

Process Writing and the Development of Grammatical Competence

Desarrollo de la competencia gramatical en el contexto de la producción escrita

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This article presents the results of an action research study whose purpose was to apply alternatives for the development of grammatical competence in a group of third semester students of a Morphosyntax I course in an English language teaching undergraduate program at a Colombian public university. Given the fact that the teaching of grammar has for a long time been a polemical issue, the study intended to find an effective and meaningful way to develop this competence in a contextualized manner and writing was the selected medium. The results indicate that the use of writing activities to develop grammar generates a mutually enriching process as both linguistic elements are enhanced.

Key words: Communicative competence, grammatical competence, process writing

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de un estudio de investigación-acción cuyo propósito fue aplicar alternativas para el desarrollo de la competencia gramatical en un grupo de estudiantes de tercer semestre de un curso de Morfosintaxis I en un programa de Licenciatura en inglés en una universidad pública colombiana. Dado que la enseñanza de la gramática ha sido tradicionalmente un tema polémico, el propósito de este estudio era hallar una manera efectiva y significativa para desarrollar la competencia gramatical de manera contextualizada, siendo la escritura el contexto seleccionado. Los resultados indican que el uso de actividades de escritura para desarrollar la gramática genera un proceso mutuamente enriquecedor por cuanto ambos elementos mejoran.

Palabras clave: competencia comunicativa, competencia gramatical, proceso de escritura

Introduction

While teaching English in an English language teaching (ELT) undergraduate program at a public university I met some groups of students whose participation in class—academic and communicative performances—was in many cases affected and impoverished due to their low level of grammatical competence. Considering these situations and the fact that these

students were being prepared to be English teachers, I was convinced grammar was a weakness, an unrecognized “need-to-improve” that these learners had in order to be competent users of the language. It is worrying when future English teachers advance in their studies without showing an adequate level of grammatical competence as there is a big risk of fossilization and the language proficiency they acquire will be the language they teach.

Bearing all the previous in mind, I decided to carry out a study in order to enhance the English level of those learners by paying specific attention to grammar as a fundamental constituent of communicative competence. The project was developed as an action research study since it originated from a problem found in the teacher-researcher’s teaching context as there was a need to find alternatives of solution. The participants in this research study were learners of the Morphosyntax I course in the second semester of the year 2008. The project aimed at answering the following research question: What happens when grammar instruction is addressed in the context of written production? The research objectives were:

- To enhance grammatical competence by addressing grammar in the context of written production.
- To raise awareness of the writing process to produce written texts.

The Problem

After having taught courses of elementary, intermediate, and advanced English, general and academic composition, and Morphosyntax I and II for three years in the ELT undergraduate program where the research study was carried out, I noticed that a recurrent problem among different groups of students at elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels was that their participation in class—their academic and communicative performances—was in many cases seriously affected by their low level of grammatical competence. Some of the problems caused by grammar inaccuracy were the abandonment of ideas, language switch, and long periods of hesitation after which generally there was not much to say. All this happened while students were speaking and had problems identifying and selecting the right words and ways to put them together in order to carry out communicative acts. These grammatical difficulties also hindered students’ written texts as their errors made it difficult to understand what they were trying to express, as shown in the sample text below in which a student of the Morphosyntax I course was asked to summarize a short story called “The Tempest.”

The ship didn’t sick totaly. Henry asked the capitan what it was happening, but He didn’t answer. The compass was around affter the five minutes. It was going back to normality. After they could continue when their travel to Florida.

Writing along with speaking were the two skills where grammatical inaccuracy was evident, but this problem also affected their whole communicative competence. It was

worrying that some students had reached the advanced levels of English presenting these types of difficulties, and their errors had become fossilized, and if that situation was not faced seriously, the same phenomenon could continue happening with the newer groups of students entering the program every semester.

Rationale for Grammar Instruction

When discussing the place of grammar in ELT, it is important to acknowledge the existing impression among many English teachers who believe that communicative language teaching and grammar are two worlds apart and that it is unacceptable to care about grammar if you are working with a communicative methodology. All the opposite, as Hedge (2002) claims that it is wrong to believe that communicative language teaching does not pursue “a high standard of formal correctness,” (p. 47) and defends the idea of promoting accuracy while being tolerant to errors and risks as crucial steps for developing communicative competence.

