**Engaging Children in Writing Activities: Working with Paintings to Make Course Book Writing Tasks More Effective**

**Tesistas:  Castro Elena Carolina**

**Destéfanis Natalia Marinés**

Castro, E. castrocaroe@gmail.com. Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa.

Destéfanis, N. natid713@gmail.com. Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa.

**Director: Dra. Alejandra Reguera**

**Co Director: Prof. Lic. Rafael Raspanti**

**Universidad Tecnológica Nacional**

**Facultad Regional Villa Maria**

**August, 2023**

**Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Licenciado en lengua Inglesa.**

# Contents

**Abstract**

This descriptive study aimed to improve the writing skills of young EFL learners by incorporating works of art, especially paintings, as a visual aid to supplement writing activities in coursebooks. We, as teachers, found that students were having difficulty completing the writing tasks and lacked engagement in the activity. Therefore, we implemented a strategy that involved presenting and discussing a painting to encourage students to express their own ideas and thoughts in their writing. The study analyzed the texts created by our learners before and after the presentation and discussion about the painting. The results revealed that the use of paintings as a visual input and the exchange of ideas through discussion allowed students to improve their writing skills and express their own ideas more effectively. This study highlights the importance of incorporating visual aids and discussion in language learning activities to enhance students' engagement and learning outcomes. It also suggests that the use of works of art, such as paintings, can be an effective way to supplement language learning activities and improve students' writing skills.

*Keywords*: paintings, visual input, writing activities, young learners, writing skill.

**Introduction**

This research project falls under the category of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning, and its main objective is to propose a learning experience that contributes to the development of the learners' writing skills. The study involved observing and collecting data on students' writing production in EFL classes, with the aim of improving their writing abilities through the use of visual aids and discussion of works of art. On the whole, the study points up the importance of incorporating innovative teaching techniques and materials to enhance EFL learners' language skills and engagement in language learning activities.

In this study, the primary objective was to enhance coursebook writing tasks by incorporating the presentation of a work of art, specifically a digital image of a painting. The term "supplementing" refers to the need to amplify the writing activities proposed to students to encourage their active participation in the task. The writing tasks found in the elementary student's books used in this study were deemed repetitive and needed to be revitalized. For that reason, we sought to provide students with a more engaging and creative writing experience by introducing visual inputs and discussions surrounding works of art. The writing tasks typically provided in the elementary student's books mainly include writing short texts about the topic being dealt with in the unit. However, these tasks have been found to be repetitive and lacking in creativity. To boost the writing experience, we incorporated works of art, specifically digital images of paintings, and organized discussions surrounding them. This allowed students to express their own ideas and complete the writing activities presented in the book unit. To carry out the research, we have analyzed the writing productions of the students both before and after the presentation and exchange of ideas about the painting. By doing so, we were able to register the differences in the length and message conveyed by the writer. This analysis

was crucial in determining the effectiveness of the new approach and how it impacted the students' writing skills.

As educators, we have observed that our students often lack motivation when it comes to completing writing tasks presented in their books. This lack of motivation can be attributed to the students' difficulty in knowing what to write about or feeling disconnected from the task. In addition, we have identified that this lack of engagement results in difficulty for teachers to get students involved in the topic included in the activity. This issue highlights the need for innovative teaching approaches to improve students' motivation and engagement in writing activities. By incorporating works of art and facilitating discussions surrounding them, we aimed to provide a more creative and engaging writing experience for our students. The results of the study indicated that this approach was successful in improving students' writing skills and promoting their active participation in the task. This study serves as an important reminder for educators to consider innovative teaching techniques to enhance students' engagement and motivation in language learning activities. The use of visual inputs such as paintings can stimulate creativity and encourage students to express their ideas more effectively. The exchange of ideas during the discussion can help students to develop their critical thinking skills and provide them with the opportunity to learn from their peers. We believe that this method offers a more engaging and interactive way of learning and can help to address the lack of motivation that students often experience when it comes to writing activities. In conclusion, supplementing course book writing tasks with visual inputs and interactive discussions is an innovative approach to teaching writing skills and can lead to more effective learning outcomes for students.

Taking this into account, the following research questions arose:

- Do the presentation and debate about an artist's work result in engaging input to supplement coursebook writing activities?

- Is there any improvement in our students' productions after participating in the analysis of an artist's work?

- Is there any increase in the number of words in our students' written productions?

- Do the students efficiently convey a clearer, more meaningful, and more personal message in the second draft?

- Do the presentation of the work of art, the debate, and the word bank provide ideas for students so as to complete their writing works.

Supplementing the course book writing activities with visual inputs and interactive discussions has proven to be an effective method for enhancing students' writing skills and promoting their engagement and motivation in the task. We have found that this technique has enabled students to write more efficiently, express their ideas more effectively, and share their points of view with their peers. Moreover, this process has helped pupils to improve their communication skills in a real-life setting.

This study provides a valuable contribution to the field of teaching English as a foreign language, as it offers a practical approach that can be adopted by other educators. By incorporating works of art and facilitating discussions surrounding them, teachers can help students to develop their writing skills while making the learning process more enjoyable and engaging.

## Objectives

### General objectives

_ To analyze if the implementation of visual input, such as a painting, together with an oral debate about the work of art and what students see in it, play a constructive role in the enhancement of EFL students' written productions.

### Specific objectives

_ To describe the variations in length of the students' written productions, before and after the presentation of the painting.

_ To record the differences in meaning, in the internal logic of the text, between students' first and second drafts.

## Variables

Dependent variable

-Students' written productions

Independent variables

-Students' level of proficiency in English (EFL)- Although students belong to the same class, they might not have the same proficiency level..

- Works of art (paintings)

- Oral debate about the painting presented

- Number of words in the texts, considering the improvement of the length in the second texts.

- Students' own ideas and experiences, which are possible to notice in students' drafts.

## Theoretical Framework

We focused on utilizing paintings as a tool to improve students' writing skills by facilitating clear expression and effective communication. Through  observations, we noted that students required a certain level of language proficiency and well-formed ideas to effectively complete the writing task. To address those needs, we presented the painting and conducted a discussion to provide a visual aid and stimulate ideas for the students. The resulting word bank allowed students to concentrate on relevant vocabulary, while the debate surrounding the painting enabled students to share their thoughts and opinions on the topic. We effectively addressed the challenges faced by students when completing writing tasks by providing a stimulating and engaging visual aid that fostered language proficiency and critical thinking skills. This study provides a valuable contribution to the field of teaching English as a foreign language, and its results can inform the development of innovative and effective teaching methods for educators.

Incorporating visual input, such as paintings, in writing activities can be particularly effective for students with a strong spatial intelligence. This type of intelligence involves the ability to visualize, imagine, and manipulate objects in one's mind (Gardner, 1983). By presenting a painting and discussing its visual elements, students with strong spatial intelligence can better understand and express their ideas through written language. Additionally, using visual input can also benefit students with other types of intelligences, such as linguistic and interpersonal, by providing a context for them to communicate and share their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, considering multiple intelligences can be beneficial when designing tasks that incorporate visual input to enhance writing activities.

The *Learner Characteristics' Theory* emphasizes the importance of recognizing and accommodating individual differences among learners, including their learning styles and preferences (Spratt et al., 2005). Teachers who are aware of their students' different intelligences and learning styles can adapt their teaching methods and materials to better suit their students' needs and facilitate their learning process. In the case of using visual input to enhance writing activities, it is important to consider the preferences of students who are more visually oriented and provide them with opportunities to use this strength in their language learning. Some authors proclaim that "Learning styles are the ways in which a learner naturally prefers to take in, process, and remember information and skill'. These styles can be categorized as visual, auditory, kinesthetic (hands-on), group, individual, reflective and impulsive" (Spratt et. al., 2005, pp. 52-53). In this study, we intended to cater for all our students' needs though the emphasis was put on the visual aspect, since visual representations are the ones preferred by learners (Bradford, 2011).

In addition, the use of painting as visual input to supplement the course book writing tasks has to do with the teachers' need to make students express themselves effectively. Most of the textbooks include similar writing tasks, that is to say, the same types of activities are regularly presented; among such activities, there are some which contain photos or illustrations to be described. These pictures or illustrations are used as hints to learn new vocabulary items. However, these types of activities may not be enough to motivate students to engage in the writing process, nor do they necessarily help them to develop their writing skills effectively. The use of paintings, on the other hand, provides a more complex and thought-provoking visual input, which can lead to more meaningful writing activities. Additionally, the use of paintings encourages students to develop their critical thinking skills, as they analyze and interpret the visual information presented. Most paintings have covert messages and thus, they allow each person to have their own

interpretation of that message. In this way, there is a difference between the activities that are proposed in the textbook and the ones our students are involved in when analyzing a painting. In the latter case, the activity demands the use of higher thinking levels from the learners. In order to illustrate the human thinking process, we make reference to a system of categories developed in 1956 by Dr. Benjamin Bloom, who aimed to assist in the design and assessment of educational learning. This system was primarily created for academic education; however, it is compatible with all kinds of learning. It was named *Bloom's taxonomy domain* and it refers to a classification of levels of thinking. Bloom's taxonomy model is divided into three overlapping domains: the cognitive (intellectual capability), the affective (feelings, emotions, and behaviors) and the psychomotor domain (manual and physical skills). Within the cognitive domain, Bloom identified six levels of thinking, starting from the lowest to the highest level: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. In relation to writing tasks, students can use all of these levels of thinking, from recalling information to generating new ideas and creating their own written pieces. By supplementing the course book writing tasks with visual input, such as paintings, students are encouraged to use higher thinking levels, as they need to analyze and evaluate the content of the painting and generate their own ideas to express in their writing. This not only helps them to improve their writing skills but also enhances their critical thinking abilities. By considering Bloom's taxonomy when designing tasks using visual input, teachers can ensure that their students are learning the language as well as developing their critical thinking skills. For example, when using a painting as visual input, a teacher could start with lower-level tasks such as identifying colors, shapes, and objects in the painting (knowledge and comprehension levels). Then, the teacher could move on to higher-level tasks such as analyzing the message or theme of the painting, evaluating the techniques used by the artist, and synthesizing their own interpretation of the painting

(analysis, evaluation, and synthesis levels). By doing so, teachers can help their students develop their language skills together with their analytical and creative thinking skills.

Furthermore, the *Dual Coding Theory* suggests that there are two types of memory: verbal memory and nonverbal memory. According to this theory, when learners use both types of memory at the same time, they are more likely to remember and understand the information presented to them (Paivio, 2007). Therefore, by incorporating visual input, such as paintings, into EFL writing activities, learners are more likely to improve their ability to recall and understand the language and concepts presented in the lesson. This theory supports the use of paintings as visual input to supplement EFL writing activities, as it can enhance students' memory and comprehension of the language. To add more, the Dual Coding Theory suggests that the combination of verbal and visual information in a task or learning activity helps learners to process and remember the information more effectively. This is because the human brain has separate systems for processing visual and verbal information, and combining them can create a more powerful and integrated representation of the material (Clark & Paivio, 1991). Therefore, using both visual and verbal input in teaching can enhance learners' cognitive processes, leading to better understanding, retention and recall of the material. Dual coding can also be applied in writing activities. For instance, the teacher can ask the students to create mind maps or diagrams with images and keywords to organize their ideas before they start writing. In this way, students can associate visual and verbal representations of the information, which can help them to remember the content and structure of their writing better. Additionally, the use of visual input can make the writing task more engaging and meaningful for the students, which can foster their motivation to learn and practice writing. This is closely related to the process of verbalization, defined by Ur (2012), who affirms that "(…) the first step in the three- stage process of learning any language skill is the verbalization of the

target language" (p. 19). The teacher can explain the meaning of some words and the uses of different structures in context, or they can elicit this from the students. Hence, students will be able to start practicing until they automatize the use of the skill (in this case, the writing skill).

