

# THE USE OF GUIDED COMPOSITION THROUGH TOPICS IN ORDER TO HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP THEIR WRITING SKILLS

*Dunia Navarro Ramírez\**

Recepción: 4 de agosto de 2006 • Aprobación: 3 de noviembre de 2006

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the following article is to share the results of a research project based on the application of a technique called Guided Composition through Topics, a thesis project in order to obtain the Licenciatura degree. The main objective of this research carried out with a group of tenth grade students, was to prove the effectiveness of this technique as an alternative source used by secondary school teachers to teach their pupils to write accurately. The technique was applied to a group of twenty-eight students from Colegio Patriarca San José in San Ramón, Alajuela whose ages ranged from fifteen to seventeen. The method was developed during eight sessions, four sessions for writing and four for the revising process, in which a self-correction code was used by the students. The purpose of this correction code was to prove its effectiveness by giving the students the opportunity of correcting themselves and improving their writing skills. After the eighth session, it was observed that the students showed improvement in their written abilities and developed self-confidence in writing.

**Key Words:** Skill, Topics, Correction Code, Method, Activity.

## RESUMEN

El propósito del siguiente artículo es el compartir los resultados de una investigación realizada como requisito para optar al grado de licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés, trabajo que se desarrolló con un grupo de estudiantes de décimo año, a quienes se les aplicó una técnica llamada "Composición Guiada a través de Temas", cuyo objetivo fundamental es el permitir a los estudiantes desarrollar sus habilidades para escribir, por medio de temas seleccionados por ellos mismos o sugeridos por el profesor. La investigación se enfocó en dos aspectos, probar la efectividad de esta técnica para ser usada como alternativa metodológica por los docentes del Inglés, en su afán de desarrollar la destreza de escritura en esta lengua, y a la vez analizar la efectividad de la utilización de un código de auto corrección como estrategia para

---

\* Profesora del Departamento de Educación de la Sede de Occidente de la Universidad de Costa Rica.  
[dmnavarror@yahoo.com]

ser implementada por los profesores con sus estudiantes. Esta técnica fue aplicada a un grupo de veintiocho estudiantes de décimo año del Colegio Patriarca San José, San Ramón, Alajuela cuyas edades van entre los quince y diecisiete años. El método fue implementado durante ocho sesiones, cuatro para escribir y cuatro para el proceso de revisión en donde el código de auto corrección fue utilizado por los estudiantes. El objetivo primordial de este código fue el de dar a los educandos la oportunidad de corregirse ellos mismos, al mismo tiempo que mejoraban sus destrezas de escritura en inglés como lengua extranjera. Después de finalizar el periodo de ocho semanas dispuesto para este trabajo, los estudiantes sujetos de esta investigación, demostraron una gran mejoría en su forma de escribir, así como desarrollaron confianza a la hora de expresarse en forma escrita en este idioma como su composiciones así lo demostraron al final de la investigación.

**Palabras claves:** destreza, temas, código de auto corrección, método, actividad.

## Introduction

The ability to use language effectively is appropriately described as an art, and writing skills are a life-long necessity. As a painter uses colors and shapes, a writer uses words and structures to create images for the reader. Through language, people share stories, traditions, and values; they inform, describe, explain, and modify the behavior of others.

According to Yiyun (1989), man has a desire to express himself, and to make him understood, and writing is an eloquent way to communicate these thoughts and needs. *“writing has come to occupy the prominent role it deserves in foreign language teaching and learning. Its value is confined by the latest research, which shows the classical relevance of writing not only reflects our thinking but also helps to create new thought”* (Khan, 1993:42)

When students write, they have a chance to be adventurous with the language, to go beyond what they have just learned to say, to take risks. They basically get involved with the new language, because the effort to express ideas and the constant use of eye, hand, and brain is a unique way to reinforce learning. Composition then, broadens the student's communication abilities, and it also completes the study of grammatical patterns and vocabulary. In an integrated English Language curriculum, writing is taught in meaningful contexts to the students.