Sesnan (2001) uses a metaphor to describe the negative effects of speaking a language without paying attention to its grammar. He claims that if we see language as a “building” then the words are the “building blocks or bricks” and grammar will be “the architect’s plan” (p. 54). From the previous, one can ask whether an architect would be able to make a building just with a million bricks and without any plan, and the answer is likely to be negative; in the same way it can be concluded that if a person knows thousands of words in English but does not know how to organize them or what to do with them, then that person cannot speak English. The same author advocates the importance of correction in the process of learning another language, and just with this position there may be a clash with experienced teachers who are convinced that correcting students’ grammatical errors is just a way to traumatize or “stigmatize” them and that these corrections must be forbidden.

In dealing with communicative language teaching, Savignon (2001) emphasizes the necessity to care about form in communicative acts. That is why it is vital to find ways to integrate grammar teaching—where the focus is on form—with practical activities focusing on meaning, in other words, we have to promote the use of the language in a meaningful but at the same time accurate way.

Eskey (1983) mentions that in the past it was accepted that by learning the forms communication would emerge; nowadays many people believe that by attempting communication, command of the forms will develop. However, these positions represent extreme points as both communication and grammar do not necessarily take care of themselves, or at least this does not happen for many learners, and that is a fact we cannot ignore.

That is the situation that I personally experienced and it is why I am convinced we cannot take grammatical competence for granted; instead, we should be open minded in order to

identify when grammatical inaccuracy has become a problem in order to take action. It is not advisable to expect our learners to realize they have some errors and correct them by themselves, or worse, even expecting errors to disappear over time because if we adopt this position a bigger problem can appear as Pienemann (1984) emphasizes.

Communicative Competence

Hymes (1971), as a reaction to Chomsky's characterization of the linguistic competence of the "ideal native speaker," proposed the term *communicative competence* to represent the use of language in social context, or the observance of sociolinguistic norms and appropriateness. Later on, Savignon (1972) used the term "communicative competence" to characterize the ability of classroom language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to recite dialogs or perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge.

More recently Hedge (2002) states that communicative competence is related to the knowledge of a language and to the ability to put that knowledge into practice by using it to communicate with others in different contexts and situations, a position clearly resembling Hymes's.

Regarding communicative competence, the Common European Framework (CEF) of Reference for Languages, Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Council of Europe, 2001), states that "for the realisation of communicative intentions, users/learners bring to bear their general capacities together with a more specifically language-related communicative competence. Communicative competence in this narrower sense has the following components: linguistic competences, sociolinguistic competences, and pragmatic competences" (p. 108).

Linguistic Competences

The CEF (Council of Europe, 2001) describes the following categories as very useful for the linguistic description and analysis of a language and can therefore be regarded as linguistic competences: lexical competence, grammatical competence, semantic competence, phonological competence, orthographic competence, and orthoepic competence. For the purposes of this paper I will only focus on grammatical competence.

Grammatical competence. According to the CEF (Council of Europe, 2001), this competence is defined as knowledge of, and ability to use, the grammatical resources of a language.

Formally, the grammar of a language may be seen as the set of principles governing the assembly of elements into meaningful labeled and bracketed strings (sentences). Grammatical competence is

the ability to understand and express meaning by producing and recognizing well-formed phrases and sentences in accordance with these principles (as opposed to memorizing and reproducing them as fixed formulae). The grammar of any language in this sense is highly complex and so far defies definitive or exhaustive treatment. (pp. 101-118)

Ways to Approach Grammar in the Second or Foreign Language Classroom

Sesnan (2001) points out that English is perhaps the school subject with the largest number of different methodologies. And if we consider the teaching of grammar, it has evolved as new methodologies have appeared. With the appearance of the communicative approaches, the way to deal with grammar has changed even more. In the Colombian context for example, authors such as Mendoza (2005) have conducted research studies in order to explore alternatives to develop grammar. This author for instance studied the effects of implicit vs. explicit instruction of grammar and concluded that learners taught in explicit instruction achieve better results than those taught in implicit instruction. For many other ELT professionals however, what matters today is to promote in our students communication but not necessarily an accurate one, and this is how grammar has been relegated in the ELT field.

