Importance



It is possible to establish, according to this figure, that the teachers believe all the strategies are important for developing writing skills. However, and contrasting it with the students' answers, it can be said that students do not perceive all strategies as valuable and teachers might need to provide additional information so that learners recognize the value all strategies have for them.

Taking into account these results, it could be said that although the teachers consider that these strategies are effective and important in the development of writing skills, they do not apply all of them with the frequency they should for writing instruction, in this way, it can be

said that their answers present some contradictions among the frequency of use, the effectiveness and the importance of each strategy.

Students and teachers comparison

According to these results, it can be assumed that the concepts between students and teachers are similar in relation to the kind of instruction applied for developing writing skills, almost 80% of teachers and students assert that they are carrying out an explicit instruction, and 20% agree with implicit instruction. It confirms that the students are receiving a certain type of instruction, and regardless of the fact that the instruction is explicit or implicit, it shows that teachers are applying consciously or unconsciously a certain set of procedures for providing writing instruction.

Another aspect of coincidence is about the least used strategy, in this case clustering, which, according to the statistics, has the lowest scores in both cases.

On the other hand, it could be asserted that there is not concordance between the answers given by teachers and students about the frequency of using these strategies for writing skills, because while students believe that brainstorming is the most frequently used, teachers prefer providing instruction through free writing, questioning and

outlining strategies. Teachers do not seem to bear in mind what kind of strategies students rather use for developing their writing skills, and preferences should be taken into account if teachers want learners to get more involved in the learning process. Moreover there is not relation with the concepts that teachers said they have taught and what students really apply for their writing.

Considering the second and third aspects, effectiveness and importance, there is a coincidence since both teachers and students suggested that these strategies are effective and important. Nevertheless, there is a low frequency of application of them on the writing instruction process.

Results of Students' Surveys

The third part of the survey, called conclusions helped us to verify the previous answers and confirm that there really was coherence among the responses provided. A low percentage of subjects did not follow completely the directions given. However, it was possible to find out what the subjects' opinions are, regarding their writing process and the reasons they take into consideration for applying the strategies selected.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is relevant to specify that our study focused on the importance of writing as a process that requires to be accomplished at all stages. According to Tribble, (1996)

“Process can be seen as a series of decisions and choices that should be made in a certain order. This suggested order is what many authors have called the process-oriented approach to writing, practice that began to replace the product approach. The process approach identifies four stages in writing: (1) prewriting, (2) drafting, (3) revising, and (4) editing (Tribble, 1996)”.

This research was developed taking into account the prewriting stage and the strategies involve in it.

After having processed the information provided by both teachers and students and after having reviewed current literature on the subject of writing, the following conclusions can be drawn.

A good performance in writing is not likely to be developed and take place without a process which involves the pre-writing strategies that allow them to brainstorm for ideas and find the most appropriate structure for a determined text type.

According to the results mentioned in this chapter, teachers and students agree with the importance and effectiveness of the strategies proposed. Nevertheless, the

ones most frequently used by the students are brainstorming and outlining, but teachers establish that questioning, free-writing and outlining strategies are the most applied ones.

According to the literature review it could not be affirmed that there is just one strategy that can be considered as the most important or effective because each learner has a different way of learning. For this reason, there needs to be a variety of strategies proposed by the teacher according to the needs of the student. It cannot be said that teachers use "right" or "wrong" strategies because that depends on each individual, but it can be said that a variety of strategies have to be applied at different times to appeal to different students and preferences.

In general, there is a difference among students according to their proficiency level regarding the preferred strategies to use in writing. The most advanced learners prefer to use free writing because of the knowledge they have acquired during the earlier semesters. In contrast the intermediate learners prefer brainstorming because it is easier for them to give different ideas and construct their own concepts based on short thoughts or key words than on rather complex and longer texts.

Among students clustering is the least used by them around 54% of the students never use this strategy. Among teachers all the strategies are widely used however 20% of them answer that they never use outlining.

The results of this research turned out to be affected to some extent due to the lack of cooperation and collaboration from some of the subjects - teachers - during the administration of the questionnaire since they did not hand in the surveys in the time requested.

To conclude, we can affirm that, even though there were certain issues in the gathering and analysis of the data it was possible to accomplish the main objective of this research which was to identify and establish the most common strategies used by English teachers at University of Nariño to teach writing according to the effectiveness, importance and frequency of use, as well as how they are perceived by the students.

Once the most relevant conclusions have been presented it is time now to provide some recommendations about the topic of writing instruction. These suggestions are as follows:

Brainstorming is a useful strategy to generate ideas but it is necessary that students apply other strategies to be able to write a coherent text. For this reason we suggest

the use of strategies such as questioning, outlining and free-writing which enables students to approach in a more effective way the writing process due to the fact that these techniques prepare learners with a warm-up of the topic and allows them to focus on main ideas.

