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Autora

Valentina Rios Ruiz

Universidad de Antioquia

Escuela de Idiomas

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**Improving the writing practices through the creation of comics based on the Students'
interests.**

How to improve the students' writing practices through the use of comics in an EFL
seventh-grade classroom in the Centro Formativo de Antioquia?

Valentina Rios Ruiz

Universidad de Antioquia

Thesis, research, and practicum advisor

Sandra Milena Echeverri Delgado

Magister in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

Abstract

This research project explores the integration of comic writing as a component in seventh grade. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the impact of incorporating comic writing tasks on student engagement and English language communication skills. The participants in this action research project are 35 seventh-grade students from CentroFormativo de Antioquia.

By incorporating the creative and visual medium of comic writing, this study aims to create a more dynamic and interactive learning experience for students. The utilization of comics as a writing tool provides a unique platform for students to express themselves while developing their linguistic and writing practices. The research project will employ qualitative research methods, including observations, interviews, and analysis of student work, to examine the effects of comic writing tasks on student motivation, engagement, and language development.

Keywords: Comic writing, motivation, language learning strategies, students' interests, writing practices

Título del proyecto en español: La mejora de las prácticas de escritura de los estudiantes a través del uso de comics en un aula de séptimo grado en el Centro Formativo de Antioquia.

Degree Requirement

This action research project is being submitted as a requisite component of the Bachelor of Education program, Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French), at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, located in Medellin, Colombia. The research was conducted at Centro Formativo de Antioquia during the period of October 2022 to April 2023. The principal aim of this research project is to analyze my role as a teacher-researcher within this educational institution, fostering critical introspection of my pedagogical approaches while concurrently enriching them with newfound insights and knowledge.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the completion of this research project, which serves as the culmination of my degree in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the Universidad de Antioquia.

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Additionally, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the teachers at Centro Formativo de Antioquia for their unwavering support and cooperation throughout the research process.

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Preface

This action research project, conducted as part of the Bachelor of Education program in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia in Medellin, Colombia, focused on integrating the component of writing comics into the curriculum. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of incorporating comic writing tasks on student engagement and English language communication skills. The participants consisted of 35 seventh-grade students from Centro Formativo de Antioquia. By incorporating the creative and visual medium of comic writing, this study aimed to create a more engaging and interactive learning experience for the students. The utilization of comics as a writing tool provided a unique platform for students to express themselves, while also developing their linguistic and storytelling abilities in English.