It is the teachers' task to help learners use the language effectively and appreciate the written expression of others. As it is well known, communication is the fundamental reason for the existence of language, and writing is a means towards it. Moreover, it gives the students a chance to practice what they learn in

a more meaningful and creative way. In other words, through writing, the students are able to relate what they learn through every day life and experiences. Basically, according to Gwin "*the true reason for writing in the real world, whether it is a report on scientific research, a technical manual, an office memo, or a personal letter, is to communicate some meaning to another person.*" (Gwin, 1991:2) Language enables an individual to express thought, and by expressing it in a more precise way; he or she can refine and clarify his or her thought. In an integrated English language curriculum, there are many opportunities for thought and language to stimulate and sustain each other. Such opportunities should help students develop a sense of excitement and respect towards the power and beauty of language, besides a positive and inquiring attitude toward it.

Despite the importance that writing has in order to communicate ideas, many teachers in Public schools do not pass this skill on to their pupils, as they should in their lessons. As a teacher of English as a Foreign Language myself, I have noticed that students in Public Secondary schools do not write compositions as part of their work in the foreign language class. Although students may have acquired enough knowledge to write simple compositions, English teachers do not usually give them the opportunity to do so.

As it was verified by this investigator through experience in Public schools, if some English teachers practiced composition in their classes, these composition exercises mostly limited to fill in the blank exercises, or to just change some elements in a given paragraph.

Due to these facts, this researcher developed this research project in order

to prove the effectiveness of using a composition strategy called "*Teaching composition by topics*" to help tenth grade students from Patriarca San José High school, in San Ramón, Alajuela, in their intents to learn to write accurately. The purpose of this article is to share the findings with other colleagues and to provide them with some tools that could be used as an alternative for the teaching of writing in the English courses in high schools. Also this article attempts to show EFL teachers that teaching students how to write is not a difficult task if different alternatives techniques such as guided composition through topics are used to help them develop this skill in an easier way.

## Theoretical framework

### Guided Composition through topics

Guided Composition through topics is the technique through which teachers give a subject of discussion for students to write about. As Wiriyachitra points out "*if the students are given a chance to play with words, they gain a more comprehensive feeling for the language. Written work also provides the students with tangible evidence that they are making progress in the language; thus satisfying a psychological need*". (Wiriyachitra, 1983: 40)

According to Sanders (1980) it is important to match topics with the student's interests :Holidays, letters, folk tales, writing news articles and headlines, writing a newspaper ad, identifying the type of pet or object, describing physical characteristics, writing a letter to give advice, giving a solution to a problem and many more.

The teacher or students can write some of the students' ideas on the board for the rest to copy them. This will help

them to get started and will provide them with some key vocabulary words and sentences that they might like to use in their own compositions.

### **The use of topics to write compositions**

The teaching of guided composition by means of using topics motivates students because it provides with the opportunity to explore their imagination. The students gain a little more freedom to create their own sentences based on an idea or topic given to them rather than by just observing a visual aid. Besides, this technique improves their writing skills. Some of the advantages of using this technique are directly related to the structures and vocabulary learned in class. The pupils learn that “*grammar is not taught in isolation, so they have the opportunity to make use of what they have learned in real communication*” (López, 1991:44).

Writing through topics provides students with the opportunity to explore their imagination. The students gain more freedom to create their own sentences based on an idea or topic given than just by merely observing visual stimuli.

### **Variations of guided composition through topics:**

There are many different variations of “*the guided composition through topics*” technique: Dixon (1990:37) advises teachers to give students a topic and have them to “free-write” as much as they can on that topic without stopping. This gives them practice in writing quickly and extensively in English, and allows them to see how much they know about a topic.

According to Chen (1988:20) teaching composition through topics is divided in two parts: teacher guided and student

centered. At the beginning, the teacher helps the student to choose a topic. Then the activities gradually become student centered, including group discussion, oral presentation, writing a first draft, peer evaluation, and revision. The teacher is just a language consultant rather than a dominator.