It is necessary for teachers to take into account some other aspects, not only the pre-writing strategies; such as punctuation, spelling, capitalization, connectors (Perez, I. n.d.) since these aspects will be taken into account when assessment is applied. Then, and in order to provide fair assessment students need to have extensive instruction and practice in these aspects.

It is necessary for teachers to take into consideration, students' needs and preferences in order to allow students to write about their own interests and likes. If learners are writing about something that is familiar for them or about a hobby or topic they like, the pre-writing and writing stages will be more meaningful and students will be more likely to get involved in their own learning.

It could be interesting to make an experimental research to establish the most effective strategy in a comparative study since this study was descriptive. This can be the first step in further analyzing some of the aspects involved in writing instruction.

There are different aspects to take into account to talk about EFL learner's benefit; in this particular case it is necessary to mention the needs of the learners and the way they could apply right strategies to get a better production. These strategies are useful to generate ideas what is considered as a crucial point to develop the writing skills, for this reason it is possible to say that all of them can help students to improve their writing.

It would be important to bear in mind, that the knowledge of a variety of strategies, can be useful to obtain better results in the written production and the implementation of those strategies considered by students as more effective in writing, can help them to feel more confident when developing this skill according to the student's purpose and his/her qualities.

Having in mind the writing process, it is necessary to mention that when students finish the pre writing stage, they have to continue with the next steps, in this case drafting where they can connect previous ideas and revising where they have to analyze the concordance, punctuation, grammar error structures and so forth.

According to the student's level it can be used a particular strategy, for instance, for beginners it would be useful to apply brainstorming and clustering that contribute

to create ideas about an assigned topic. For intermediate levels, it could be appropriate to use questioning and outlining, because these strategies establish some parameters to make written compositions and help the students to identify the ideas they will use in their writing. Finally, for advanced levels, it can be used the free writing strategy, because it permits learners to write their ideas freely, without following any parameters that limit their writing, thus reducing anxiety caused by these parameters or time constrains.

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Appendix A. Survey's Format

Appendix A 1. Survey's Format

STUDENTS' SURVEY

Answer the questions below to be able to describe your preferences in terms of pre-writing strategies. This activity is not a test, so feel free to be as honest as possible.

A. Writing instruction received: Choose the most appropriate answer according to your experience as a student.

1. How many hours a week do you receive writing instruction?
 - a. 6
 - b. 4
 - c. 2
 - d. Other (please specify) _____

2. When you start working on a paper, do you usually use any strategies to facilitate writing?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. No

3. How did you learn how to write (paragraphs, stories, essays, papers) in English?
 - a. The teacher explained the procedures to follow before and after writing a paper (how to produce ideas, how to write a first draft, how to revise and edit the paper).
 - b. The teacher encouraged me to realize the importance of following a process when writing but did not provide any instruction.
 - c. I have never received instruction on writing process and strategies.

B. Importance, use and effectiveness of pre-writing techniques:

1. Importance of Pre-writing Strategies: Classify the strategies described below according to the importance that you, as a student, would give them during a pre-writing exercise.

NOT IMPORTANT= N.I

IMPORTANT = I

<i>How important do you think each of the following writing strategies are?</i>	N.I	I
Writing down key words and concepts to brainstorm ideas in abbreviated verbal or graphic form? <i>Brainstorming</i>		
Creating diagrams to visualize and connect the main ideas. <i>Clustering</i>		
Making lists and dividing subtopics to organize your ideas. <i>Outlining</i>		
Writing as much as you can about a topic without considering grammar, punctuation or spelling. <i>Freewriting</i>		

Answering questions about a topic to obtain the basis of a composition. <i>Questioning</i>		
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Other (Please Specify):

2. Use of Pre-Writing Strategies: Classify the strategies described below according to the frequency you apply them during a pre-writing task.

NEVER = N SOMETIMES = SM OFTEN = O ALWAYS = A

<i>How frequently do you use each of the following writing techniques to help your writing process?</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SM</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>A</i>
Before writing a paper do you usually write down key words and concepts to brainstorm ideas in abbreviated verbal or graphic form? <i>Brainstorming</i>				
Do you create diagrams to visualize and connect the main ideas? <i>Clustering</i>				
Do you make lists and divide subtopics to organize your ideas? <i>Outlining</i>				
Do you try writing as much as you can about a topic without considering grammar, punctuation or spelling? <i>Freewriting</i>				
Do you answer questions about a topic to obtain the basis of a composition? <i>Questioning</i>				

Other (Please Specify):

3. Effectiveness of Pre-Writing Strategies: Classify the strategies described below according to how effective you consider each one of them to be in order to generating thoughts, establishing topics and putting down coherent ideas on paper.