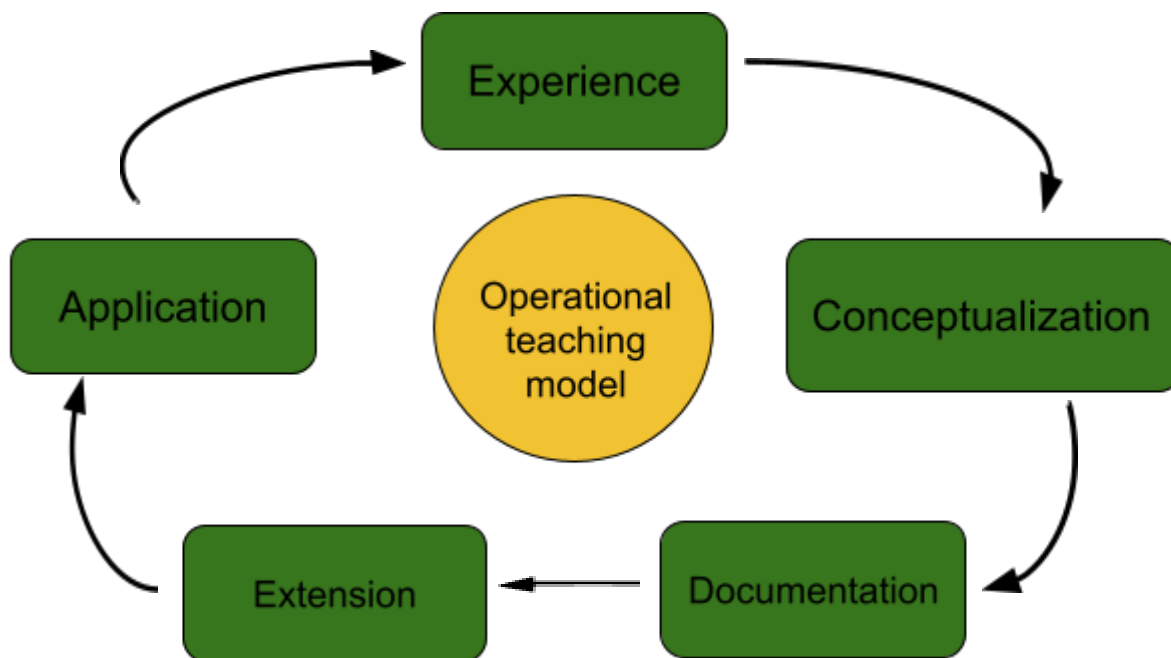
Context's Description

The high school “Centro formativo de Antioquia” or “CEFA” is a public institution in which only female students are admitted. It is located in La Candelaria neighborhood. It offers education from sixth to eleventh grade. In addition, in the grades tenth and eleventh students are also formed in technical secondary education. In this program, the students can choose between the following specialties: commerce, health, food science and technology, design, chemical sciences, and Mathematics. Currently, the institution has two sections, one in the mornings from 6:00 to 12:15, and the second in the afternoons from 12:15 to 6:15.

This institution is interested in standing out from other high schools. This is why they have planned a complete study program based on their values, they call it “CEFA culture”. This culture is meant to teach students how to be good citizens. These values are also seen in its mission and vision. The first establishes that as in its motto "Let your light shine", CEFA's education is based on the implementation of citizen culture, which intends that the students have excellent bases for labor initiation and admission to higher education. The second mentions that CEFA plans to be one of the best educational institutions in the city of Medellin, following a path of excellence to form citizen culture and high academic competitiveness. Hernandez, F. (2022).

The school was recently renovated, this is why it has some modern establishments and some older ones. It also has classrooms that are equipped with boards and speakers. The institution also has a gym, computer room, art room, laboratory, and teachers' rooms; which are divided by dependencies. Its staff comprises the teachers, the cleaning staff, and the administrative staff.

Concerning the educational model, the CEFA has adopted the operational teaching model as its base component which is intended to develop the components of being, knowing, and knowing-doing. In turn, they are divided into several phases as shown in the following diagram:



Taken and translated from: <https://www.flipsnack.com/6AD88A99E8C/modelo-pedagogico-did-ctico-operativo-cefa.html>

As stated on the school website, this model was created by Felix Bustos Cobos. Its purpose is to carry out the teaching and learning process through production. It is based on the model of Piagetian constructivism which trains the student as an agent capable of determining the problems that surround him and in turn seeking a solution.

The English course is found as part of the humanities area plan which is composed of Spanish language and foreign languages, in this case, English. This area plan takes into account

several laws, including the general education law in Colombia, which in its article 22 establishes a specific objective of primary education in the secondary cycle "The understanding and ability to express oneself in a foreign language". (Law 115,1994, p8).

Additionally, the Bilingualism Law in its article 8, "the promotion of the English language in official educational establishments..." (Law 1651, 2013, p2). Finally, they adopted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, in the fields of learning, teaching, and assessment to determine the levels at which each grade should be.

During this project, I will be observing seventh-grade group 2. The English syllabus for this grade is divided in three competencies concerning the area: conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal. They are explained as follows:

- Conceptual competence: refers to the linguistics component, which is explained as the ability to understand and formulate well-structured messages.
- Procedural competence: refers to the pragmatics component. This component is described as the ability to organize sentences into sequences to produce textual fragments
- Attitudinal competence: belongs to the sociolinguistics component which refers to the ability to handle rules of courtesy and other rules that govern the relationships between generations, genders, classes, and social groups.

The thematic content is divided into two periods. During the first period that is the period I will be implementing my proposal, they will use the lecture of narrative text as guides to learn

how to describe their opinions, identify main and secondary ideas, and recognize all the elements involved in a text.