If the topic chosen by students is too broad, the teacher should help them narrow it down. After the topic is set, Chen suggests, teachers should guide students to search in different sources such as textbooks, periodicals, dictionaries and so on, in order to reinforce their knowledge in the selected topic. Besides, summary writing and other reference skills in this technique are indispensable and should be reinforced too. Based on Chen’s suggestions (1988), before preparing the outline, students should get together to discuss the topic. This “quasi-brainstorming” is designed to exchange personal experiences and information obtained from other sources thus enriching the content.

After each student or group has finished preparing an outline, they are asked to present it to the class, distributing the outline to their classmates. By presenting an oral report, the speaker learns to use language as a communicative mode, to develop his/her sense of audience, and to modify his/her information. The skill developed in oral activities can be helpful to produce clear and desirable compositions because this is an opportunity that students have for meaningful interaction. Group and peer discussion activities allow them to learn from each other by transferring the skills learned.

Answering questions or turning questions into statements is the simplest introduction to paragraph writing. It is also

another pattern used for this technique. The procedure is as follows: the teacher gives the students three or four sequential questions that can be answered to write a coherent paragraph. Two kinds of questions can be used: "Yes/No questions" or "Information questions". The exercise on "Yes/No questions" is easier but artificial, since students are asked to do more than a mechanical operation. The questions must be either based on a reading that the students are familiar with or carefully phrased to rely on general knowledge common to all the students. With the information questions, students have the opportunity to use a large repertory of relevant words linked into sentences which answer the given questions. Information questions are more natural since they require students to decide on the correct answer.

Another option, according to Ike, (1990:41) consists of writing compositions by using a brainstorming activity. This technique has five steps: selecting the topic, preparing to write on the topic, group writing, peer-group editing, and rewriting. Ike suggests that before the end of the class, each student is asked to mention a topic that interests him or her. As each student is asked to indicate their chosen topic, the teacher quickly writes the title on the board, assigning a serial number to it. Later, the subject for the composition is chosen by asking the students to raise their hands to indicate their interest in writing on any of the topics enumerated. The one that gets the most votes is chosen as the topic for the composition. After the topic has been selected, the teacher leads the students to writing a topic sentence. The teacher can do this by turning the composition topic into a question and having the students

produce an appropriate answer. Based on this, Ike (1990) advises to ask each student to write on the topic. Here the student is expected to search for and collect facts, notions, and evidence that will help him or her write a meaningful composition. In the next class, the teacher again writes the topic sentence on the board and underlines the keyword of the statement. The students are asked to produce three words that can best define the keyword on his/her own, and these words are written on the board. Then, with the help of the teacher, the three most appropriate words are chosen. These words will form the main ideas of the composition or "*the major ingredients, for the topic sentences*" as Ike (1990: 42) calls them, for the three main paragraphs of the essay. Later, the main ideas will be defined again in a general sense to produce the subordinate ideas, which in turn will be defined to produce divisions in the subordinate idea, both of which will form the primary and secondary supporting details of each paragraph.

When the outline has been produced and copied by the students, the teacher divides the class into groups of four or six students. Each group selects a leader, and the members of the group guided by the outline, suggest sentences to develop the thesis into a well-written essay. When a sentence is suggested by a member or members of the group, these members decide on its appropriateness. If the sentence is found to be correct, the leader writes it down. The sentence could be rearranged, rephrased, or replaced by another sentence suggested by the group. This exercise continues until the final word of the composition has been written. Later, the leader reviews the write-up with the members. As he or she reads the

composition, each member tries to discern any grammatical or structural incongruities. The changes are analyzed by the group and if accepted, are incorporated in the final composition.

When the teacher sees that all the groups have finished writing, he or she asks each group to exchange their papers with the group next to it for revising them. This enables each group to gain insight, learn from, and criticize or admire what the other group has written. As soon as the papers are exchanged, the leader of each group reads aloud the paper to be checked, while the members listen actively, carefully, and critically. As the reading proceeds, each member is expected to point out errors or suggest corrections. This method gives the slow students an immediate opportunity to learn from their faster classmates whose task is to teach the slower ones to write a good composition, while making both aware of the types of mistakes they make. This method also gives the students the opportunity to take responsibility and to make “*constructive efforts*” (Ike, 1990:43) in correcting their own mistakes.