According to the procedure presented in this study, the paintings are accompanied by an oral presentation on the part of the teacher, and a debate about what can be appreciated in the painting; in other words, there is a short discussion about what students see in the work of art, what the artist tries to show in their work and how the interpretation of their message may differ, according to the person who appreciates it. The topics that the painting brings up are connected to the writing activity included in the students' textbooks. This approach is beneficial as it helps students to connect their visual and verbal representations of the concepts, as well as develop their critical thinking skills. By discussing the painting and its themes, students are encouraged to analyze and evaluate the artwork, which promotes higher order thinking. This discussion can also help students to develop their language skills, as they are able to practice expressing their opinions and ideas in English. Additionally, by connecting the painting to the writing activity, students are able to see the relevance of the visual input to their language learning goals, which can increase their motivation and engagement.

We think that, by working in this way, we can help our students to feel motivated to communicate what they find in the work of art and to give them the opportunity to express themselves by putting the vocabulary into practice  or structures used in the debate. What is included in the presentation is basic vocabulary or basic structures to help writers convey their ideas. Thus, taking into account that students need the verbal input together with the visual one and that, at the same time, it is important to verbalize the aspects of the language required for the practice of any language skill, the oral debate should be held

before the writing of the second drafts takes place. By incorporating basic vocabulary and structures into the presentation, we are providing our students with the tools they need to effectively express their ideas and opinions. Moreover, by including an oral debate before the second drafts are written, we are giving our students the opportunity to practice their language skills in a more dynamic and interactive way. This can be especially helpful for students who may feel more comfortable speaking than writing, or for those who benefit from collaborative learning environments.

The main objectives of the activity are related to helping students to successfully complete the tasks and improve their writing skills. If learners succeed in doing the writing activities, they will consolidate their learning. According to Ur (2012), "Success-orientation is a characteristic of effective language practice". In this sense, this author states that "teachers should select, design and administer practice activities in such a way that learners are likely to succeed in doing the task" (p. 22). When students feel that they are able to successfully complete tasks, they are more likely to feel motivated and engaged in the learning process. This can lead to improved language proficiency over time. In order to create success-oriented practice activities, it's important to focus on the role of the teacher. It is necessary to provide clear instructions and feedback, so that students understand what is expected from them and can make improvements in their writing based on your feedback (p.23). By designing activities that are focused on success and improvement, the teacher can help your students become more confident and proficient writers.

Krashen (2005) made a distinction between *acquisition* and *learning*. Acquisition refers to the language we pick up subconsciously when we are engaged in communicating and understanding messages, while learning makes reference to the language we consciously study and learn about (Krashen, as cited in Scrivener, 2005). Scrivener (2005) defines acquisition as "the significant process when learning a foreign language" and he

stresses the importance of learners' productions  when they use the full range of language they have at their disposal, without being restricted to use specific grammar or vocabulary items" (p. 114). These productions are considered to be "authentic output".

As regards the role of the teacher in the classroom, there are tasks they should perform in order to help students write in a better way, especially when students are doing ¨writing for writing¨ activities (Harmer, 2004, p. 41). The reason for this is that students usually feel reluctant to express themselves, or have difficulties finding ways for expressing their ideas. Some of these tasks are: demonstrating, motivating and provoking, and supporting. Teachers play a crucial role in supporting students' writing skills, particularly in situations where students are engaged in "writing for writing" activities. In order to help students write more effectively and confidently, teachers can perform a variety of tasks. One important task is demonstrating, which involves modeling effective writing strategies and techniques for students. Motivating and provoking students is another key task for teachers. By creating a supportive and engaging classroom environment, teachers can encourage students to take risks and experiment with different writing styles and approaches. This can help students overcome their reluctance to express themselves and become more confident and skilled writers over time. Finally, supporting students through the writing process is crucial for helping them develop their writing skills. This may involve providing feedback on drafts, helping students to identify areas for improvement, and offering guidance and support as needed. Harmer suggests the teacher should present the language used to perform certain written functions for students to become aware of it. They should also get students involved in the activity planning an engaging warm- up activity; teachers must avoid their students feeling of being ´lost for words´ (Harmer, 2004, p. 42). On the other hand, students need a lot of help and reassurance, so the teacher should always be available. In the activities proposed in our

project, we tried to fulfill these roles, especially when carrying out the debate, and creating the word bank.

Childers (1998) states "writing and arts share much of their approaches to composing and manipulating the messages unique to their discourse communities" (p.9). We are going to guide our students in the process of decoding the messages that lie in a piece of art in the same way we would do with a written passage; but we believe that the former process will end up being more engaging than the latter one.  It is a widely shared concept that paintings are considered to be texts. Therefore, when learners have to deal with a painting, they also engage in a reading activity, which involves two interrelated approaches: the top-down and the bottom-up processes (Grabe, as cited in Castells et. al., 1998). In the top-down one, readers move from the general idea of the text to the specific details, guided by their previous knowledge (schema) and expectations. It's interesting to see the connection being made between writing and art, and the idea that they share similar approaches to composing and conveying messages. This makes sense, as both writing and art involve creating meaning through the use of symbols, whether they are words or visual images. Analyzing a piece of art can involve similar processes to analyzing a written text. For example, readers can use both top-down and bottom-up approaches to make sense of what they are seeing or reading. The top-down approach involves using prior knowledge and context to help interpret the overall meaning of a text or image, while the bottom-up approach involves analyzing individual elements, such as specific words or visual details, to build a deeper understanding. By incorporating art into language learning activities, students can engage with the language in a new and creative way, while also building critical thinking and analytical skills. This can help to make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable for students, while also deepening their understanding of the language and culture they are studying.

In this way, they predict the content, get interested in the text, and link the topic to their personal lives. After the reader grasps the main ideas, readers go back to the information presented in the text and use it for different purposes; this is the bottom-up approach. According to Grabe, (reprinted in Castells et al., 1998, p. 59) reading ends up being an interactive process, which incorporates top-down and bottom up strategies in order to ensure the accurate assimilation of the information. The final result of the reading process, when working with paintings, is that "the reader is able to make informed evaluations of the author's arguments" (Grabe, reprinted in Castells, et al., 1998, p. 229).

Here, critical thinking plays a vital role and it is enhanced by the two approaches interacting in the reading process. Goodman (1971) describes the process of reading as a guessing game in which the reader reconstructs a message encoded as a graphic display by the writer. When we approach a text, we use our previous knowledge to make sense of it, as it was formalized by Rumelhart (1980). Rumelhart states that a text does not carry meaning by itself; it only provides directions for readers to help them construct meaning from their own acquired knowledge. This acquired knowledge is defined as a person's background knowledge, and the previous knowledge structures are defined as *schemata* (Rumelhart, 1980)*.* The interest and background knowledge will enable students to comprehend at a reasonable rate, and keep them involved in the material in spite of its syntactic difficulty (Coady, 1979). After comprehension, every input will be mapped to existing knowledge structures (schemata) (Coady, 1979, p.77). Furthermore, in order to develop the reading skill, it is necessary to develop the prior knowledge, or schema, especially in the top-down process. In other words, each text activates schema, a learning theory developed by C.R. Anderson and first used by Piaget in 1926, which "views organized knowledge as an elaborate network of abstract mental structures that represent one's understanding of the world" (Ausubel, 1960, p. 267-272).

When we read a text, we activate the relevant schema and use them to make connections and create meaning. This process is important for comprehension and critical thinking, as it allows us to understand new information in the context of what we already know. The concept of schema is a useful tool for understanding how learning and comprehension work, and can be applied in many different contexts, including reading and interpreting texts. By building on existing schema and making connections between different ideas, students can deepen their understanding and become more effective learners. Schema is not fixed, but is constantly being shaped and modified by new experiences and knowledge. When paintings are used in ESL lessons, they can serve as powerful visual aids that help students activate their existing schema and make connections with their previous knowledge. This process allows students to develop a deeper understanding of the world and to incorporate new interpretations into their existing schema.By using paintings as visual aids during the pre-reading stage, students are able to engage with the material in a more meaningful way, and to develop a greater appreciation for the arts. They are also able to sharpen their perceptions, check for misconceptions, and learn about art in an engaging and inviting context. To sum up, the use of paintings in ESL lessons can be a powerful tool for helping students to develop their schema and to deepen their understanding of the world around them. By providing students with opportunities to engage with art and to make connections with their previous knowledge, teachers can help students to become more effective learners and critical thinkers.

To help students develop their writing skill, according to Oxford and Scarcella (1996), it is necessary to take into account different factors that affect the learners whenever faced with a writing task. Firstly, the writer's needs and objectives: writing instruction should emphasize expressive and personal writing to satisfy people's intellectual and

developmental needs. Secondly, the writer's motivation to write: students should feel that their efforts to write are worthwhile. Finally, the writer's authenticity to communicate meaning is another key factor: teachers should use writing purposefully asking learners to convey authentic messages aiming at real audiences. Moreover, it is important to highlight the fact that "writing activities provide room for the integration of the four macro skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing." (Oxford and Scarcella, 1996, p. 118-122) Though the final outcome in our experiences is the student's written production, we aim at using all the macro-skills, in order to develop critical thinking, and raise awareness in our students.

On the one hand, we intend to use reading, so as to pave the way and provide the learners with the necessary tools to be able to produce a text of their own. On the other hand, we will use speaking and listening macro-skills in order to build vocabulary for students to have their own voice, and be able to carry out a critical analysis of the works of art. That is to say that, by using reading as a way to provide learners with the necessary tools to produce their own text, we are helping them to develop their writing skills while also building their comprehension and critical thinking abilities. In addition, by using speaking and listening macro-skills to build vocabulary and encourage critical analysis of works of art, we are providing our students with the tools they need to engage with the material in a more meaningful way. This can help them to develop their own voice and to become more confident in expressing their ideas.

As regards the link that exists between the process of writing and the interpretation of pieces of art, we consider that, in order to minimize students' frustration to write, teachers should focus on the personal meaning each student is able to attribute to a piece of art, so as to foster meaningful writing. As each student can contribute with a new perspective or point of view, others may have not seen yet, each contribution is highly valuable.

It is true that the process of writing and the interpretation of art are closely linked. Writing about a piece of art can help students develop a deeper understanding of the work and its meaning, as well as their own personal perspectives and experiences. However, some students may find it challenging to write about art, particularly if they feel they lack the necessary vocabulary or knowledge to do so.

Focusing on the personal meaning that each student can attribute to a piece of art is an effective way to minimize frustration and foster meaningful writing. By encouraging students to explore their own thoughts and feelings about a work, teachers can help them develop their own unique perspectives and interpretations. This can also help students feel more invested in the writing process, as they are not simply regurgitating information but are actively engaging with the art and their own ideas. Moreover, by valuing each student's contribution, teachers can create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that encourages collaboration and diverse perspectives. This can lead to richer and more nuanced discussions of the art and its meaning, along with more engaging and insightful writing. By focusing on personal meaning and valuing each student's contribution, teachers can help students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of art, as well as build their writing skills and confidence.

The activities included in our analysis do not focus on specific grammar structures or vocabulary items. What we are going to analyze in the students' productions is the degree of coherence in the text. According to Harmer (2004), for a text to have coherence "it needs to have some kind of internal logic, which the reader can follow, with or without the use of cohesive devices" (p. 24). Thus, the reader can understand the writer's purpose and the writer's line of thought. The writer's purpose refers to their intention to give information, make suggestions, make judgements, or express a personal opinion. The writer's line of thought, or line of reasoning,  helps the reader follow a story in a narrative or know exactly what is being described in a descriptive piece (Harmer, 2004). Following Harmer's line of thought, "coherence in a paragraph is frequently achieved by the way in which a writer sequences information" (p.25). It has implications not only for the way

people write in their native language but also the ways in which writers express themselves in a foreign language (Harmer, 2004). Besides, it is important that teachers make sure students have a writing aim. As a result, they have a purpose in mind and construct their writing following that purpose. Considering these two actions, Harmer believes that students become effective communicators. Moreover, considering the activities proposed, we do not ask students to follow a specific genre; the project does not focus on the teaching of writing for the construction of different text genres. Having a clear writing aim is crucial for students to effectively communicate their ideas in writing. Without a purpose, students may struggle to organize their thoughts and construct a coherent piece of writing. By providing a clear writing aim, teachers can help students focus their writing and develop their skills as effective communicators. In addition, it is not always necessary to focus on teaching specific genres of writing in order to foster strong writing skills. By allowing students to approach writing tasks with a more open-ended mindset, they can explore different styles and genres organically, which can ultimately lead to a more well-rounded writing skill. The emphasis can be on developing strong writing skills in general, rather than focusing solely on specific genres. We believe that by providing a clear writing aim and encouraging students to explore different writing styles and genres, teachers can help their students become effective communicators with strong writing skills.