Concerning the teacher's academic background, she graduated as a Professional in Foreign Languages, she has also studied two major degrees: A specialization in Pedagogical Evaluation, Specialization in Educational Management. She has worked as an English teacher for around 25 years in both private and public institutions being the last one the longest; she has been teaching in public institutions for 24 years. Nowadays, she is working as an English teacher at the Centro Formativo de Antioquia, she has been working in this institution for 9 months. She considers her methodology as a mixture of communicative, lexical and grammatical approach. She also describes her teaching purpose as follows: "Improve my students' abilities in reading, speaking, writing and listening following the English Subject Plan" (Londoño,2022)

The selected group to carry out this action research is a seventh-grade group with 32 students. They have English classes twice a week for three hours; one hour on Mondays and two on Thursdays. The students' ages are between twelve and fourteen years old. During the class observations it was evident that some of the students have a great English level while the others have difficulties producing complete sentences without the teacher's help. In terms of discipline, the students talk a lot during the class time, some of them were receptive when the teacher call their attention, while others kept talking "The Ss were talking a lot while their classmates were going to the board. The CT noticed this and told them that if they continued talking that much, she was going to change the activity and do dictation...There are some SS that are still talking a

lot while others are trying to practice the pronunciation.” (Journal, September 15). There are students who worry about their grade in the activities presented, however, there are others who do not perform the class activities even when they are failing the subject. Most of the students show a participative attitude in the class activities “When I first arrived at the classroom, I thought they wouldn't participate at all, however, they have proven to be a really participative group. ” (Journal, August 29).

Statement of the Problem

Students' interest and engagement in English writing can be highly influenced through the use of different types of texts. As Akesson, B. and Oba, O. (2017) mentioned “comics can be a useful tool for students whose first language is not the mainstream language or for students with different learning abilities”. During my observations in the Centro Formativo de Antioquia, I noticed that the only variety of texts and material that students were exposed to were the copies the teacher brought to class. With these worksheets, they worked mainly on vocabulary and grammar topics through different activities such as completing sentences with the correct verb conjugation, or answering questions about a reading. There were times when she did not give them the copies and they had to buy the copies themselves or write the text in their notebooks:

“She told them that she was just going to lend them the copies and they should write the text in their notebooks. Some Ss preferred to make a copy of the document and asked the cooperating teacher if they could go to the stationery”. (Journal 7, September 19th, 2022).

It seems that the lack of variety in resources and class activities affected students' engagement and English development. After analyzing the class environment and students'

attitudes, some effects could be evident: 1) Student's attitudes towards English, 2) poor development of productive skills, such as writing, and 3) The materials and activities proposed are not interesting to the students.

Student's attitudes towards English. Since learners are not exposed to language practices such as listening, speaking, and writing, they have shown attitudes such as a lack of confidence, fear to speak, and reluctance towards the teacher when she speaks in English. The following journal excerpt is an example of students' unwillingness to have the class in English: "Once they finished, the CT started to explain in English what they were going to do next, again like in the previous classes the Ss asked her to explain in Spanish" (Journal 4, September 12). Furthermore, the lack of language practice and exposure leads students to avoid speaking and using the language since they feel ashamed of speaking in front of the class. This attitude can be illustrated in the following journal entry: "The SS are suggesting to do another activity because they didn't want to speak in front of others" (Journal 6, September 15).

They are not developing productive skills, such as writing. The main writing practice they are developing is by stating short sentences connected to the grammar or vocabulary they are working on for the term. Those sentences are usually presented in copies or written on the board. Sometimes, students have to go to the board and complete blank spaces in sentences to conjugate the correct verb in the tense they were working on: "The CT brought a paper sheet in order to diagnose their understanding level of the previous topic (Simple past) and grade their pronunciation. There are two types of sheets, they have different sentences" (Journal 4, September 12). Besides, students are exposed to a reduced variety of texts as copies intended for the purpose of developing certain skills such as reading comprehension, grammar practice and

vocabulary building. The importance of developing productive skills such as writing is to use the language purposefully to communicate meaning, however, when I had the opportunity to grade the students' notebooks, I noticed that the students had difficulties writing simple sentences: "I arrived earlier and graded the notebooks, most of the Ss didn't complete the task and the ones who finished made mistakes in the sentences having a low grade. Only four Ss could have a passing grade"(Journal 4, September 12).