### Warm up activities

It is suggested that, once the teachers have decided on a suitable topic for students to write on, the teacher should develop pre-writing activities in order to enhance the generation of ideas.

Anthony S. Bruton (1983:15) believes that most writing exercises should be preceded by some sort of oral buildup that focuses the learner’s attention on the topic they want to write about. There are many pre-writing activities that can be used to motivate students. However, for the purpose of this research, the following four were applied:

- The teacher discusses with students the importance and advantages of writing in a different language.
- Students suggest interesting topics to write on, through a brainstorming activity. All these topics are written on the board by the teacher for the students to use later on in their work.
- Students listen to a song to discuss its meaning as a motivating technique.
- Students play a writing game. Pupils write sentences in which the first word begins with A, the second word with B and so on. Students, individually, write down 10 sentences of 10 words each.

### Audio visual aids

Aids such as: charts, songs, pictures, videos or other activities are very helpful, but for the aim of this research, just a chart and a song were used. They were especially successful because these aids became a motivational step for the writing process as well as being open to the teacher’s own creativity.

### The Correction Code

A time saver for teachers is to use a correction code. The code is taught to students in order to be used as a self correction code by them. This code was used to correct students’ mistakes in their compositions. The teacher’s goal by using this tool was to show students that they could also correct their own work, which made the writing more of a learning activity. Besides, it provided students with an opportunity to learn from their errors and gain confidence in their own ability to write. It also facilitated the teacher’s everyday task. The idea of this code is to have students check their compositions

by using these marks, which will guide pupils to identify their errors.

Figure 1 is an example of a correction code or proofreading marks that could be adapted to the teacher's own needs, as a contribution in this field.

Mark	Meaning
▣	Insert
▣	Delete
▣	Insert space
▣	Close up space
=	Capitalize
/	Make lower case
Ô	Check spelling
~	Switch order
&	New paragraph

Figure 1. Correction Code. Source: Correction Code used by the researcher.

## The study

### Methodology

One group of tenth graders, twenty-eight students in total, whose ages ranged from fifteen to seventeen years old, at Colegio Patriarca San José, Alajuela was chosen in order to prove the effectiveness of the technique called "Guided composition through topics" as another alternative to teach English composition in high schools.

The research was divided into eight forty minute sessions in which the technique was used. Four sessions were used to encourage students to write based on a selected activity, and four were used to make the students correct themselves by means of the correction code created by the researcher for this purpose. The eight sessions were developed as follows:

#### *First session:*

A pre-writing activity was followed by the writing activity in which the students individually answered a sequence of structured personal questions presented on a chart to them, in order to write a complete composition. Later on, these works were handed out to the researcher for correction.

It is important to point out that every time the compositions were corrected, either by the students themselves or by this researcher; the correction code selected by this researcher was used by the students in order to improve their drafts. A copy of the correction code was given to the students at the beginning of this session (code shown above). The students were told to keep the correction code at hand so they could refer to it when writing and correcting their compositions. The researcher taught the students how to use the code and explained that she herself was not going to use other marks but those to correct their compositions. The Pupils were told to be attentive to these symbols to identify the mistakes they could have made. Once the instructions were clear, the researcher placed a chart on the board containing twelve simple personal questions. The researcher asked the students to take out a sheet of paper to answer these questions in paragraph format. They answered the questions without writing them. The researcher allowed the students to use a dictionary and require help to other classmates or teacher-researcher when needed.

#### *Second Session:*

In this session the researcher explained to the students the way they had to rewrite their compositions by

following the symbols included in the correction code. The teacher-researcher returned the compositions already corrected to the pupils, who had the task of rewriting the composition once again [in another sheet] by looking at the code in order to discover the errors made. At the end of the session, the compositions were handed out to the teacher-researcher again by the students.