Hedge (2002) is an author who emphasizes that “the ability to communicate effectively in English is now a well-established goal in ELT” (p. 44). Taking into account this idea, one can ask whether the term “effectively” does not necessarily mean accurately or properly. In other words, is it not correct or logical to expect a person—who is said to communicate effectively—to do it accurately, using the appropriate vocabulary, pronunciation, tense form and word order—among some other conditions—to express his or her ideas? Does grammar not play an active and elementary role in successful and effective communication?

In the discussion for and against grammatical instruction, there is a growing acknowledgment nowadays that grammar must be taught and this must be done in context. There exist many proposals to deal with grammar which focus on the use of writing activities as proposed by Jago (2006), Patterson (2006), and even Celce-Murcia (as cited in Nunan, 1991). It is for this reason that I decided to link the development of grammar with the teaching of writing.

Teaching Grammar and Teaching Writing

The debate of how to teach grammar effectively can be directly linked to the development of writing because as Celce-Murcia (as cited in Nunan, 1991) stresses, “the receptive skills require less grammatical knowledge than the productive ones and, between the two

productive skills, writing is more grammatically demanding than speaking” (p. 134). In Colombia for example, authors such as Giraldo and Perry (2008) have recognized the importance of dealing with English as a second language (ESL), writing errors through appropriate techniques in order to avoid future and more complex difficulties in students at higher levels of instruction.

As the purpose of this research study was to develop grammatical competence in the context of written production, a *process and genre model* was followed to incorporate the teaching and practice of writing while at the same time developing grammatical competence.

The above-mentioned model is a combination of two well-known approaches to teach writing, the *process approach* and the *genre approach*. Harmer (2004) establishes that the process approach to teach writing identifies four stages which are, (1) planning, (2) drafting, (3) editing (reflecting and revising), and (4) final version. However, the existence of these stages does not mean that the writing process is linear; on the contrary, he calls this model the process wheel which means that writing is recursive and that writers can plan, draft, edit but also “re-plan, re-draft, and re-edit” (p. 6).

Yan (2005) explains that “according to Cope and Kalantzis (1993), the genre approach consists of three phases: (1) the target genre is modeled for the students, (2) a text is jointly constructed by the teacher and students, and (3) a text is independently constructed by each student” (p. 20). This same author emphasizes the importance that “social situations” as well as “particular purposes” have in writing.

As a result of combining the two approaches to develop writing, we have that the process-genre approach consists of these steps: “(1) preparation, (2) modeling and reinforcing, (3) planning, (4) joint constructing, (5) independent constructing, and (6) revising” (Yan, 2005, p. 20). As this model makes use of the processes of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing, it offers a great opportunity for developing grammatical competence as the students are exposed to meaningful and relevant feedback every time they create a new draft, thus, grammar can be taught in context, in this case in the context of written production.

Method

Type of Research

The research project followed an action research methodology as it aimed at finding solutions to a particular problem encountered in a given educational context, in this case a language classroom. Regarding this type of research, Nunan (1992) states that

[It] is carried out by practitioners rather than outside researchers; it is collaborative and it aims at changing things. A distinctive feature of action research is that those affected by planned changes

have the primary responsibility for deciding on courses of critically informed action which seem likely to lead to improvement, and for evaluating the results of strategies tried out in practice. (pp. 17-18)

Participants

This research study was carried out with a group of twenty two students of the third semester of an ELT undergraduate program at a public university in Florencia, Caquetá (Colombia). Eight of these students were men between the ages of 19 and 40 and the remaining fourteen learners were women whose ages ranged from 17 to 34; these students belong to socioeconomic strata levels 2 and 3.¹

Additionally, most of these students presented serious difficulties related to grammar which were more evident when they were asked to write a text. In the oral production activities only an average of four students participated while the other ones showed fear and remained silent. When asked about the reasons for that situation they manifested it was due to the way they had been taught in the previous semesters. Students claimed their classes of basic English were mainly taught in Spanish. The way they were evaluated also seemed to be a determinant factor as on the term exams no oral or listening sections were included. Students also assured the writing skill was not properly approached and for all these factors they felt insecure and considered those “weak” foundations of theirs were the main reason for which they could not perform very well in the third semester.

Research Stages

Diagnostic stage. From the analysis of ten journal entries and seven field notes (see Figures 1 and 2) written over a period of four weeks and used to gather general information about the events happening in the classes, a series of recurrent problems were identified.

From the analysis of the data collected through the journals and field notes it was detected that there was a group of students characterized by remaining silent, switching to Spanish very frequently, and showing a clear difficulty to state ideas. A survey was designed in order to find out the reasons for these situations and especially for these students’ low participation in class activities (see Appendix 1).