It concentrates on what is defined by Harmer (2004) as "writing for writing". When teaching "writing for writing", teachers help students to communicate real messages in an appropriate manner that is completely different from the teaching of grammatical or lexical accuracy (Harmer, 2004). If a text genre is needed, the subsequent exposure of students to different examples will help them to fulfill the task. These examples are usually included in students' course books. Furthermore, in order to develop the reading skill, it is necessary to develop prior knowledge, or schema, especially in the top-down process. In other words, each text activates schema, which is defined as "an internalized representation of the world or an ingrained and systematic pattern of thought, action, and

problem solving". Developing prior knowledge or schema is essential for developing reading skills, particularly in the top-down process. Prior knowledge refers to the reader's existing understanding of the topic or subject matter, which can help them make sense of the text they are reading. Schema theory suggests that each text activates existing schema in the reader's mind, which allows them to understand the text more effectively. These schemas can be thought of as mental frameworks or models that the reader uses to interpret the text. By activating existing schema, the reader can quickly identify and understand key concepts and ideas in the text. For example, if a reader has prior knowledge about a particular historical event, they may be better equipped to understand and interpret a historical text related to that event. Similarly, if a reader has prior knowledge about a specific field of science, they may be better able to comprehend and analyze scientific texts related to that field. Therefore, teachers can help students develop their reading skills by building on their existing knowledge and experiences. This can involve providing background information or contextualizing the text to help activate relevant schema. By doing so, students can more effectively process and understand the text, ultimately leading to improved reading skills. Our schemata develop through social learning or direct learning. Both of these processes may involve assimilation (responding to experiences based on existing schemata) or accommodation (changing schemata when new situations cannot be incorporated within an existing one)" (Hutchinson, 2008). We know that schema is not fixed, since the notions we have of the world are constantly shaped by experience. When paintings are used in the ESL lesson as visual aids during the pre-writing stage, students are free to use their schema (experiences, general knowledge of the world) to make meaningful connections with their previous knowledge and incorporate new interpretations to the old ones. In this way, they can sharpen their perceptions, check misconceptions, or learn about art in an engaging and inviting context. To conclude, it is important to take into consideration what Ur (2012) states in

relation to the teaching of writing. The author believes that writing has been considered a less useful skill for communicative purposes; it is mainly used for language practice and testing. However, the importance of informal writing for communication has increased immensely, mainly due to the widespread use of email, online chat, blogging, texting, and social networking tools (Crystal, as cited in Ur). For this reason, we need to put in a great deal of effort in helping our students to achieve written fluency (Ur, 2012). It is important to recognize the evolving role of writing in communication and to provide students with the necessary tools and skills to succeed in today's digital landscape. By emphasizing the importance of written fluency and providing opportunities for informal writing, teachers can help students develop the skills they need to thrive in the modern world.

**Methodology**

Students were asked to do a writing task proposed in their coursebooks. Teachers explained the activity and learners worked individually. When they finished, they handed in their pieces of work. These productions are texts number 1, corresponding to each of the students. The following class, the teachers showed a digital image of a painting. Pupils were asked to describe it. Also, the professor asked a set of questions to focus students' attention on a particular topic ( one that was included in the unit being dealt with in their coursebooks). We used a combination of writing and visual analysis activities. By asking students to complete a writing task proposed in their coursebooks and then following up with a visual analysis activity, the tutor provided learners with opportunities to practice different language skills. The writing task in the second stage likely helped students develop their writing skills, including the ability to organize their thoughts and express their ideas clearly in writing. By analyzing a painting and describing it, students were able to practice their descriptive language skills and develop their ability to analyze and interpret visual images. Additionally, by asking a set of focused questions related to a

particular topic, the teacher helped the students connect their visual analysis to the content being covered in their coursebooks. This helped the pupils deepen their understanding of the topic and connect it to real-world examples. While students were participating and answering questions, the teacher wrote some words or phrases she created in a word bank on the board. What is depicted in the painting is related to the unit being covered. Thus, the word bank created helps learners to fulfill the writing task, allowing them to express themselves more appropriately. Students had to do the same writing activity again, but now after participating in the debate about the painting. These were texts number 2.

The teacher's use of a word bank is a great way to support students in their writing task. By creating a list of relevant words and phrases related to the topic, the schoolteacher is providing students with a valuable resource that can help them express themselves more effectively. Additionally, by connecting the word bank to the visual analysis activity, she is helping students make connections between the topic being covered in their coursebooks and real-world examples. This can help learners better understand the material and see its relevance to their lives. By asking learners to complete the same writing task again after participating in the debate about the painting, the professor gave students an opportunity to apply what they have learned and practice their writing skills in a new context. This can help students build their confidence and become more effective writers overall.

These second productions were considered text number 2, corresponding to each of the students. We collected the students' productions that were written before presenting the painting (texts n°1). Then, we compared these texts with the ones produced by our pupils after the presentation of the painting (texts n°2). The texts analyzed are from primary and high school students. In the first stage, we included the productions of 20

students, 10 belonging to 6<sup>th</sup> grade in a primary school in Córdoba city, and 10 from students in 1<sup>st</sup> year of secondary school level in Colonia Caroya. Each of the students' written productions included two different texts. Text 1 was produced before the presentation of the painting, and texts n°2, written after it. 40 texts were analyzed in the preliminary stage. For this final thesis, there are 56 students' productions included, that is to say, 112 texts.

**Selection of paintings**

In relation to the selection of the paintings, there are some common characteristics we took into account. When we chose them, we considered if the artworks would catch students' attention, if children would like them or not, and most important of all, if our students would have the vocabulary to express how they felt, and what they would be able to observe in them. These original and famous paintings give our learners the opportunity to work in the activities proposed using their elementary language level.

It is important to consider the selection of paintings carefully when using them as a tool for language learning. The teacher has taken several factors into account when selecting paintings to use in the classroom, including their ability to catch students' attention, their level of appeal to children, and their relevance to the students' vocabulary and language level.  By choosing paintings that students find interesting and engaging, the teacher is helping to create a positive learning environment that can encourage students to participate and engage with the material. Additionally, by selecting paintings that are relevant to students' language level, the teacher is providing students with an opportunity to practice their language skills in a way that is both challenging and accessible.

Adopting original and famous paintings in the classroom can also help students develop their cultural awareness and appreciation for the arts. By introducing students to a

variety of artistic styles and movements, the teacher can help them develop their visual literacy skills and connect the material being covered in the coursebooks to real-world examples. Using paintings from different parts of the world and from different artistic styles is a great way to foster students' creativity, imagination, and cultural knowledge. By exposing students to a variety of artistic styles and traditions, the teacher is helping to broaden their understanding of the world and encouraging them to think creatively and critically. In addition to developing students' cultural awareness, working with these pictures can also help students develop their vocabulary and language skills. By focusing on specific vocabulary items related to the paintings, the teacher is providing students with an opportunity to practice their language skills in a meaningful and engaging way. Additionally, by asking students to describe and analyze the paintings, the teacher is helping them develop their critical thinking and language production skills.

In order to help learners to complete the writing task more effectively, the teacher shows a painting as a digital image. She shows the painting and she asks students to say if they recognize who the people in the picture are. She encourages them to describe it orally. For example, by saying who and what they see, where they are, and any other piece of information that would be relevant to them. Then, the teacher asks if they had seen the work of art before and if they would like to know some information about the painter. The teacher provides students with some factual data about the artist. The professor writes a word bank on the board, so learners can use some of the words in their texts. This includes words and phrases that have been elicited from students and other words that the teacher had written on the board in order to help students in the process of writing. What is depicted in the painting was closely related to the unit being covered in the learners' book. Thus, the word bank helped students to express themselves more appropriately. Students had to complete the writing activity. They wrote a text following the

same instructions that they had in their course books for writing texts number 1. In this case, the productions, which were written after working with the painting, are considered texts number 2. Both texts, corresponding to each of the learners, are compared taking into account the length of the texts and concerning the changes in the message.

The selection of paintings for our classes was curated based on the unit's topic. For instance, when exploring personal descriptions, we chose portraits, and for the study of occupations, we opted for paintings featuring groups of workers. Our selection criteria also included the prominence of the artist and the artwork's significance, so that students could gain insight into the artist's oeuvre and impact. By incorporating famous and influential paintings into our lessons, we aimed to enrich students' understanding of the subject matter and cultivate their appreciation for the role of art in shaping our cultural heritage.

Ron Keas (1943) is an accomplished artist who has been painting for more than six decades. His work has garnered attention from a wide range of notable figures, including Clint Eastwood, Jay Leno, and former President Bill Clinton. One of Keas' most notable achievements is his extensive portfolio of oil portraits of President Obama. He has painted more portraits of Obama than any other artist in the world, and his work has been featured prominently in media outlets such as the New York Times. The painting in question depicts Obama with his family in a park. The family is shown wearing casual summer clothes, and they are all smiling and appearing to enjoy the moment. The painting's natural lighting, which suggests a sunny day, adds to the relaxed and cheerful atmosphere. Despite the family's wealth and status, the painting conveys a sense of ordinary happiness and family togetherness. The portrait captures a moment in time where the Obamas are simply enjoying each other's company, free from the pressures of public life. The painting is a testament to Keas' skill as an artist and his ability to capture the essence of a moment in time. The teacher uses a comprehensive approach to introduce the painting to the

students. By first asking if the students recognize the people in the painting and encouraging them to describe it, the teacher is prompting them to think critically about the image and engage with it on a personal level. Providing information about the painter and asking questions about him is an excellent way to add context to the painting and spark further interest in the topic. This approach allows the students to see the painting as part of a larger cultural and artistic context, and can help to develop their appreciation of the work. The teacher's instruction to write about the painting and compare it to their own family is an excellent way to encourage creative and critical thinking. By providing a word bank, the teacher is also helping to support students who may struggle with vocabulary or expression. To conclude, this approach appears to be a well-rounded and effective way to engage students with the painting and encourage them to think deeply about its themes and meanings. The word bank includes words and phrases: Some of them were elicited from students, and others  provided by the teacher in order to help students in the process of writing. The word bank includes family members, possessive pronouns, phrases like: I live in/ with, they are/have, I/He was born.

Leonid Afremov (1955-2019) was a renowned artist known for his unique spatula technique. He was born in the Soviet Union. Afremov's paintings typically depict urban or rural landscapes, animals, and portraits, all utilizing his distinctive technique. The painting *"Greece Harbor"* is a striking example of Afremov's work. The use of the spatula technique, along with the vibrant colors, creates a sense of texture and movement that draws the viewer into the scene. The painting depicts a Greek harbor at night, with the city brightly illuminated and visible in the background. The houses and buildings are perched on mountains that overlook the water, with boats visible in the harbor, including some that are likely fishing vessels. The city appears to be a popular tourist destination, as the natural landscape is breathtakingly beautiful. The coastline and hills are particularly noteworthy,

and the lights that illuminate the city at night create a sense of magic and wonder. The painting is an excellent example of Afremov's skill as an artist, and the way he was able to use his technique to create a vivid and captivating depiction of a place and time.