*Third Session:*

The Teacher –researcher started the session by giving the students some feedback. Then the session continued with a brainstorming exercise in which the students were asked to suggest topics to write on. The researcher wrote the suggested topics on the board. The students then suggested thirteen topics.

Then they were asked to gather in groups of five to choose one of the topics. Each group was asked to choose a coordinator and a secretary. Once the topic was selected and tasks divided, the students were asked to write a ten-line composition in groups. Each group evaluated the composition by means of the correction code. When this stage was completed, the researcher asked the pupils to exchange among groups the written compositions to follow the previous procedure. The final products were collected by the researcher at the end of the session.

*Fourth Session:*

Group Compositions were given back to students in order to be corrected in groups again by means of the correction code.

*Fifth Session:*

Students silently listened to a song called “*Gracias a la vida.*” Then, the

teacher wrote a topic on the blackboard for the students to write their compositions based on that structure as the starting sentence. The students were asked to work in pairs to write a ten-line composition based on the topic assigned. The researcher collected these works at the end of the session.

*Sixth Session:*

Using the correction code, the researcher corrected the compositions once again and gave them back to each pair of students who were responsible for rewriting it. The teacher researcher reviewed basic mistakes students made in their compositions to reinforce learning. The students based their work on the correction code.

*Seventh Session:*

Pupils were asked to write a ten line composition about any topic; the one which best inspired them at the moment. The compositions were collected at the end of the session by this researcher.

*Eighth Session:*

The compositions were given back to students for them to rewrite them based on the correction code.

As it is seen, these eight sessions had specific purposes and they followed the next processes:

### **The Pre-Writing Process**

In each of the four sessions the researcher chose a different pre-writing activity in order to enhance learning and motivate pupils for the writing practice. Beginning with a simple oral analysis of the importance of composition, the students showed a great interest in learning through active participation.



The second activity consisted of a brainstorming exercise, in which students suggested some topics to write about. Participation and enthusiasm were the main ingredients, which clearly demonstrated the students' interest to work.

The third warm – up activity was a song. This really motivated students to write after listening and discussing the message of the song amongst themselves. Finally the last exercise applied was a word-game competition in groups which consisted of writing a sentence of ten words following the alphabetical order. The group that finished first was the winner. After the warm up stage was over in each of the four sessions, the writing process began.

In each session, pupils showed their interest in learning. Of course, slow students had a difficult time doing the work, especially when they had to work individually. They spent a lot more time doing their writing task than the rest of the group.

The writing process was divided into eight sessions of an eighty-minute class. The second, fourth, sixth and eighth sessions were used for the revising process, where the students had to check their compositions by means of applying the Correction Code.

The first session, which consisted of answering questions in order to write a paragraph, was an easy way for students to write. Besides, this process was useful for teachers because the questions were written on the board, which facilitated the teacher's work.

The third session was a group work composition based on a brainstorming activity in which students suggested the topics to write about. This gave the students the opportunity to work in teams

while writing their composition. However, it needed a lot of control from the teacher because sometimes it seemed that just some of the members were working while the rest would waste their time just waiting to see the work done.

In the fifth session, after listening to a song presented by the researcher, the students were asked to write about a topic the researcher wrote on the board.

The seventh session consisted of asking students to write about any desirable topic, which is another variation of this technique. Having the students free-writing gave them the opportunity to express themselves without limits which made the work challenging for them.

### **The revising process**

The code was given to each student during the first session; however, getting adjusted to the code was somewhat difficult for students at first. Once they became accustomed to working with it, they started to rewrite their compositions based on it.

For the third session the students were asked to write a composition in groups based on topics suggested by them. The students also selected their partners, and then exchanged papers among themselves to correct their work according to the correction code. This exercise was different for the students, but at the same time, it was also a creative task.

Every time students wrote a composition, individually or in groups, they were asked to rewrite it following the evaluation-correction code applied by the researcher for the correction of students' compositions. This correction technique was applied after writing the first draft, and it gave the students the opportunity to discover, through the code, the

mistakes they made to improve their writing on the next composition.