The results of the survey showed that the main reasons for students’ low participation in class were that even though they had many ideas to express, they did not know how to express them and as a result they ended up producing disorganized and unclear statements and this

¹ In Colombian socioeconomic stratification there are six levels—being 1 the lowest and 6 the highest—mainly used to differentially utilities fees and to collect taxes.

TEACHING JOURNALS		
DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION	ACTION PLAN
<p>Today the class was from 9.45 to 10.30 P.M. thirteen students attended the class the only exception was the student who is supposed to be getting married. During this class the aim was to emphasize more the topic of modals to give suggestions and for this we worked on a discussion about vacation plans and the class was focused on speaking. The students asked and answered questions related to a place they choose to go on vacation; they discussed things such as the type of clothes they should take there, the places to visit, the food to eat, and the activities to do. After this activity we had an oral practice in the form of a game called bottle roulette, here the students sitting in a circle had to answer some questions or give suggestions depending on a given situation according to a bottle that was rolled into the circle and once it stopped, the neck was pointing to a student who had to perform the activity</p>	<p>In the two exercises, there was one student who wanted to talk a lot and participate more than the others, and there were cases in which some of them were totally silent and I had to ask them some questions directly and wait until they gave the answer, because most of them took longer than others as they had to organize what they wanted to say and for this they required some help from other students. But in general, all the group seem to be using correctly and differentiating the modals studied, must, should and have to in different forms.</p>	<p>JE 11</p> <p>Reflecting a little bit on this class, again there seems to be a part in which I was acting as a controller but it doesn't mean that I was the center of the class, I consider the situation required my intervention to regulate the students' participation and involve the ones who didn't want to speak. Some of them said some sentences that were inaccurate and difficult to understand, for this, I sometimes repeated the sentence or made them repeat it in order to identify their error and thus correct it. But also the same students acted as monitors and correct the other learners' errors.</p>

Figure 1. Sample of a Journal Entry

FIELD NOTES RECORDING FORM	
NOTES	COMMENTS (Inferences or reflections)
<p>FIN 2</p> <p>The class started with 4 students who came on time, the others arrived within the next 10 minutes. One of them left at 6:55 and another at 6:57. They came back at 7:15 p.m.</p> <p>The last 5 who arrived used a dictionary in the class to do the exercises, occasionally the other students borrowed it to check the meaning of some words in English, and also in Spanish.</p> <p>In total there were 8 girls, only 4 of them brought the material to class unlike the others didn't bring anything. As a result the ones without any material had to join the others and receiving the homework was really time-consuming.</p> <p>Concerning the students, who left and came, and behind the others and didn't have a single paper. His contributions were limited to comments in Spanish about anything different from the class. His attitude is really disturbing.</p> <p>Moreover, by the middle of the class he took out some chewing gum and began chewing it. I told them that if they had something more important to do they could leave the classroom as I didn't need interruptions.</p>	<p>Same situation keeps happening almost every class in which the same group of students arrive late to class without materials, without homework. Their attitude is worrying. I have found that 5 students never do any homework.</p> <p>Perhaps the student with the most annoying attitude feels like there's nothing new for him and because of that he didn't need to be committed with the class. It is also worrying that his attitude seems to be influencing others who act like him.</p> <p>Lack of maturity is evident. He likes interrupting the class, making disgusting comments about others pretending to be funny. More than a challenge, having him in class is demotivating not only for me but for the classmates.</p>

Figure 2. Field Notes

was one of their biggest difficulties. Other reasons were that their vocabulary was poor and limited and their pronunciation was also poor. Students also mentioned that if they knew more vocabulary and how to make sentences correctly and if they had more time to organize their ideas, this situation could improve. Figure 3 presents a summary of these findings.

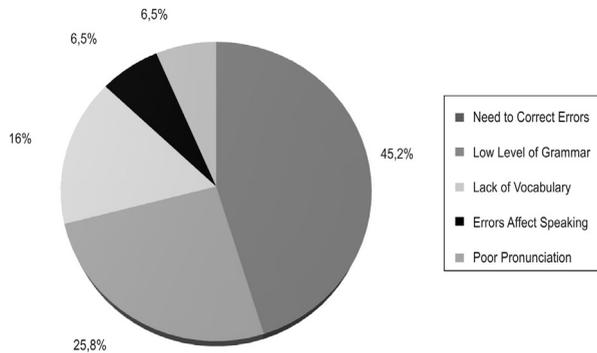


Figure 3. Reasons for Low Participation in Class

Regarding error correction, some students said they preferred to be corrected either by the teacher or classmates after the activity had ended while many others preferred to be corrected as soon as the error was made, but in general all of them considered that error correction was a strategy to help them improve the difficulties they presented.