The materials and activities proposed are not interesting to the students. The implementation of activities that are not attractive to students causes a lack of interest in participating and learning the language. Therefore, the students' response to English is negatively affected. This can be portrayed through the copies brought by the teacher. They are mainly addressed to develop exercises such as filling in the blanks and answering reading comprehension questions. These types of practices are not interesting to the students and are the only version of English that they are exposed to. I noticed that while they were doing those types of class activities, they were dispersed and unfocused: "The other Ss were talking a lot while their classmates were presenting, they were not doing the activity proposed in the copy nor practicing the pronunciation." (Journal 8, September 22th, 2022). For this reason, it can be said that the lack of variety of texts, materials, and resources caused multiple effects on the students' English learning process and their interest in using the language. Therefore, by promoting other types of activities, providing a variety of materials and texts, and encouraging students to develop productive skills could change the situation of this class. One possible alternative to tackle this is the use of comics as a literacy practice. They could be useful to catch students' interest to be involved in the language and as Lopez and Varón. (2018) stated "Comics can be

included in regular classes, by creating connections between stories and school subjects”. This means that comics can be adapted to the learners’ interests along with the school subject.

In conclusion, improving writing practices through the creation of comics can be a significant study because students would be exposed to different types of texts that will allow them to be involved in more complex thinking processes, they would also use the comics to transmit a message and communicate, and they will be able to innovate and create the comic according to their personal interests as it was mentioned by Akesson, and Oba (2017).

“Therefore, as a learning tool, comics can create a more inclusive classroom setting, and the accessibility of comics means that students can process the information at their own pace and convenience.”. (p. 6). In addition, productive skills, especially writing practices can be developed through the use of texts that involve more complex processes. According to Akesson and Oba. (2017), “Comics enable students to escape the potential tedium of learning, involve their multiple senses, and provide practical techniques to understand difficult social issues” (p. 10).

Theoretical Framework

To better understand this research project, it is important to explain three key concepts that can illustrate why comics are a useful tool to improve students’ writing practices. First, the benefits and characteristics of narrative texts to promote writing practices. Second, the usefulness of comics in the English classroom; their benefits to engaging students in social problems and the easy adaptation they can have, their purpose, and their main characteristics. Finally, the writing practice which will lead us to the benefits of writing a comic.

Narrative texts

Aschawir (2014) states that “Narration is a storytelling that is used to describe a situation, preserving history and also to entertain the readers” (p. 91). Given the fact that this research project is focused on the use of comics, it is important to differentiate visual narratives from written narratives. Beckley (2014) remarks on the difference between these two types of narratives:

“When considering visual versus written narratives, I am referring to the balance of words to visuals. I am labeling written narratives as stories that utilize mainly written words in the entirety of the story, from the story construction to its publication. Whereas a story that is visual, consists primarily of visual media to create and tell the story” (p. 5).

Comic

After seeing the different types of narratives, we can define what a comic is. Will Eisner (2000) as cited in Lewkowich, D. (2019), was the comic artist who spread the term graphic novel, and sequential art. Throughout his career as an artist, Eisner explained how images follow one another to tell a narrative. Taking into account this definition, we can describe comics as a sequence of images that can form a narrative.

The use of comics in the classroom

In English teaching, it is important to provide students with materials that are interesting to them. When we select the materials for the classes, we should look for instruments that promote the use of different thinking-level processes. According to Akesson and Oba (2017):

“Comics activate the senses and immerse students in an experience that goes beyond the topic. In this way, the genre requires a high degree of interaction between the text and the student and can therefore evoke insights that extend not only beyond words but beyond the classroom” (p. 2)

Taking this into account, we can say that comics are an excellent instrument to enhance the thinking processes because it will activate different brain practices such as relating and integrating images and text to give a meaning to the narrative. Additionally, comics can be adapted to any linguistic objective we want to achieve, allowing teachers to diversify the focus topic they choose such as social issues, environment, health, entertainment, etc. López and Varón (2017) stated that:

“Comics can be included in regular classes, by creating connections between stories and school subjects like social sciences, biology, ethics, and languages. In this sense, comics are quite useful, supporting texts and images to express their ideas and to develop their skills in L2. ” (p. 105).