### The rewriting process

This procedure consisted of asking the students to rewrite their compositions individually or in groups according to the variation of the technique used by this researcher during the different sessions.

The students had a forty minute class to rewrite their works. Each time the students were asked to write, the researcher collected their works at the end of the session and gave them back the next session. The students' assignment was to correct their work based on the symbols the researcher wrote in their compositions. The researcher was very attentive to the students' work and helped them anytime they asked.

### Teacher's Feedback

Every other session, the instructor used at least ten minutes to discuss errors with the students. This activity was performed on the board. Its main purpose was to answer questions and clear up doubts. The most common errors found were spelling mistakes, structural errors, word choice, word order, and unclear ideas.

An oral explanation was followed by written examples with the aim of improving the students' writing. At first, the students asked several questions. But as the activities progressed, they stopped asking. However, the instructor did not give the students extra practice due to the time available for this research.

## Analysis of the results

### Error analysis in teaching through topics

**Table 1**  
Number of students who made mistakes in the writing process

Word Choice	29
Unclear Ideas	28
Spelling	26
Lack of Words	26
Subject-Verb Agreement	23
Punctuation	23
Verb Tense	22
wordiness	21
Word Order	20
Word Form	18
Connection of Ideas	9
Plural/Singular	8
Capitalization	1

Source: Students' quantitative error analysis done by the researcher.

**Table 2**  
Number of students who made mistakes in the rewriting process

Word Choice	22
Unclear Ideas	12
Spelling	13
Lack of Words	20
Subject-Verb Agreement	6
Punctuation	9
Verb Tense	9
wordiness	11
Word Order	10
Word Form	5
Connection of Ideas	2
Number	9
Capitalization	1

Source: students' quantitative error analysis done by the researcher.

As it is seen in the above tables students had some trouble with certain aspects, especially those concerning grammatical structures. Table 1 shows the number of students who made mistakes during the writing process and which type of mistakes they made. However, as variations of the technique were used, the students improved as it is shown in table 2.

**Table 3**  
**Error type and number of errors made in the first and second draft by students**

Error Type	First draft	Second draft
Grammar	88	39
Omit a word	22	11
Spelling	36	13
Wrong word	39	22
Add a word	56	20
Word order	20	10
Punctuation/ capitalization	24	14
Unclear ideas	28	12
Paragraph structure	9	2

Source: students' quantitative error analysis done by the researcher

Table 3 shows students had an improvement in compositions. In the first draft students made more mistakes than they did in the second after the application of the guided-composition- through topics technique and the application of a correction code in order to help students improve.

## Conclusions

Teaching composition is a cognitive discovery process, which helps students think and create new thoughts. As it was

seen along the activities planned by this researcher, high school students were able to write short pieces by using the GCT technique. They also showed improvement in their work as the activities were carried out during this research. The correction code used by this researcher probably helped them to be aware of the mistakes they had made in their compositions.

Through composition practices, students improve their writing skills because as students learn to write coherent units, they organize their thinking, which enriches and facilitates general learning. As it is supported by Ann Raimes (1983:3) "*As writers struggle with what to put down next or how to put it down on paper, they often discover something new to write or a new way of expressing their idea*"

Therefore, through teaching composition, students not only learn, but also improve their thinking process as it was observed by this researcher, and idea reinforced by Raimes (1983) because as they discover the right word or structure to be used in the sentence; it also emerges "*a close relationship between writing and thinking which makes writing a valuable part of any language course*" as he calls it (1983:3.) Also, as it was noticed by this researcher along the process, writing composition fosters idiomatic expressions, grammar, and vocabulary used in class.

Moreover, students can compose and express themselves in written English, no matter what their level is; thus, "*being able to write is a vital skill for speakers of a foreign language as much as for everyone using their own first language*" (Harmer, 2004:3) what they need is motivation. Teaching guided composition through topics is a viable alternative that teachers in high schools could apply in their classes.

A correction code is an excellent idea which could be adapted to the students and teaching aims. In this study the correction code helped students to self-evaluate and this process produced a change of attitude toward writing compositions in class. The correction code really worked and it was an excellent tool the teacher could use in order to reinforce critical thinking and self-analysis.