The teacher starts the lesson by introducing the painting "Greece Harbor" by Leonid Afremov. She then prompts the students to describe what they see in the painting and asks questions to encourage them to think critically about the artwork. For example, she may ask if they have seen the painting before and what is unusual about it. She may also ask if they recognize the city in the painting and if they know what technique the painter used to create it. After the students have had a chance to express their thoughts and ask any questions they may have, the teacher shares information about the artist and the technique he used. This information may include the artist's background and his other notable works, as well as details about the spatula technique that Afremov utilized to create this particular painting. Finally, the teacher writes a word bank on the board to help students as they begin to write their own descriptions of the painting. This word bank may include key vocabulary words related to the painting, such as "landscape", "coastline", and "tourism". By providing this word bank, the teacher helps to support the students' writing skills and encourages them to use new and varied vocabulary in their descriptions of the artwork.

Georges Seurat (1859- 1991) was a famous French artist. He devised the technique known as pointillism. His large scale work "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte" initiated "Neo-Impressionism", and is one of the icons of late 19th-century painting. Seurat´s work depicts a number of Parisians at a park on the banks of the river Seine. For them, Sunday was the day to escape the heat of the city and head for the shade of trees and the cool breezes that came off the river. The teacher let students know about this situation. Students could describe the landscape, and what was

happening. Teacher guided them by asking different questions: What day is it? What time is it? What activities do they enjoy doing? Are they having a good time? How can you tell? Do people in our area enjoy spending time by the rivers in the hills? Is it common for a family to travel to the countryside? What do you do on Sundays? What did you do last weekend? . The word bank mainly included time expressions, and free time activities.

Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) was an American painter. In his works, he reflected the country's culture. For many years, he created the cover illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post,* one of the most popular and iconic magazines of the 1900's. The Runaway was one of those covers, it was published in 1958. The painting depicts a child on a barstool, he is accompanied by a police officer and the counterman. The child has a small bindle; apparently he ran away from home. Students are asked to describe the painting. Then, the teacher tells them about the artist and the characteristics of his works. Then, the teacher drives their attention to the adults in the painting who seem to be protecting the boy. Students describe their jobs. The teacher helps them by asking some questions: What time do they work? Do they like their job? What clothes are they wearing? Where do they spend most of the time? The word bank mainly includes time expressions and activities related to the people's occupation.

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) was a Spanish painter and sculptor. He is considered one of the most influential artists of the 20th century. He was one of the creators of Cubism. In his portrait of Dora Maar, a French painter and photographer, he presents her seated on a chair with a small cat perched on her shoulder. She has a particular hat too. The artist aims to depict not only her beauty, but also her temperament. Picasso depicted Maar's portrait in the Cubist style, her face is presented from two angles, one half in profile with her eye looking straight at the viewer, and the other half of a full face.

The teacher provides the context of this work, and the artist´s biography. Students are asked to describe the person in the portrait. The vocabulary they use is registered on the board.

After reading the different versions of the texts, we analyzed the data obtained, and drew conclusions. The results in the number of words used are displayed graphically. A description of the possible improvements in giving the message coherently is provided in a written form.

Analyzing the data obtained from the different versions of the texts has provided valuable insights into the students' writing abilities. The graph displaying the number of words used in each version of the text clearly shows that the students' participation in the debate about the painting had a positive effect on their writing output. The second version of the text, which was written after the students had participated in the debate, contained more words and was more detailed than the first version.

However, there are still areas for improvement in terms of giving the message coherently. Some of the students struggled to organize their ideas and express themselves clearly. This could be addressed by providing additional guidance on how to structure a written text and by encouraging students to focus on developing their ideas in a logical and coherent way.

The experimental phase lasted six months. We worked with students from private schools: 6th grade students at primary level, and 1st year students at secondary level. In these schools, students use a course book and we used those to carry out the first part of the project.

## Results

Texts produced by 6th grade students from Jesús María school, which is situated in Córdoba city.

Activity proposed in their course books: Write about your weekend.

Painting used before the writing of texts number 2: *A Sunday Afternoon on the island of La Grande Jatte* by Georges Seurat.

**STUDENT 1** TEXT 1

Last weekend I played football and I ate barbecue. I visit my grandparents and

I played with my broter.

STUDENT 1 TEXT 2

Last weekend I had a good time. I met friends in club and I played football. I ate barbecue. On Sunday, is hot, I visited my grandparents and my

grandmother prepare milkshakes.

**STUDENT 2** TEXT 1

The last weekend I listen to music and played computer games. I stay in my house.

STUDENT 2 TEXT 2

Sunday was sunny. I stayed at home. I played video games. I didn´t met friends. My dad didn´t work and watched TV.

**STUDENT 3** TEXT 1

I visited my grandma and I played hockey in school. Then, I sleep.

STUDENT 3 TEXT 2

On saturday, I played hockey in Universitario. I walked home with one friend. I ate rice. Next I watched TV in my bedroom. I played video games in the cellphone.

**STUDENT 4** TEXT 1

I went to a camp with Scouts. I played games and walked a lot. We cooked spaghetti. We get up early and prepared breakfast. It was great.

STUDENT 4 TEXT 2

Last weekend I went to a camp. I had a great time. I went with my friends. We do a lot of things. We cooked and played games outside. We went for a walk. It was a sunny day.

**STUDENT 5** TEXT 1

On Saturday I went to my dad house. I played tennis at 4 o´clock. My sister came and see. On Sunday, I ate barbecue in my uncle house.

STUDENT 5 TEXT 2

Last weekend I played tennis with my dad. I stayed in my dad house with my sister. We ate hamburgers. On Sunday I visited my uncle. I played with my cousin. He is Matias.
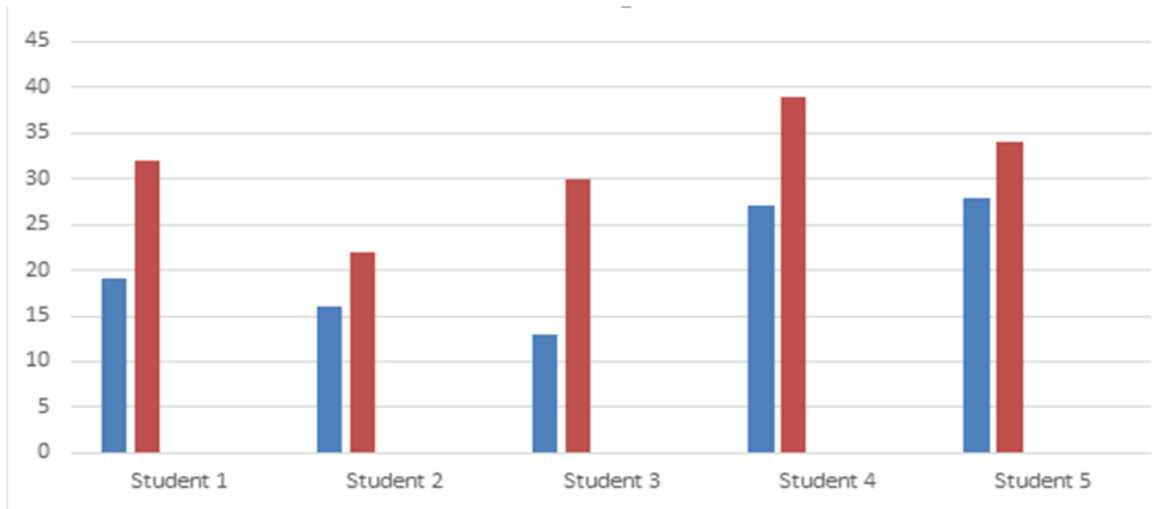


Graphic 1 representing the number of words in 6th grade students' productions (Activity: write about your weekend)

**STUDENT 6** TEXT 1

Last weekend I went to saw a bascketball games at Union Electrica club. It was championship of children bascketball. The winner was the group of Córdoba. I was very happy because my friend Lucas was a champion. I bought the t-shirt.

STUDENT 6 TEXT 2

Last weekend I played football with my friends. I went to union Electrica. I ate meat and salad. I bought ice cream. Next, I visit my cousins I watched tv with my cousins. On Sunday my grandma visit my. She made ñoquis. I went to the sarmiento park to played football.

**STUDENT 7** TEXT 1

I weekend I went to the house friend went to the park, played the football bough the pizza and ate the pizza.

STUDENT 7 TEXT 2

In the weekend I meet my friends Cami and Mica. Went to the park with the bikes. I ate chicken with my family and drink juice. It hot day.

**STUDENT 8** TEXT 1

Last weekend I went to Carlos paz, next I bought the gave for my dad and mum. I ride in my bike and I played in my computer and my IPAD. I sleeping at twelve o clock.

STUDENT 8 TEXT 2

Last weekend I went to the school on Saturday, I cooked empanadas in the Scouts, I played games with my friends of Scouts. We ate cookies and drank water. Is a good day. I was tired next I ate barbecue at night with my mum and dad and watched tv in my bed.

**STUDENT 9** TEXT 1

In the last weekend I went shopping center. I met my friends and ate ice cream. Next I bought a videogame and play with my sister

STUDENT 9 TEXT 2

In the last weekend I went to the my granny's home and I ate salad and chiken. next, I went to mass. Then, my granny and I went to "Del Pilar" I like it. Next we

went shopping and we went cinema. We saw "Hotel Transilvanya 2" I like it I went to my house at 8 pm.

**STUDENT 10** TEXT 1

On Saturday I went to the cinema and my mum bougth the potatoes I went to sleep to the friends house. On sanday I and family went to the restaurant. I ate spaguetis and drank Coke.

STUDENT 10 TEXT 2

Last weekend it was good. On Saturday I went to hockey in my school, then I went to my house and ate a sandwich and I drink coke. Next, I played video games with my brother. On Sunday I went to my grandads house and I ate barbecue. Then I stayed in my house. Finally I ate pizza and I watched tv.
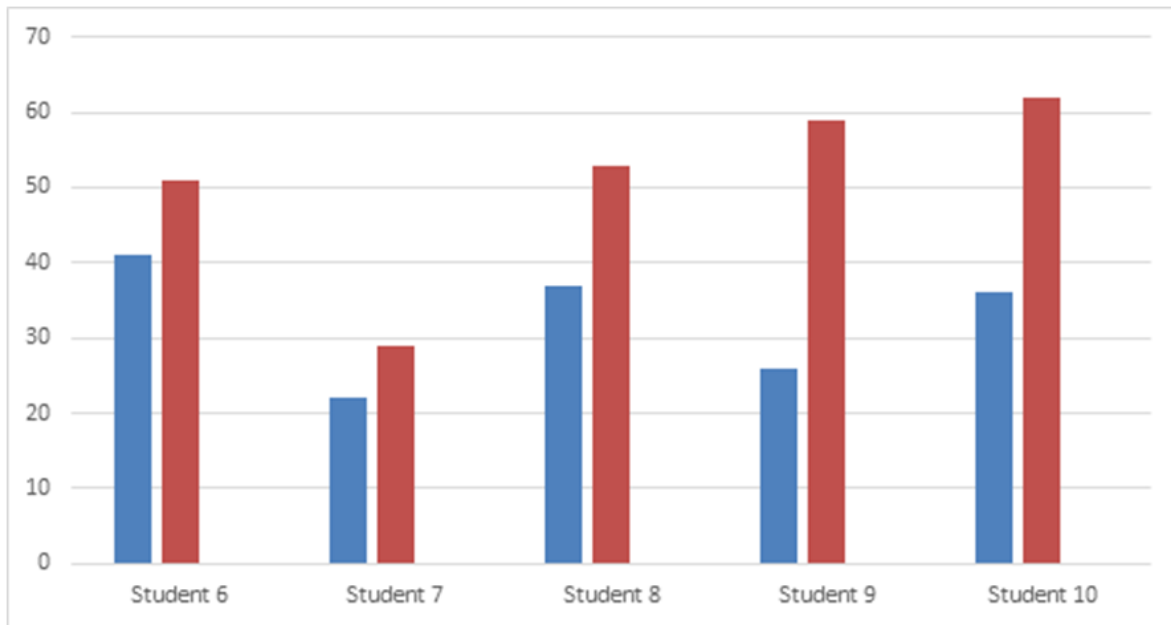