Then, after having identified that the problems related to grammatical inaccuracy were common in spoken and written language, and taking into account students' answers to the survey, I decided to address the grammar problems in written production and for a three-week period, a classroom observation checklist (see Appendix 2) was used to gather information related to difficulties in this area. The results are stated in Figure 4.

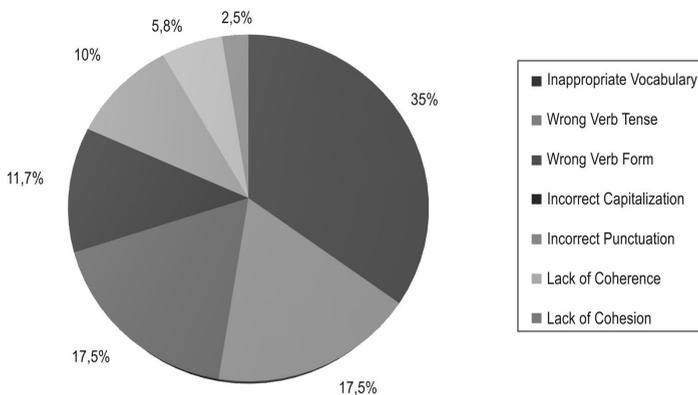


Figure 4. Difficulties in Written Production

The second phase of the study included the revision of literature to explore alternatives to teach grammar. An option for this was provided by the process and genre model which was used to incorporate the teaching and practice of writing while at the same time dealing with grammar topics.

The proposal included a series of workshops (see Appendix 3) implemented during the second semester of 2008 where students were provided with sample texts to be read, analyzed, and used as models from which they were required to write a similar text. These texts were revised and feedback about their content and structure was given. Errors were approached through the use of a correction code (see Appendix 4) which students were trained to employ. An analysis of learners' errors was also conducted and time in class was allotted for peer and self-correction and individual editing of compositions. Every written paper went through different versions in which learners progressively incorporated more details and elements according to the observations made and the topics studied until a final version was reached as in the examples shown in Figures 5 and 6.

^{cur} in this moment of the ^{cur} amazonia university
^{cur} specifically in the ^{cur} english program^{cur} the students are very
angry because the problems that are affecting
the quality & the program are without solution.
^{cur} the ^{cur} english program ^{cur} have much ^{cur} difficulty^{cur} as lack
the classroom and laboratory. ^{cur} other problem is the
^{cur} register^{cur} expensive^{cur} and the majority of students don't
have money and won't study the next semester.
^{cur} this situation ^{cur} have ^{cur} consequence as suspend the
class of ^{cur} ~~cur~~ program & approximately three
weeks. ^{cur} finally the managers ^{cur} of amazonia word
and of other program some days - finally
the managers solved the problems of classroom and
the cost register.
^{cur} the student of english are happy by the solution
but the students of other program (they) are
incomfor because they say ^{cur} than the register^{cur}
will increase.

Figure 5. First Draft of a Composition About the Problems Affecting Students

Finally an evaluation of the process was conducted employing self-assessment forms (Appendix 5), an observation checklist of students' progress in writing employed by the teacher (Appendix 6), and an observation form for class development used by an external observer (Appendix 7).

In this moment at the Amazonia University specifically in the English program the students are very angry because the problems that are affecting the quality of the program are without solution.

The English program has some problems as lack of classroom^{of} laboratory ^{SP} teachers. Other problems ^{is} the expensive register, and the majority of the students don't have money and won't study the next semester.

This situation has consequences for the students of English program because ~~stopped the~~ ^{W.O} class. ^{YOC} Approximately ^{is} weeks and half, and the other programs some days.

Finally the manager solved some problems. The students of English program are happy by the solution, but the students of other program are worried because they say ^{yet} who the cost of matricula ^{to} them will increase.

It's important that you included a lot of elements that were part of the problem.