INEFFECTIVE = I EFFECTIVE = E

<i>How effective do you think each of the following writing strategies are?</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>E</i>
Writing down key words and concepts to brainstorm ideas in abbreviated verbal or graphic form? <i>Brainstorming</i>		
Creating diagrams to visualize and connect the main ideas. <i>Clustering</i>		
Making lists and dividing subtopics to organize your ideas. <i>Outlining</i>		
Writing as much as you can about a topic without considering grammar, punctuation or spelling. <i>Freewriting</i>		
Answering questions about a topic to obtain the basis of a composition. <i>Questioning</i>		

Other (Please Specify):

C. Conclusions:

1. Which are the pre-writing strategies that your teacher has taught you during the course of writing composition?

2. Which prewriting technique or techniques work best for you? Why?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

Appendix A 2. Survey's Format

TEACHERS' SURVEY

Answer the questions below to describe teachers' preferences in terms of pre-writing strategies. This activity is not a test, so try to be as honest as possible.

A. Writing instruction received: Choose the most appropriate answer according to your experience as a writing composition teacher.

1. How many hours a week do you provide writing instruction?
 - a. 6
 - b. 4
 - c. 2
 - d. Other (please specify) _____

2. Do you think it is important to teach the students strategies to facilitate their writing process?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. No

3. How do you teach how to write (paragraphs, stories, essays, papers) in English?
 - a. By explaining the procedures to follow before and after writing a paper (how to produce ideas, how to write a first draft, how to revise and edit the paper).
 - b. By implicitly making them reflect upon the importance of the writing process.
 - c. I do not usually provided instruction on writing process and strategies.

B. Importance, use and effectiveness of pre-writing techniques:

1. Importance of Pre-writing Strategies: Classify the strategies described below according to the importance that you, as a teacher, would give them during writing class.

NOT IMPORTANT= N.I

IMPORTANT = I

How important do you think each of the following writing strategies are?	N.I	I
Writing down key words and concepts to brainstorm ideas in abbreviated verbal or graphic form? <i>Brainstorming</i>		
Creating diagrams to visualize and connect the main ideas. <i>Clustering</i>		
Making lists and dividing subtopics to organize your ideas. <i>Outlining</i>		
Writing as much as you can about a topic without considering grammar, punctuation or spelling. <i>Freewriting</i>		
Answering questions about a topic to obtain the basis of a composition. <i>Questioning</i>		

Other (Please Specify):

2. Use of Pre-Writing Strategies: Classify the strategies described below according to the frequency you teach them during a pre-writing task.

NEVER = N SOMETIMES = SM OFTEN = O ALWAYS = A

How frequently do you teach each of the following writing techniques to help the students' writing process?	N	SM	O	A
Before writing a paper do you usually write down key words and concepts to brainstorm ideas in abbreviated verbal or graphic form? <i>Brainstorming</i>				
Do you create diagrams to visualize and connect the main ideas? <i>Clustering</i>				
Do you make lists and divide subtopics to organize your ideas? <i>Outlining</i>				
Do you try writing as much as you can about a topic without considering grammar, punctuation or spelling? <i>Free writing</i>				
Do you answer questions about a topic to obtain the basis of a composition? <i>Questioning</i>				

Other (Please Specify):

3. Effectiveness of Pre-Writing Strategies: Classify the strategies described below according to how effective you consider each one of them to be in order to facilitate the students' generating of thoughts, the establishment of topics and the putting down of coherent ideas on paper.

INEFFECTIVE = I EFFECTIVE = E

How effective do you think each of the following writing strategies are for your students?	I	E
Writing down key words and concepts to brainstorm ideas in abbreviated verbal or graphic form? <i>Brainstorming</i>		
Creating diagrams to visualize and connect the main ideas. <i>Clustering</i>		
Making lists and dividing subtopics to organize your ideas. <i>Outlining</i>		
Writing as much as you can about a topic without considering grammar, punctuation or spelling. <i>Freewriting</i>		
Answering questions about a topic to obtain the basis of a composition. <i>Questioning</i>		

Other (Please Specify):

C. Conclusions:

1. Which are the pre-writing strategies that you have provided during the course of writing composition?

2. In your opinion, which of the pre-writing strategies that you teach is better, in terms of methodology (time, materials, and procedure)? Why?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

APPENDIX B. WRITING CONVENTIONS

SYMBOL	MEANING	EXAMPLE
S	Incorrect spelling	I ^S recieved ^S jour letter.
W.O.	Wrong word order	We know ^{W.O.} well this city. Always I am happy here.
T	Wrong tense	If he <u>will come</u> , it will be too late.
C	Concord Subject and verb do not agree	Two policemen ^C has come. The news ^C are bad today.
WF	Wrong form	We <u>want</u> that you come. That table is <u>our</u> .
S/P	Singular or plural form wrong	We need more <u>informations</u> . ^S
h	Something has been left out	They said/ ^h was wrong. He hit me on/ ^h shoulder.
[]	Something is not necessary	It was too ^[] much difficult.
?M	Meaning is not clear	Come and ^{?M} rest with us for a week. The view from here is very ^{?M} suggestive.
NA	The usage is not appropriate	He ^{NA} requested me to sit down.
P	Punctuation wrong	Whats ^P your name ^P He asked me what I wanted? ^P