Graphic 2 representing number of words in 6th grade students' productions

(Activity: write about your weekend)

Word bank: last weekend - on Saturday- on Sunday- sunny day – fun – go to the park – ride the bike – play a sport – play outside – go for a walk – meet friends - have a good time – have a milkshake – go to the shops – be tired -  be happy- stay in my house- with my family

Activity: Write about your weekend

1 Graphic representing 6th grade students' productions (writing task about their weekends)
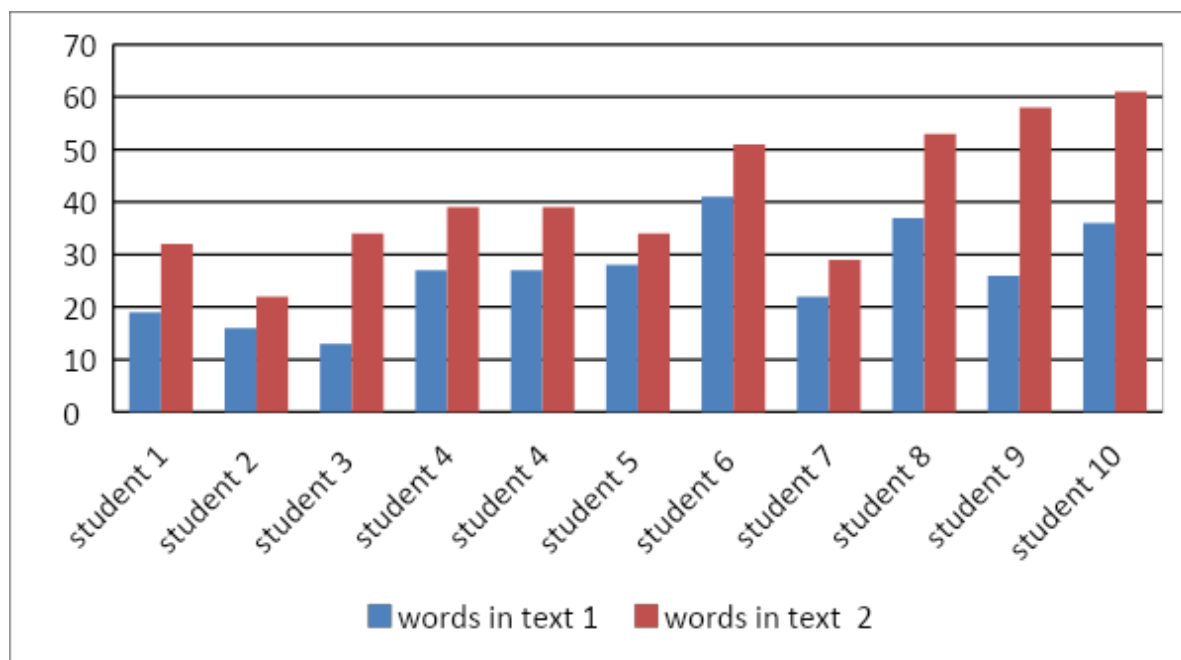


After analyzing the texts above, we can say that texts number 2, which are longer than first drafts, result to be more complete. Some of them include students' personal experiences and also their family members' experiences, as compared to texts number 1 that were mainly sentences about themselves, starting with "I". For instance, students 1 and 6 wrote about their grandmother, and student 3 wrote about his father. In addition, some learners described the weather in their second drafts. For example, students 1, 2, 4 and 7. Besides, some of the writers specified the day they were referring to, that is to say Saturday or Sunday (students 3, 5, 6 and 10). Including what other people in the family did last weekend, describing the weather, and being specific about the day they were writing about allowed the learners to improve their writings.

Texts produced by 1ˢᵗ year students from a private secondary school, which is situated in Colonia Caroya, Córdoba.

Activity proposed in their course books: Describe your city.

**STUDENT 1** Text 1

there is houses, there isn't cinema,they are school, they aren't sport center

STUDENT 1 Text 2

There are houses and schools. There isn't a cinema or sport center but thre are people running in the park. It's windy. It's dark. There are nice mountains

**STUDENT 2** Text 1

there is a river, there isn't castle, there are some houses, there are shops, there aren't shopping, there aren't churches, there isn't football stadioum

STUDENT 2 Text 2

There is a river and there is a castle.and there are dogs, and people in the park. It's raining.There are a lot of shops, churches and shoppings. There is a football stadium

**STUDENT 3** Text 1

there is a cinema, there are some houses, there isn't any beach, there aren't any rivers

STUDENT 3 Text 2

There are a lot of cinemas and there are some shops and there are some houses. There is a river but there is a beach. People are happy. Dogs are running in the park. The moon is beautiful

**STUDENT 4** Text 1

 there is a church, there is a cinema, there isn't any football stadium, there isn't any beach, there are supermarket, there are sport centre, there aren't any building,

there aren't any castle

STUDENT 4 Text 2

There are a lot of buildings, there are a lot of house. There aren't any castleland there aren't a sport centre. There are churches. There are cinemas and there isn't any beach. There is a river big. There are beautiful lights. There are mountains.

**STUDENT 5** Text 1

there is supermarket, there are houses, there are any bus station, there isn't football stadium

STUDENT 5 Text 2

There are supermarkets, there are a lot of houses, there are football stadiums, but there isn't supermarket
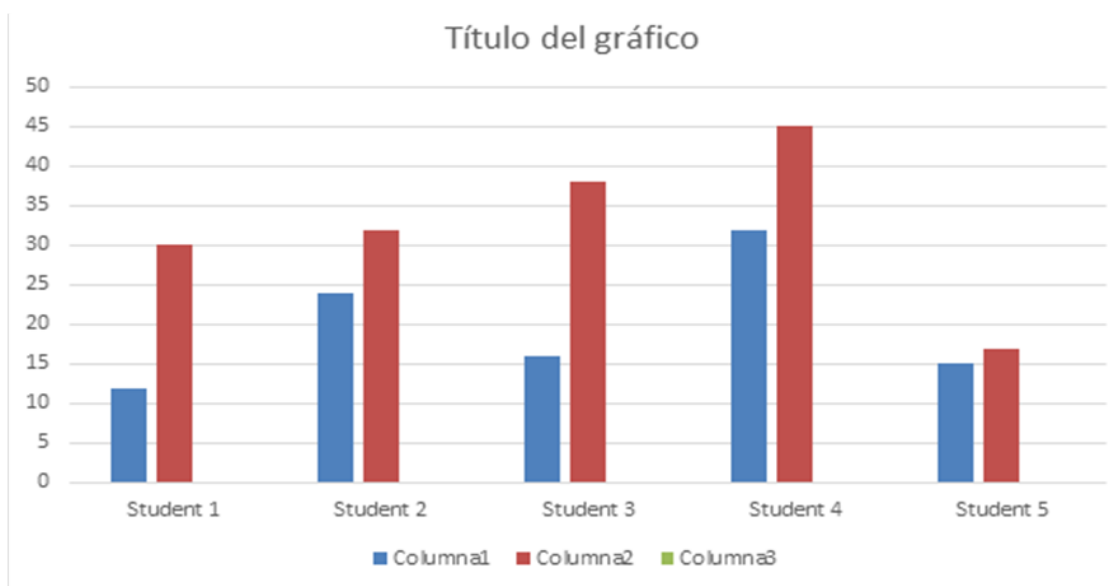


Graphic 3 representing number of words in 1st year students' writings (Activity: Describe your city)

**STUDENT  6** Text 1

there is school, there is stadium, there is houses, there are baskquetball, there isn't a beach, here is cinema, there isn't churches, there is café, there is supermarkets

STUDENT 6 Text 2

There are a lot of school, there are some houses, there are some café too. But there isn't churches, there aren't supermarket any. There are football stadium too. There are parks, there is a beautiful river

**STUDENT  7** Text 1

there are many houses, there are four supermarkets, there are lots shops, there are churches

STUDENT 7 Text 2

There is a beach,there are boats next to the beach. There are five schools, There are a lot of cafes, there are a lot of churches, there are football stadium too but there isn't a museum,there aren't a supermarket. There are some shops

**STUDENT 8** Text 1

there is a river, there is a park, there are houses, there aren't football stadium, there aren't a school, there aren't shops, there isn't some houses. There isn't swimming pool, there isn't river

STUDENT 8 Text 2

There are a lot of houses and there are a lot of shops in the mountains. But there isn't any supermarkets. There are a swimming pool. And there is a beach, and boats. There are schools, and there is a cafe

**STUDENT 9** Text 1

There are schools and churches in the city. But there isn't a castle. There isn't a river but there is a swimming pool.

STUDENT 9 Text 2

There are people in the park. People are happy. It's windy. There are a lot of mountains. There is a river and boats but there aren't any swimming pool.

**STUDENT 10** Text 1

There isn't a football stadium, and castles. There is a bus station, there are a lot of schools and there are two sports centre.

STUDENT 10 Text 2

There are beautiful mountains, there are lights in the city at night. There are people in the boats. There are cinemas and cafes. But there isn't football stadium.
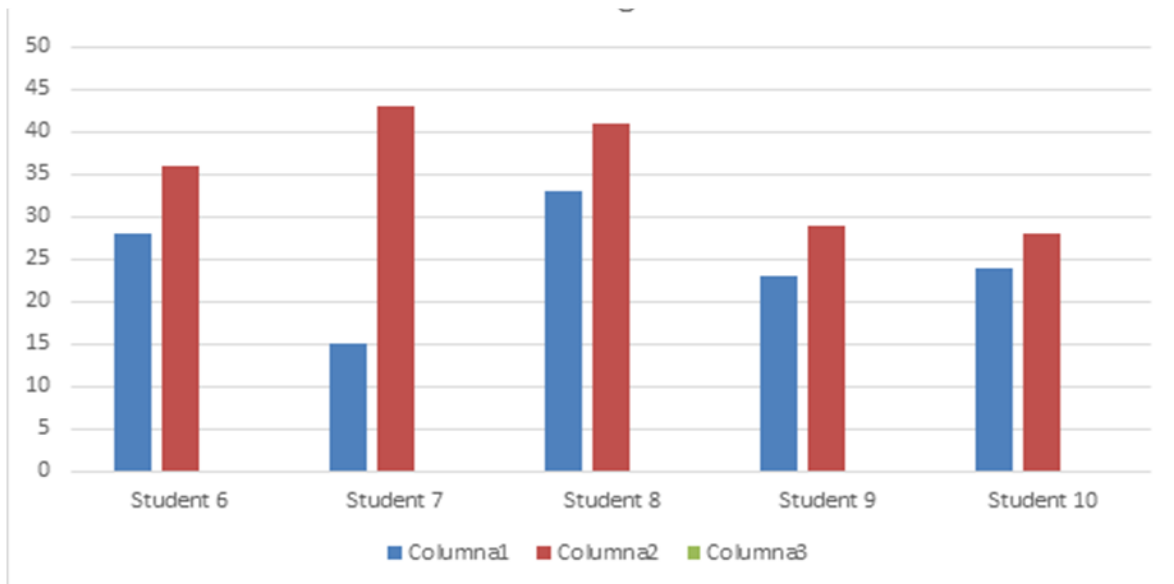


Graphic 4 representing number of words in 1st year students' writings (Activity: Describe your city)

Word bank: Park-house- markets-museum - beach- church- supermarket-football stadium- cinema- café- sport centre- bus station- castle- school- shops -swimming pool- river- and- but- too- any- or – a lot of- some

Activity: Describe the city.
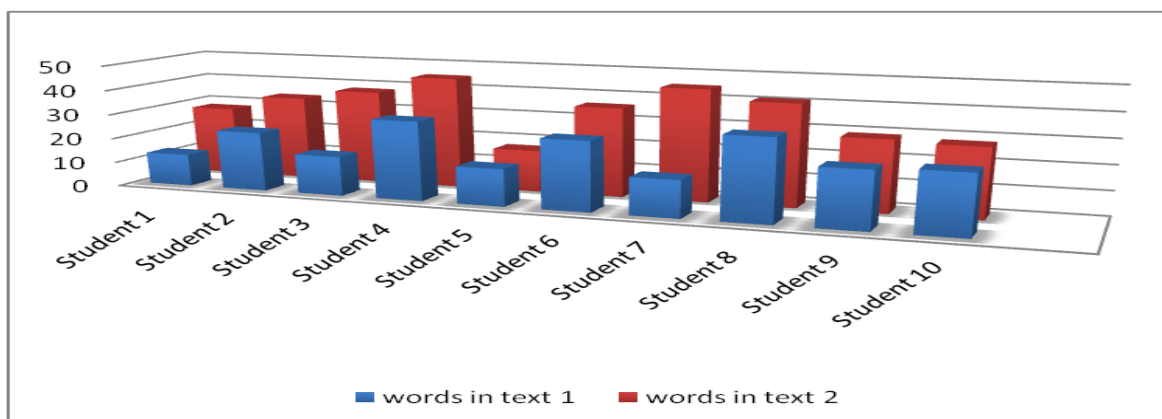
Graphics 3 and 4 representing 1st year students' production (writing task

in which they describe a city).