Figure 6. Second Version of Composition After Peer Reviewing and Editing

Findings

Regarding the objectives of this research study it was expected that learners would achieve a better level of grammatical competence evidenced in their written production, and in fact students demonstrated a certain degree of improvement in the quality of texts, especially in their length and organization. For instance, in the first writing assignments students completed, a total lack of differentiation between a sentence and a paragraph was evident. Additionally, it was common to find texts where ideas were separated by a period after which no change in capitalization was applied. Difficulties in spelling, vocabulary usage, and omissions were among the most common. The aesthetic factor was also affected as most of the learners were used to creating their compositions without paying too much attention to handwriting and paper quality. Almost all the texts were written with pencil and any correction that students felt necessary was done over the original text.

However, it is worth saying that this situation changed progressively and the following are the areas of difficulty where a positive change was noticed.

Lexical Competence

Students gained awareness in the appropriate use of vocabulary according to the context, for this the use of a dictionary was a skill students developed. As a result of this, no more

“invented” words were found. There was also a wider range of vocabulary including synonyms and antonyms employed to convey a particular idea.

Many students showed an enhancement in the appropriate selection and use of words such as prepositions, pronouns, and articles, even though there were still some omissions in the use of prepositions such as *about*, *for*, and *of*, and conjunctions such as *as*.

Punctuation and Sentence Structure

Students learned the importance of using punctuation marks to create shorter sentences. A better command of capitalization was noticed in proper nouns and initial letters in a sentence as well as in words after a period or question mark.

Learners also paid more attention to syntax in sentences and reduced errors in subject-verb agreement and adjective-noun collocation.

Verb Forms

Students showed a better comprehension and use of verb forms and auxiliaries depending on the person and number. However, this improvement did not correspond with a better use of verb tenses.

Writing as a Process

In general terms learners took more time planning and revising their written productions and were more careful editors not only with their own papers but also with their classmates'. As a consequence of this longer time invested in the process, the students' dedication helped them achieve a more fruitful performance in text length and quality and also in the aesthetic factor which was noticed in handwriting, organization, and in the general presentation of papers. As a result of using various types of texts in the class activities, students were also able to differentiate and produce narrative and descriptive texts according to the particular qualities of each genre.

Conclusions

Aspects of English Learning Enhanced From Addressing Grammar in the Context of Writing

The teaching of grammar has for a long time been the most “controversial and least understood aspect of language teaching” as recognized by Thornbury (1999, p. ix), and this study was not apart from this controversy. Considering that the biggest failure when

addressing grammar is that activities where mechanical and decontextualized drills are employed, one can say the use of writing activities offers the ideal context with which to develop grammatical competence; for this reason, dealing with grammar through writing activities is a mutually enriching experience. The fact that writing demands a great deal of grammar is the perfect excuse to explore, analyze, and reinforce most—if not all—the grammar topics a language user needs in order to be communicatively competent.

Training our learners to develop writing as a process provides them with a setting where attention to form and awareness on linguistic features are achieved while at the same time dealing with ideas and emotions being expressed in a written text.

The Treatment of Errors and Their Impact on Grammar and Writing

It is a fact that any attempt to develop grammar has to face the reality of errors as natural indicators of the evolution of the language acquisition process. Fearing the identification, treatment, or correction of errors with the hope that accuracy will naturally develop can be a two-edged sword. It is true that some learners have the capacity to monitor their linguistic progress but the opposite is certainly true of other learners and avoiding any form of error treatment can be the most direct way to allow the occurrence of fossilization.

The question is no longer whether to teach grammar or not, but rather how to do it. Similarly we should not worry in deciding whether to address errors or not but how to do so effectively. Employing error analysis in which students work together to identify and correct their difficulties is a good strategy as it promotes cooperative work and a sense of responsibility as learners are required to find and correct errors, focusing on solutions rather than on problems. To do this we have to ensure confidentiality so that only samples of errors without students' names are employed. Students like this type of practice because this is a way to put the theoretical knowledge they are receiving into practice and also, this makes them aware they are working with real language, the one they are producing as users and learners.

Issues for Further Research

Education is a never ending process and so is learning a foreign language. It is true that this research was conducted toward achieving certain improvements in grammatical competence; however, this process needs to be constant in order to become permanent. If teachers are engaged in implementing writing activities as a strategy to foster grammar knowledge, a bigger achievement and improvement in the two areas will be achieved. However, considering the limitations of this study with respect to how grammatical competence is evidenced in oral production, one is sure research in this area is required. It is

clear that an enhancement of grammatical competence in writing does not necessarily transfer to an improvement in speaking.