In addition to what was mentioned by the authors, this flexibility can help us to work with different learning styles. They also mentioned that “comics can be a useful tool for students whose first language is not the mainstream language or for students with different learning abilities”(p. 6).

Furthermore, the use of comics in the classroom is also more attractive to the students helping to the lack of students' interest and enthusiasm as it was mentioned in Gonzalez, Galindo and Gutiéllles (2020):

“The main reason why teachers resort to comics is because students do not understand abstract concepts, and those who adduce this reason mainly notice interest in their students. The second alludes to the fact that it is difficult for the student body to maintain attention. When used for this problem, the student body's reaction to the comic is one of interest and enthusiasm” (p. 178)

Writing practices

Before introducing the meaning of the process of writing a comic, I consider it important to define what writing is.

According to Cassany (1999) as cited in Lopez and Varón (2018) “Writing is a tool that keeps words and shares knowledge through history. In addition, writing is the product of a complex brain process that involves many functions from individuals” (p.103). Throughout history, writing has been used to save information and also has been considered a way to transmit messages. Therefore, with the practice of writing, students can express their feelings and share their likes and dislikes with others at the same time that they learn the language. We can also say that since writing is a brain process, it can be learned and then trained.

The writing process comprises different stages, as mentioned by Harmer (2004) in Lopez and Varón (2018) “the writing process corresponds to a progression identified by him as the process wheel and it is marked by four basic stages: Planning, Drafting, Editing and Final Version” Those four stages can be implemented and elaborated through the different practices students may have or learned during their school process.

The benefits of writing a comic

There are also various types of texts that can include writing, comics are an example of it, as it was mentioned, comics are narrative texts that include images which can be more attractive to the students. This makes comics an excellent tool to enhance students' interest in writing. As Lopez and Varón (2018) mentioned citing Bowkett and Hitchman, (2012) “comic books might be used as part of the teacher’s toolbox to develop literacy both in terms of children’s reading abilities and those of writing” (p. 105).

The use of visual images can be a stimulus to the students’ activating both hemispheres of the brain. As mentioned by Listyani (2019) “These visual images can be used to stimulate students to be creative and think logically Second, comic strips with empty bubbles and mystery pictures are good media to enhance their creativity in narrative writing and to sharpen students’ soft skills as well” (p. 216). The choice of activities will then be of the utmost importance, since through these, different skills can be developed.

In conclusion, teachers can use comics as a tool to enrich the classroom materials, with the use of adequate activities comics can trigger different brain processes, as mentioned by Lopez and Varón (2018):

“ Writing in comics is about people’s own original creations, which will be drawn by oneself or another artist. Thus, comics provide the chance of telling several stories, by using creativity. In addition, drawings and images permit complimenting students’ ideas to enrich their texts while having fun” (p. 105). Taking into account the benefits of using comics in the

classroom, can bring to the learning process, the following research question and objectives emerged.

Research Question

How to improve the students' writing practices through the use of comics in an EFL seventh-grade classroom in the Centro Formativo de Antioquia?

General Objective

Evaluate how the students' writing practices improve through the use of comics in an EFL seventh-grade classroom in the Centro Formativo de Antioquia.

Specific objectives

- To diagnose how the students are writing and to explore what are the main students' writing practices
- To determine how the development of writing practices encourages students to write comics about their own interests.
- To monitor how the implementation of writing preparatory activities allows students to produce their own comics.
- To identify the relation between students' writing engagement and the development of their writing practices.