 Texts produced by 6th grade students from Jesús María primary school, a private school

situated in Córdoba city.

Activity proposed in their course books: Look at the texts about the jobs presented in the

unit, write a similar text for your mates to guess the job.


Painting used before the writing of texts number 2: *The Runaway* by Norman Rockwell.

**STUDENT 1** Text 1

He starts work at 7. He works in a shop and he wears a uniform. He works inside.

Text 2

He works in the morning and in the afternoon. He works in a bar. He wears a white uniform

and a hat. he prepare coffee and talk to people. He likes his job because he makes friends.


**STUDENT 2** Text 1

He works outside. he wears a blue uniform. He can drive a car or a motorbike.

Text 2

He wears a special uniform and he has a gun. He works long hours and help people. He works in the street. He go in a car. He like the job.

**STUDENT 3** Text 1

He is a police officer. He works outside. He wears a blue uniform.

Text 2

He is a police officer. He works in the streets and takes care people. He works a lot, in the day and at night. he like coffee. he dosen't like the job.

**STUDENT 4** Text 1

He works in shops or banks. he wears a blue uniform. He has a car with siren. He has a radio. He never work in the office.

Text 2

He works patrol shops. He is in the street. He wears a uniform. He sometimes is tired because work at night. He help persons with problems. he works with a car.

**STUDENT 5** Text 1

He works in a shop. He assist people. he works inside and he wears a white uniform. He starts work at 8.

Text 2

He works in a café. He prepare coffee. He listen to people. he wears a white uniform and he like the job. He is friendly.

**STUDENT 6 -** Text 1

This person works outside in a car. He always wears a uniform. He work in the day and in the night.

Text 2

He works in the streets. He works long hours and patrol the streets, and he is sometimes tired. He can drive a car and drink coffee. he wears a blue uniform and he likes the job.

Word Bank:

In the morning, in the afternoon, at night, listen to people, like his/her job, work in the streets, work long hours, patrol, take care, make friends, have friends, tired, coffee, in a café, in a bar, prepare coffee, serve people, talk to clients, helpful, friendly.
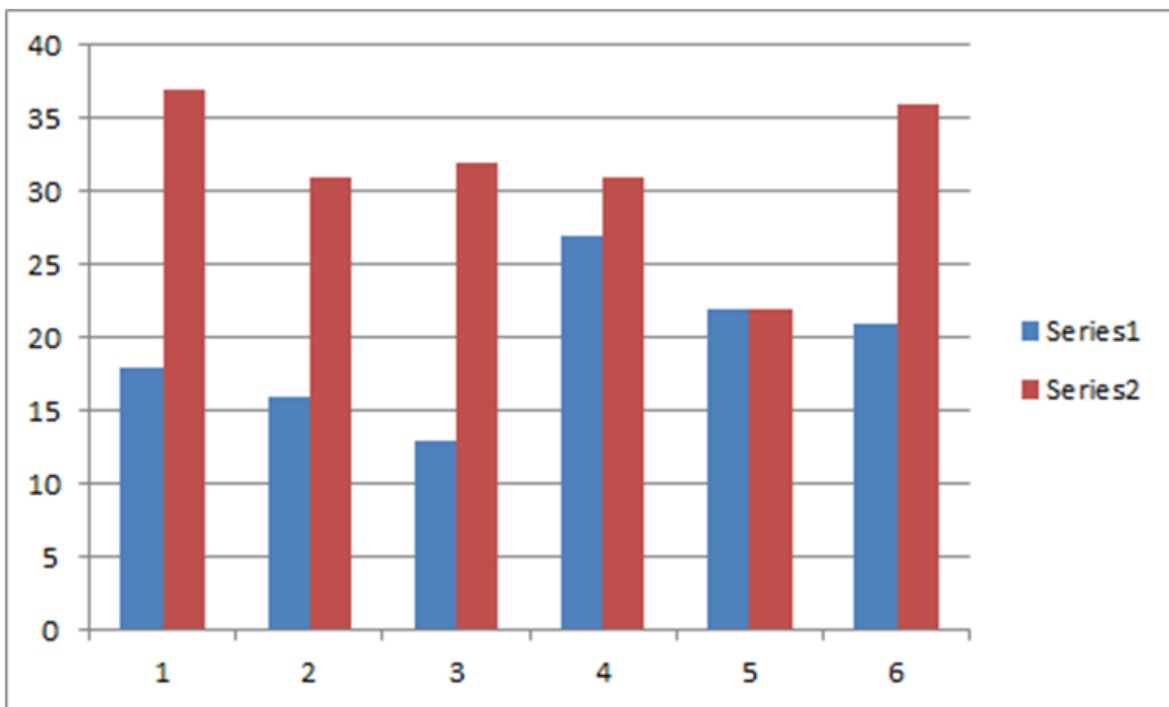


Graphic 5 representing the number of words in 6th grade students' production (writing task

in which they are asked to write about a person's job).

When analyzing the texts about a person's job, we could note that in texts number 2 learners tried to include time expressions, as well as expressions like "work long hours" or "work a lot". As a result, their texts were more complete and meaningful than their first versions. Some learners also stated if the person liked or did not liked the job; sharing their personal view. Their second drafts had a different purpose, writers needed to provide more details than in their first texts. In the end, most of the texts were longer and more personal.

Texts produced by 6<sup>th</sup> grade students from Jesús María school, a private school situated in Córdoba city.

Activity proposed in their course books: Write about your favorite star.

Painting used before the writing of texts number 2: Dora Maar Au Chat by Pablo Picasso.

**STUDENT 1** – Text 1

My favorite band is Cold Play. They play the guitars and piano. They are 4 in the band.

Text 2

My favorite band is Cold Play:

They are a band. They are from the G.B. They names are Chris Martin, Guy Berryman, Jon Buckland and Will Chapion. They play the 2 guitar, piano and singer. their famous songs are Paradise, adventure of a lifetime. His band started in 1996.

**STUDENT 2** – Text 1

My favorite star is Lionel Messi. He is from Argentina he's 29 years old. He's got one son. He's play in Barcelona.

Text 2

My favorite star is Lionel Messi. He's young and short. He's from Argentina and he live in Spain. He play for Barcelona. He's got one son. He's got one dog and new car. He can play football very good, he's got five balls gold.

**STUDENT 3** – Text 1

My favorite band is dosogas. They are youtubers. They are from Uruguay. They are 22 years old.

Text 2

My favorite band is dosogas. They are famous singers in you tube. they are youtubers and are 22 years old. Their names are Mathi and Fede. They are talls and good-looking. They have got brown hair. Mathi has got green eyes and Fede has got brown eyes.

**STUDENT 4** – Text 1

My favorite star is Maluma. He's singer and from the Colombia. He's tall and thin.

Text 2

My favorite star is Maluma. He is maluma and singer and dancer. He's from Colombia and he's 24 years . He's tall. He's got short hair and brown eyes. He's got beard. He's very popular. He likes dancing.

**STUDENT 5** – Text 1

My favorite star is Shakira. She's from Colombia. She's beautiful. She can dance and can sing.

Text 2

My favorite is Shakira. She's a famous singer. She's from Colombia and she's 32 years old. She's young and tall. She plays the guitar and dances. She sings with Prince Royce and Carlos Vives.

**STUDENT 6** – Text 1

I like Ariana Grande. She's singer and actor. She's 25 years old. She's fantastic singer.

Text 2

My favorite singer is Ariana Grande. She's a famos actress, she acted in Sam and Cat and Victorious. She's from the USA, she's 27 years old. She sang songs "Problem" "Break Free" and "Side to Side". She's toll and beautiful. She's fantastic.

**STUDENT 7** - Text 1

My favorite star is Jesse y Joy. They are singers and they play the piano. They good singers.

Text 2

My favorite band is Jesse and Joy. They are brother and sister. my favorite song is "Corre" and "Me soltaste". I'm going to describe jesse, he's tall, bare, thin. He bears a beard and he play the piano. Now i'm going to describe her Joy. She's short and thin. She sings and play the guitar. you have a very beautiful voice!

**STUDENT 8** - Text 1

My favorite singer is Cnco. He is a dancing and write music. He libes in Puerto rico. My favorite song is Regeton lento.

Text 2

My favorite band is Cnco. They are from puerto Rico. They sing and dance and they are famous. They are 18 year old. They are good-looking and good dancers.

**STUDENT 9** - Text 1

My favorite star is Coldplay. They are band. They play the piano and guitars. They are from Ingland. My favorite song is Hymn for the weekend.

Text 2

My favorite is: coldplay. They are from Ingland. They are a pop rock band. The singer is Cris Martin. He's 40 he's young and tall. He's plays the piano, guitar, clarinet, mandolin, organ and sings. My favorite song is: Hymn for the weekend.

**STUDENT 10**- Text 1

My favorite band is twenty one pilots. They are from USA the singer is Tyler Joseph. He's short. My favorite song is Stressed out.

Text 2

My favorite band is twenty one pilots. They are Tyler Joseph and Josh Dun. They sing and play the drums. They sing rap and they are from USA. They are short. they have black hair. They like the color black and the Rolling stones.

Word Bank: (black) hair, (brown) eyes, tall, short, young, old, thin, slim, muscular,

good-looking, popular, famous, singer, dancer, artist, actor/ actress, like (dancing), play the

(guitar), drums, piano.
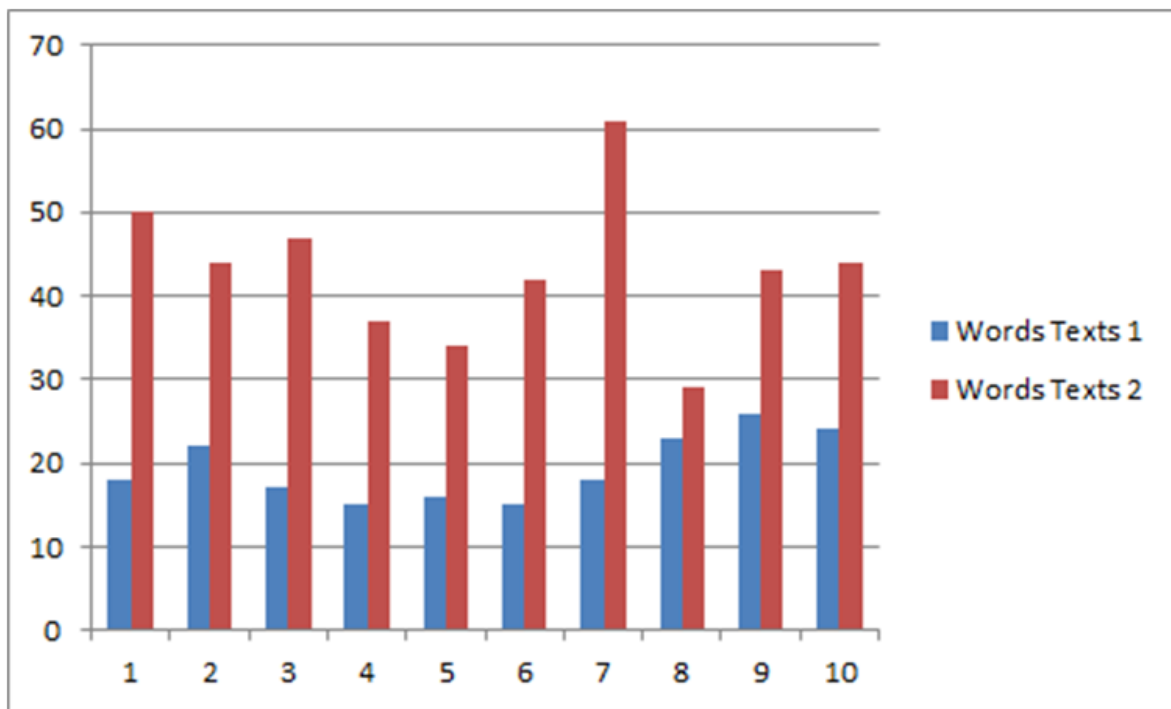


Graphic 6 representing number of words in 6th grade students' production (writing about

their favorite stars or celebrities)

Texts produced by 1st years students from a rural school in Colonia Caroya.