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This article was received on February 26, 2013, and accepted on September 15, 2013.

Appendix 1: Student Survey

The aim of this survey is to identify possible reasons for students' low participation in speaking activities in class.

Please, read the statements and circle the answer of your choice. If you have an additional comment, please write it in the space provided.

1. The reason(s) why I do not participate very often in speaking activities in class is(are):
 - a. I'm not interested in the topic under discussion.
 - b. I don't want to make errors when I speak.
 - c. I have some ideas but can't express them easy.
 - d. I don't understand the topic or questions very well.Other _____
2. When my classmates are speaking in class, I usually...
 - a. listen, pay attention, and understand what they say.
 - b. listen, understand some things, but get distracted and lose attention.
 - c. don't listen because I have to think about and organize what I will say.
 - d. don't pay attention because I generally don't understand what they say.Other: _____
3. When a classmate is speaking and makes some errors, I...
 - a. don't pay attention to her/his errors.
 - b. identify the errors and try to correct them.
 - c. expect the teacher to correct these errors.
 - d. expect the classmates to identify and correct their own errors.Other: _____
4. I can participate more actively in oral activities if...
 - a. I have more time to think and organize my ideas.
 - b. I know more vocabulary to express my ideas.
 - c. I can make sentences correctly to organize my ideas.
 - d. I have more interesting topics to talk about.Other: _____

5. Other aspects affecting my classmates when speaking can be:
 - a. Their pronunciation is not totally good.
 - b. Sometimes their ideas are disorganized and unclear.
 - c. Their range of vocabulary is poor and limited.
 - d. They speak too slow and sometimes repeat too much to say something.Other: _____

6. When I speak and make some errors, I prefer...
 - a. not to be corrected; instead, I want people to listen to me and ignore my errors.
 - b. to be corrected by my classmates or teachers as soon as I make the error.
 - c. to be corrected by the teacher or classmates after the activity has ended.
 - d. to be corrected only sometimes as I can correct my own errors.Other: _____

Appendix 2: Class Observation Checklist

Course: _____

Aspects to Observe: Written Production	
Performance	Times of Occurrence
Appropriate vocabulary	
Appropriate verb tenses	
Appropriate verb forms	
Appropriate punctuation	
Appropriate capitalization	
Appropriate use of linking words	
Appropriate use of synonyms	
Coherence	
Cohesion	

Appendix 3: Sample Workshop

Date: August 11 th -20 th	Topic: The writing process
Aim: To provide students with some general guidelines for writing.	
Procedures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Each student writes a journal entry including all personal information they consider relevant to be shared with others. – Students discuss the type of information to be included in the text. – Students exchange texts, read, and make general comments about their classmates’ compositions before giving them to the teacher. – Teacher picks up compositions and asks students to discuss the process they followed for producing the piece of writing. Notes are taken on the board about students’ comments and a preliminary conclusion about the writing process is drawn with the whole class. – Students are shown some terms included in the process wheel for writing (drafting-planning-final version-editing) as suggested by Harmer (2005) and in small groups illustrate in a diagram how they perceive the process works. – Each group shares and explains their diagram to the rest of the class. – The process wheel proposed by Harmer (2005) is shown to students so they make some comparisons with the models they have designed. Class discusses how many of the stages are normally employed when they have to write something. – Students are shown a set of situations where different stages of the writing process are employed and they have to discuss and decide how each process was carried out until the final piece of writing is done. – Students are presented with some techniques to generate ideas and make an outline of a composition. – Class discussion about the problems currently affecting the English program. Students make some notes and using one of the techniques previously discussed, start generating ideas and planning what to include in a composition about the difficulties they have had and are still having in the program. – Using class ideas students put some notes on the board. Using this information teacher and students create an introductory paragraph which is revised and edited according to students’ suggestions. – Students continue writing the composition on the topic using their individual planning. Composition is picked up and revised. 	

Comments and Evaluation

About the activities planned for these days it was found that many students in the group were silent and unwilling to participate. Many of them did not have their class materials and some did not even hand in the compositions they were asked to write. It was also noticed that many students arrived between 15 or 25 minutes after the class had started.