As students advanced in composition practice during this research work, they wrote better compositions and made fewer errors. Throughout constant practice, students increased their confidence in their ability to write in English. It was also a good way to enrich vocabulary skills.

Through the whole experience, this researcher could realize the way students improved their writing based on the rewriting process they had to develop.

However, teachers must also understand this process demands a lot of reinforcement and feedback from the teacher to the students in order to help them improve in their target language.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the experience gathered after the application of this technique, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

- Use composition in the classroom as another variation in the learning process.
- Make writing a natural and integral part of the curriculum as a language process is
- Create a meaningful environment to write.
- Emphasize writing as a means of inventing, exploring ideas, and gathering information.
- Introduce variety and integrate writing exercises with other classroom activities, mainly with reading practice followed by listening and speaking activities.
- Make warm up activities at the beginning of the composition practice.
- Make composition a productive way to teach because it capitalizes on students' prior knowledge, and recognizes the need to communicate feelings and significant events.
- Teach students the basic aspects of writing before practicing composition.
- Practice composition in class once a week. Teachers can help their students' communication skills by having students write at least 10 or 15 minutes each week from the seventh grade on.
- Pay attention to students' mistakes, and spend some time guiding and correcting to train learners to recognize and use new structures.
- Keep drafts together in individual folders for each student, and have a student-record; that could be used as reference for teachers to be aware of each student's problems and progress.
- Show students where improvements can be made. Give them recognition for good work and keep a running account of the students' progress during the school year.
- Diagnose problems in order to prescribe a suitable program for students with special writing needs.
- Train students to evaluate their own or a classmate's work in a constructive and supportive manner by assigning compositions as homework.
- Modify the tested correction code according to the students' needs.

## References

- Arnaudet, M. et.al.(1990) *Paragraph Development*. Prentice Hall Regents: New Jersey.
- Benavides, R. (1995). *Getting Foreign Language Students Write*. San Ramón. C. R. Universidad de Costa Rica. Sede de Occidente.
- Bruton, A. (1983). *Helping the teacher with limited English to Teach Composition*. A Forum Anthology. Washington DC.
- Cambronero, H. et.al. (1996). *Analysis of five techniques to teach english composition to tenth graders in high schools*. Tesis de Licenciatura, San Ramón: Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de Occidente.
- Céspedes, R.et.al. (1994). *The Process Approach: An alternative to teaching composition*. Tesis de grado. Universidad de Costa Rica. San José.
- Chen, E. (1988). *Teaching Research Paper Writing in ESL. Content, Language and Communication*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- Dixon, D. (1990). *Teaching Compositions Through Topics to Large Groups*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- Gwin, T.(1991). *Giving Students The Write Idea. A Way to provide Feedback on Writing*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing*. Pearson Education Limited. England.
- Ike, N. (1990) *From Brainstorming to Creative Essay. Teaching composition Writing to large classes*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- Khan, M. (1993). *Poetry in Motion - A Technique in Writing*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- Klise, T. (2001).*Paragraph Portfolio*. Klise Company. Mystic CT, United States of America
- Lester, J. (1993). *Writing Research Papers*. Harper Collings College Publishers. Illinois.
- Lopez, D. (1991). *From Reading to Writing Strategies*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- M.E.P. (2005). *Programa de Estudio de Educación Diversificada: Inglés*. San José, C. R.: Departamento de Publicaciones, M. E. P.
- Oluwadiya, A. (1992). *Some Prewriting Techniques for Student Writers*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- Raimes, A.(1983). *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. Oxford University Press.New York.
- Sanders, A. (1980). *Activities for Communication Practice*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- Wiryachitra, A. (1983). *Teaching Writing in ESL Communicative Syllabus*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- Wood, N. (1993). *Self-Correction and Rewriting of Student Compositions: The Correction Code*. English Teaching Forum. Washington DC.
- Yiyun, L.(1993). *From craft to art. How to teach Composition*. English Teaching Forum Washington DC.