The painting is: "The First Family."

Painter: Ron Keas.

Activity 1: Write about your family.


Activity 2 after the presentation of the painting: Write about Obama's family. You can use
the words in the bank to help you.

**STUDENT 1**- Text 1

In my family there is my mother, my father, my sister and Tomás

Text 2

In Obama's familia there is one mother, one father, and two sisters. The father is the President of the United States

**STUDENT 2-** Text 1

In my house, I live with my mother and my brother. I don't have sisters.

Text 2

Obama lives with her daughters, and her wife. They live in the EEUU in the Black House

**STUDENT 3** -Text 1

I live with my mother, my sister, my father and my brother. I live in Jesus Maria.

Text 2

I like Obama. He lives with his family in the USA. He lives with her family. Her wife is beautiful. They are in a park. They are happy.

**STUDENT 4-** Text 1

I live in Colonia Caroya. My mother is 40. My father is 41. My sister is 9 and I am 12.
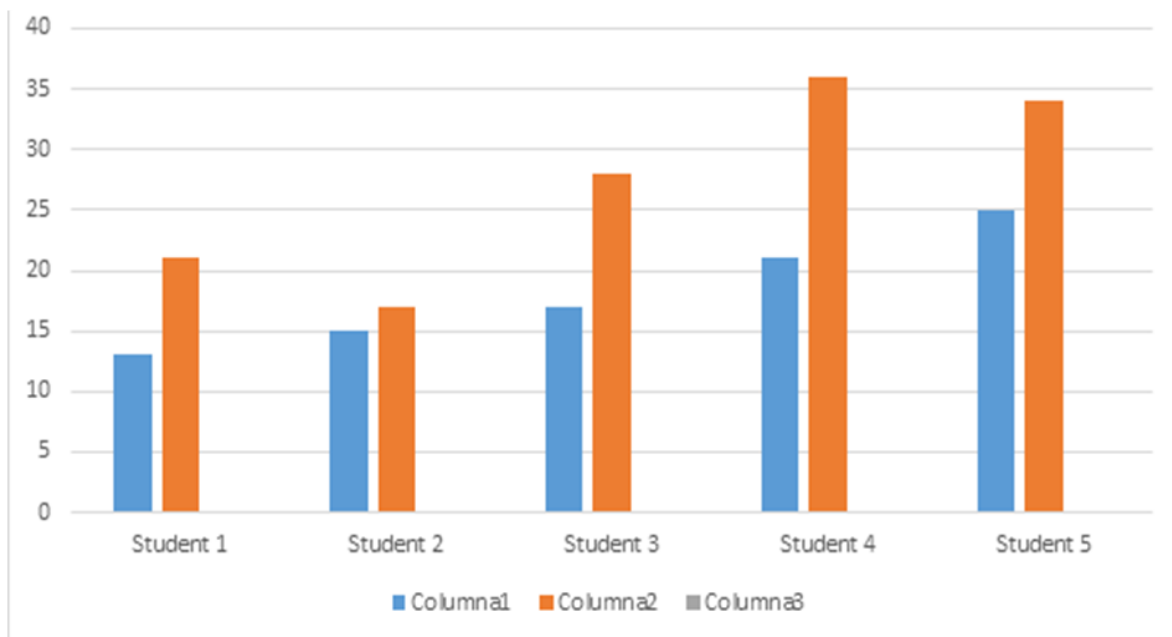
Text 2

Obama is American. He lives in the USA. He is happy. He lives with his family. He has two daughters and a wife. His daugther are 15 and 18. He is 55 and his wife is 52.

**STUDENT 5-** Text 1

I am Julieta. I live in Sinsacate with my family. I live in my house. I live with my mum, my sister and my dad.

Text 2.

He is Obama. He was the president of the USA. He is 55. His daughters are 15 ad 18. His wife Michelle is 52. They are happy. They live in EEUU. They are American.



Graphic 7 representing the number of words in 1st year student´s writings. (Activity: describe a family)

**STUDENT 6-** Text 1

I am Marcos. I live in Jesus Maria with my father and my mother.

Text 2

Obama is the president of the USA. He lives in Washington with his family. In the picture they are in the park. The day is sunny. They are happy.

**STUDENT 7-** Text 1

Hi! I am Sofia. My house is in Colonia Caroya. My family is big. I have one brother and two sisters. My father lives in Jesus Maria, but I live with my mother.

Text 2

Michelle and Obama are Americans. They live in Washington. They have two daughters. Malia is 18 and Sasha is 15. Michelle is 52, and Obama is 55. They are happy in the park. They are a nice family.

**STUDENT 8-** Text 1

I am 13. I am Pedro. I live in Colonia Caroya with my family.

Text 2

Obama and his family are in a very nice park. They live in the USA. They are happy. They live in the White House.

**STUDENT 9 -** Text 1

I am Catalina. In my family, we are four. My mother, my father, my sister and me. We all live in Jesus Maria near my school.
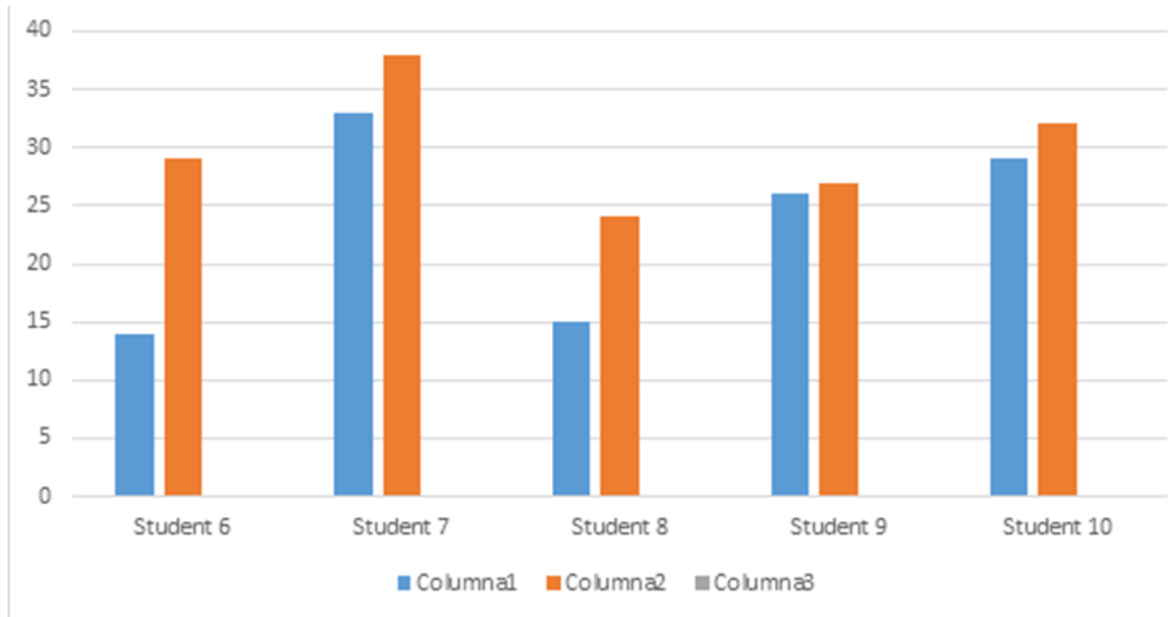
Text 2

I like Obama. He is from the USA. He was born in Hawaii. He has two daughters. And his wife Michelle. They live in The White House.

**STUDENT 10-**  Text 1

I am Zoe. I live in a house with my mother and my sister. I have a nice family. I have a aunt and three uncles. I love them!

Text 2

In the picture Obama is in the park with his family. He is happy. I like the painting. Obama's daughter love him. His daughter are Malia and Sasha. His wife is Michelle.

Graphic 8 - 1st year students - Activity: describe a family.

**STUDENT 11-**Text 1

I live in a nice house in Colonia Caroya. I have a small family but it is nice.

Text 2

The painting in beautiful. I can see Obama with his wife and daughters. Obama is a very intelligent man.

**STUDENT 12-** Text 1

 In my family we are four. My sister, me and my mother and my grandmother.

Text 2

In Obama's picture there are four people. Obama, his wife, and her daughters. Malia is 18 and Sasha is 15. His daughters are nice.

**STUDENT 13-**   Text 1

Hi! I am Agustina. I have three brothers and eleven cousins. We are a very big family.

Text 2

In the picture there are four people. They are a very famous family. Obama is the president of the USA. The picture is nice. I like it.

**STUDENT 14-**  Text 1

I am Manuel. I live in Jesus Maria, Argentina. I live in a small house. We are four in my family, my mother, my father and my brother.
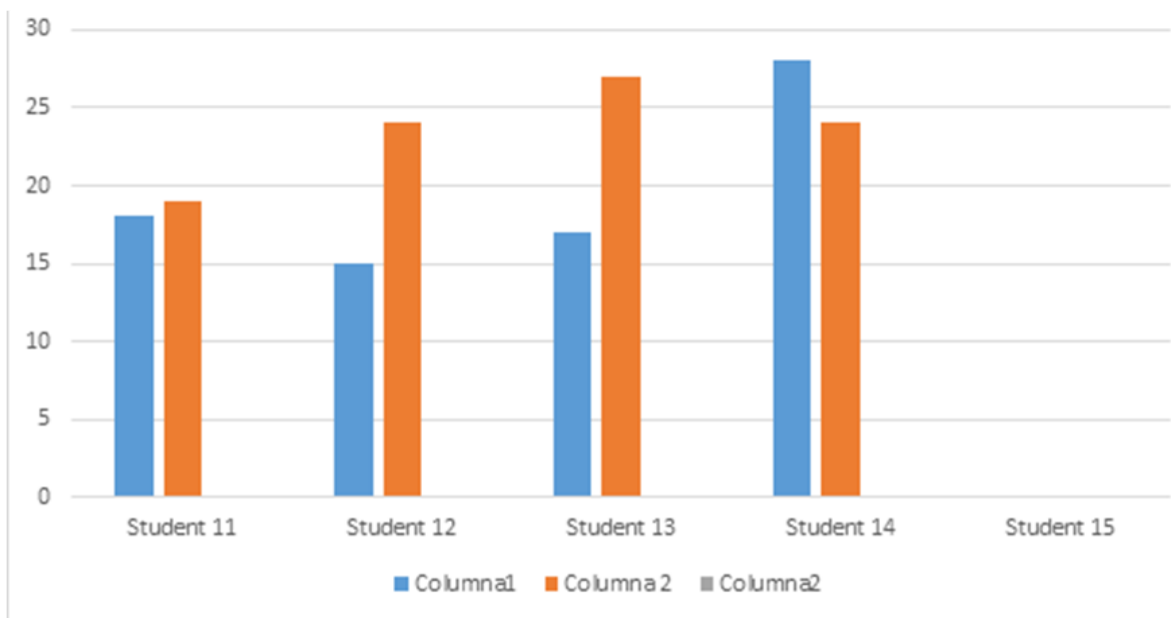
Text 2

They are in a park in the USA. Obama was born in Hawaii. He is a lawyer. He has two daughters, Sasha and Malia. The mother is Michelle.