Only three students were actively participating. Because of this situation I talked to them to see what was happening and they said they felt insecure because of their low level which made it difficult for them to speak or understand what they listen to. They said these problems come from their first semesters where most of their classes were in Spanish. Some of them asked me to be patient with them as they knew they had a lot of gaps. I told them that in that case they had to do extra and individual work to reinforce and overcome their weaknesses. I also emphasized that all of them were in similar conditions in the classes and that if they had been promoted to this semester it was because they had the required level and for that reason they should not feel intimidated. After this conversation, most of the students' attitude changed and they started showing more interest by asking questions and requesting revisions and advice about their compositions not only from the teacher but from their classmates.

Regarding the students' compositions, they were quite short and evidenced simple but long sentences, as well as difficulties with punctuation, use of vocabulary, and clarity of ideas.

Appendix 4: Correction Code

Symbol	Type of Error	Error Example	Corrected Example
Cap	Capitalization	*a perfect Balance. *mary lives in a big House.	*A perfect balance. *Mary lives in a big house.
P	Punctuation	*Why is the world wonderful.	*Why is the world wonderful?
Sp	Spelling	*it offers us many tings. *i always belived.	*It offers us many things. *I always believed.
⋈	Missing word(s)	*Laura is model *I'm looking the stars.	*Laura is a model. *I'm looking at the stars.
/	Unnecessary	*You can enjoy of every day. *Let it to happen.	*You can enjoy every day. *Let it happen.
R	Unnecessary Repetition	*The world is wonderful because the world has many things.	*The world is wonderful because it has many things.
Voc	Vocabulary	*There are five continents what are... *Why do people dye hungry?	*There are five continents which are... *Why do people die hungry?
WO	Word order	*human not are careful. *the thoughts mean of some people.	*Humans are not careful. *the mean thoughts of some people.
VF	Verb form	*All the countries has. *What a person like to do.	*All the countries have. *What a person likes to do.
VT	Verb tense	*The weather is hotter yesterday. *What do you do now?	*The weather was hotter yesterday. *What are you doing now?
Gr	Grammar	*They have differents things. *There is many people. *We have many reasons for smile.	*They have different things. *There are many people. *We have many reasons for smiling.
?	Unclear idea	They are it but innocent and beautiful that it exists in the world.	?

Appendix 5: Self-Assessment Form

Name:
Date:

1. During the last classes I have learnt very well:

2. During the last classes the difficulties I have had are:

3. I think these difficulties can be solved if:

4. I think the quality of my grammar when I write is ___Good ___Fair ___Low,
because:

5. I think the quality of my grammar when I speak is ___Good ___Fair ___Low,
because:

6. The activities currently used to teach and learn grammar are ___Appropriate
___Inappropriate, because:

7. I would like to comment that:

Appendix 6: Observation Checklist of Students' Progress in Writing

Date: _____

Event: _____

Aspects to Be Observed (difficulties)	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
1. Sentence structure										
2. Run-on sentences										
3. Coherence										
4. Cohesive devices										
5. Vocabulary										
6. Punctuation										
7. Word order										
8. Spelling										
9. Omissions										
10. Capitalization										
11. Unnecessary words										
12. Verb forms										
13. Verb tenses										
14. Unclear ideas										
15. Miscellaneous grammar errors										
16. Redundancy										
17. Other(s). (Provide info in additional page)										
Total										

Appendix 7: Observation Form for Class Development

Date:	Observer:
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To what extent are the following statements an accurate reflection of the lesson?

1 = Not at all, 2 = Slightly, 3 = Very, 4 = Totally

Aspects to observe	1	2	3	4
1. The objectives of the lesson were achieved.				
Comments: _____ _____				
2. Materials and activities were appropriate for the lesson objectives.				
Comments: _____ _____				
3. Class activities followed a logical sequence.				
Comments: _____ _____				
4. Activities were challenging but not threatening.				
Comments: _____ _____				
5. Instructions were clear and easy to understand.				
Comments: _____ _____				
6. Explanations were clear and short according to students' linguistic level.				

Comments:				

7. Error correction and feedback were appropriate.				
Comments:				

8. Lesson promoted students' active involvement and participation.				
Comments:				

9. Learners were required to interact and cooperate during the activities.				
Comments:				

10. Teacher's interventions were pertinent and limited.				
Comments:				

Additional comments				