**STUDENT 15-**   Text 1

I am Maria Clara. I live in Jesús María. In my house, we are five. My mum, my dad, me, and my two brothers.

Text 2

I like the picture. In the picture I can see a family. It is Obama's family. They are in the park. They are going to have lunch. They are doing a pic nic.



Graphic 9 - 1st year students - Activity: Describe a family

**STUDENT 16-**  Text 1

I am Paulina. I live in Colonia Caroya. I like my family. We are five, my dad, my mum, my sister, my brother and me.

Text 2

The painter is Ron Keas. I like his painting. The painting is "The First Family". The paintor likes Obama. He painted a lot of pictures about Obama.

**STUDENT 17** - Text 1

Hi! I'm Candelaria. I live in Jesus Maria with my family. I go to school every day. I have one sister, and two brother. I live with my mum, my dad and my grandmother.

Text 2

I like the painting. In the painting Obama is with his family. Hi is in a park in Washington. He has two daughters. I like the painter of the paintings.

**STUDENT 18-** Text 1

I live in Jesus Maria. I am 13 years old. I am Virginia. I have a beautiful family. I like going to the Shopping and to the cinema with them.

Text 2

Obama likes going to the park with his family. They are happy . He is in the park with Sasha and Malia, her daughters. I think that they like going there.

**STUDENT 19.** Text 1

Hello, I'm Lucila. My family is big. I have three sisters and one brother, my mum and my dad live with us in Jesus Maria.

Text 2

Obama lives in Washington with his family. He lives with Michelle, Malia and Sasha. I like Obama and I like the painter. Ron Keas likes Obama and he paints a lot about Obama and his life.
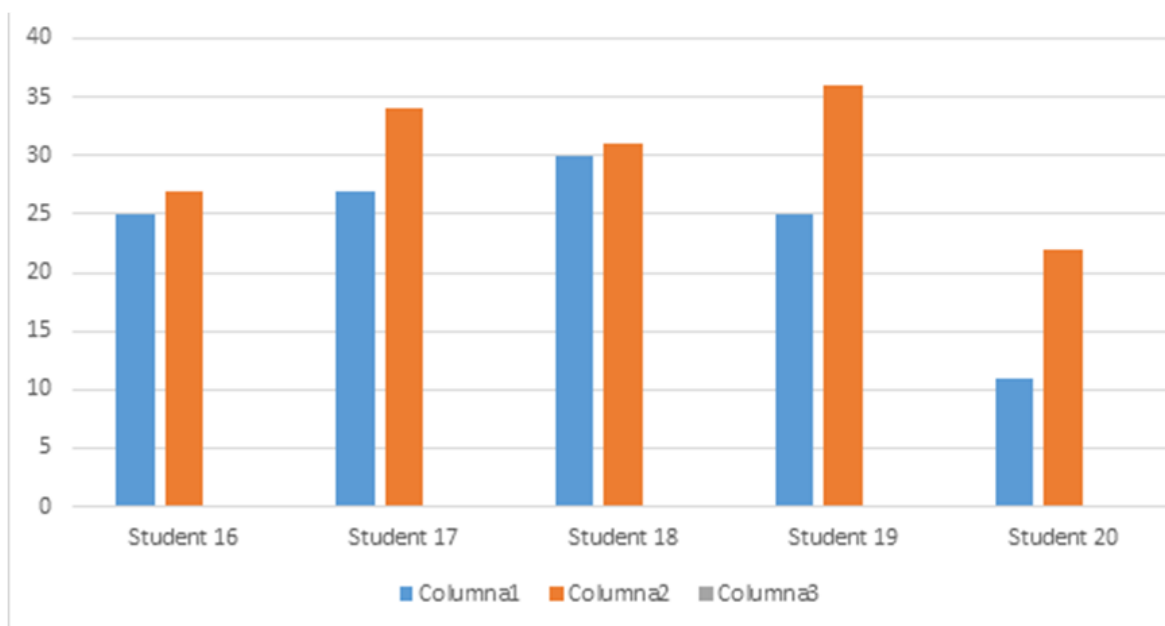
**STUDENT 20 -** Text 1

I'm Peter. I live with my family. I like my family.

Text 2

I´m Peter and he is Obama. We live with our families. He has a small family and I have a big family.

Word Bank: family members. Possessive adjectives.

Graphic 10 - 1st year students - Activity. Describe a family

Specifically, when students wrote about the activities they do during the weekend, they included more information in the second text. Here, it is possible to see some examples:

Student 1: "Sunday is hot"

Student 2: "Sunday was sunny"

Student 4: "It was a sunny day"

Student 7: "It hoy day"

They also organized the information in a better way, using  connectors and trying to order the activities they had done carefully. This is the case of students 1, 3, 5, 8 and 10. Also, they used the expressions from the word bank created during the oral debate (except students 3 and 9).

What we can observe in texts number 2, in which students described a city is that

the connectors "and" and "but"were included in most of the cases. Students connected

information making their second version of the writing task more complete. For example:

Student 1: "There isn't a cinema or sport center but there are people running in the park."

Student 4: "There are cinemas and there isn't a beach".

Student 6: "There are schools and there is a café".

Student 10: " There are cinemas and cafés. But there isn't football stadium."

In this way, students expressed their ideas more naturally. When we speak our

mother tongue, we constantly connect ideas using connectors. Some of the second

texts contain the quantifier "a lot of" or the adverb "too", which also allowed writers to

describe places more clearly.

When students tell of a person's job, they provide general information about the

profession. The first texts include the place where people work, the clothes they

wear, and the activities people do at their jobs. When we analyzed the second

version of these texts, we noticed that students added useful information related to

the time of the day when the person works, and if the person spends many hours at

work. Also, they commented on whether the person really liked his/her job. In this

way, students expressed their personal thoughts about the job. To exemplify this,

there are two students who wrote about a police officer: one of the students said "he

work long hours and help people (...) He like the job", and the other student

remarked "He works a lot, in the day and at night (...) he doesn't like the job".

When we analysed the texts about families, we observed that,  in the graphs, there

is a considerable increase of words in almost all the second texts students wrote. In

the first texts, we found that learners wrote about themselves, like a personal

presentation, giving basic and precise information about their family. In their

writings included their names, their age, and mentioned some family members.

When reading and analyzing the texts, we observed that the message conveyed is brief, clear and simple; the sentences they wrote are short. In texts number 2, we could say that students benefited from the oral debate as we presented the painting and ave students information about Obama's family, the names of their daughters and his wife, their ages, and where they live. Taking all these into account at the moment of writing, students knew what to write about, that is to say, they had an idea in mind to express.

Student 14: "They are in a park in the USA. Obama was born in Hawaii. He is a lawyer. He has two daughters, Sasha and Malia. The mother is Michelle".

Student 16: "The painter is Ron Keas. I like his painting. The painting is "The First Family". The painter likes Obama. He painted a lot of pictures about Obama".

Besides, in the following examples, learners wrote not only about the family portrait, but also what the family or a member of the family inspired them.

Student 12: "...His daughters are nice".

Student 18: "Obama likes going to the park with his family. They are happy . He is in the park with Sasha and Malia, her daughters. I think that they like going there".

When students wrote about their favorite stars, they added more information in their second

drafts, most of them included some details about the physical appearance of the famous people. Many students wrote about what the famous person liked, or what made them special. To exemplify this, we have chosen the following extracts:

Student 4: He's got short hair and brown eyes. (...) He likes dancing.

Student 7: You have a very beautiful voice (referring to the singer)

Student 8: They are good-looking and good dancers.

Student 10: They like the colour black and the Rolling Stones.

After working with the paintings:

- Students tend to be willing to write, due to the fact that they seem to have in mind

    what they want to say after participating in the oral debate

- Their message tends to be more personal, related to their everyday experiences.

- In general, there is a moderate increase in the number of words used in texts number

    2.

- Their ideas seem to be more complete; they include in the second texts words like

adjectives, or connectors that help them convey their messages more effectively.

- The word bank helps students to recall words or structures from the book unit being

dealt with at the moment of the activity, or even words or structures that can be new, or

belong to previous units in the book. Students use these words or phrases confidently in

most of the cases, since the activities included in the presentation of the painting, make

them review their use in examples during the oral debate (the word banks is not previously

set by the teacher; it is created during the presentation of the painting with the participation

of students and teachers).

**Conclusion**

All in all, as the graphics show, in almost all of the cases the number of words used

by students increased. In this context, we can say that their message ended up being

more personal. Students expressed their opinions, or made comments related to their

personal experiences or beliefs. This is clearly shown when they wrote the second

text about their favourite stars or about a person's job. They included sentences that

were not just the factual description of a famous person, or basic information about

a profession. We believe that we helped students in their way to use the language to

express themselves thoroughly.

Texts number 2 can be said to be more coherently written, since the writers had in mind what they wanted to express. The presentation of the painting and the debate offered assistance to guide learners to know what they could write about, in relation to the topic being dealt with. The information in these texts is well organized too. For example, the actions in the past when students wrote about their weekends were better sequenced.

Finally, students could use some specific vocabulary items that they brought up during the presentation of the painting, as they asked for words they needed. There was not a set of pre-selected words or expressions. This could be clearly seen in the description of the city, and the texts about the families.

## References

Ausubel, D. (1960). *The use of advanced organizers in the learning and retention*

    *of    meaningful verbal material*. Journal of Educational Psychology, 51,

    p. 267- 272.

Bradford, C. (2011), Reaching the Visual Learner: Teaching Property Through

    Art. Retrieved from https://ssrn.com/abstract=587201

Castells, P., Devine, J., & Eskey, D. (1998). *Interactive approaches to second*

    *language reading*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University

    Press.

Childers, P. & Hobson, E. (1998). *Articulating: Teaching writing in a visual*

    *world.*Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Coady, J. (1980) Rumelhart, D.E. (1980) Schema theory and ESL reading

    pedagogy. In Carrel, P. and Eistherhold, J (Ed.), Interactive Approaches to

    Second

    language reading (pp. 73-92). Cambridge: CUP.

Ehrenworth, M. (2003). *Looking to write: Students writing through the visual arts*.

    Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New

    York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (2006). *Multiple intelligences: New Horizons*. New York: Basic Books.

Goodman, K. S. Rumelhart, D.E. (1980) Schema theory and and ESL

reading pedagogy. In Carrel, P. and Eistherhold, J (Ed.), *Interactive Approaches to*

*Second language reading* (pp. 73-92). Cambridge: CUP.


Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing.* England: Longman.

Hutchinson, E. (2008). *Dimensions of Human Behaviour*.  Virginia Commonwealth

University. SAGE Publications.

Larsen-Freeman, D. & Long, M. (1994). *Metodología de la investigación sobre la*

*adquisición de segundas lenguas. Introducción al estudio de la adquisición*

*de segundas lenguas*. Madrid: Gredos.

Mayer, R. & Sims, V. (1994). *For whom is a picture worth a thousand words?*

*Extensions of a dual-coding theory of multimedia learning.* Journal of

Education Psychology, *86,* 389-401.

Oxford, R. & Scarcella, R. (1996).*The tapestry of language learning.*  California:

Heinle and Heinle.

Spratt, M., Pulverness, A., & Williams, M. (2005). *The TKT course: Teaching*

*knowledge test.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ur, P. (2012). *A course in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press.