Action plan

Considering the theories stated in the previous section, and with the purpose of using comics to improve writing practices in English in 7th-grade students of Centro Formativo de Antioquía, nine actions will be developed during my teaching practice, each of these actions has a main objective that will help me to collect data and analyze the results. The nine research actions are: 1 - Writing a comic as a diagnostic activity, 2 - Asking students about their writing practices, 3 - Presenting the generic characteristics, and features of the comic to the students, including how the comic emerged, and which countries have presented different styles, 4 - Deconstructing a comic: Explaining the comic's textual features indicating its elements such as images and illustrations, text, dialogue bubbles, and layout, 5- Reading different types of comics such as comedy, comics that talk about social issues, and comics about their interests, 6 - Providing comics templates for the students to explore their own style and topics of interest, 7 - Designing their own comics, and 8 - Asking students about their writing practices.

To contextualize the students about the project they will be part of, and diagnose and determine the students' writing practices, students will write a comic during the first week. This first comic will also serve as diagnostic text to compare the first and the final creation. As a second action, I will design a survey to ask students about their writing practices. This questionnaire will be analyzed to categorize their writing practices. Then, I will present the characteristics, and features of the comic to the students, including how the comic emerged. The aim of this activity is to introduce the comic as a narrative genre to students, explain how to read a comic, describe the comic components, and the value it has in society and its function. After

the third action, we will deconstruct a comic: explaining the comic's textual features indicating its elements such as images and illustrations, text, dialogue bubbles, and layout. This will help students recognize the elements of the comic to have a better understanding of it. During week 4, we will be reading different types of comics such as comedy, comics that talk about social issues, and comics about their interests. This action will be implemented to raise awareness about the comic's elements and understanding of the message deployed by the comics.

Once students have a broader idea of the comic and its components, during week five, I will provide comics templates for the students to explore their own style and topics of interest. This will be a preparatory activity that will help to evaluate students' understanding of the comic. After that week, students will be designing their own comics, and making decisions about the comics they want to write. As a final teaching activity, students will share their comics in order to expose their comics to share opinions about their classmates' creations and make corrections cooperatively if necessary. To conclude, the last research action will be to carry out a focus group interview to ask students about their writing practices. This action will help me triangulate data knowing students' opinions about the writing project and verify if their perception about writing and their writing practices has changed.

Data Analysis

To examine and analyze the three data collection instruments - namely, the journals, students' artifacts, and focus group interviews - a recurrence chart was utilized for data triangulation, comparison, and analysis. The analysis yielded three primary categories and with

them some subcategories: 1) Students interest about comics, 2) Students' writing practices, 3) Effectiveness of comics on improving writing.

The journals were meticulously examined and analyzed, utilizing predetermined categories that were aligned with the research study's theoretical framework and objectives. This categorization process facilitated the exploration of the journals in relation to the collected data. By employing this categorization process, it was possible to delve deeper into the content of the journals, identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights, and gain a comprehensive understanding of the students' performance, attitudes during classes, and my reflections. The careful analysis of the journals provided rich qualitative data that contributed to the overall triangulation and interpretation of findings.

Regarding the students' artifacts, three specific texts were considered for analysis: the first one was a text created before not receiving any instruction about how to create a comic nor the writing practices, the second one after explaining the comic creation process, and the third one was produced after completing the implementation of actions. The inclusion of these artifacts allowed for a comparative analysis of students' writing practices over time. The quality and performance of these texts were assessed using a rubric, and the impact of the instructional intervention on students' writing skills and development was measured through this rubric. This examination of writing production provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of using comics as a teaching tool. This approach enabled a comprehensive examination of the students' writing production before and after the instructional intervention.

Finally, the focus group interviews served as a means to gather students' perceptions of their engagement during the English course. Through meticulous transcription, these interviews were analyzed alongside the other data collection instruments, enabling a direct comparison between students' reflections and the findings obtained from the journals and artifacts. This comparison shed light on the effectiveness of using comics in the classroom, as students' perceptions of their engagement and learning experiences could validate or provide additional insights into the research findings.

Findings and Interpretations

After examining and analyzing the data, it became evident that the use of comics had a positive impact on the students' writing practices. However, contrary to expectations, the students' interest in this field was not as strong as anticipated. The findings of the study can be grouped into three categories: lack of students' interest in comics, students' improvement of their writing practices, and the effectiveness of comics in improving their writing skills.

Lack of students' interest in comics

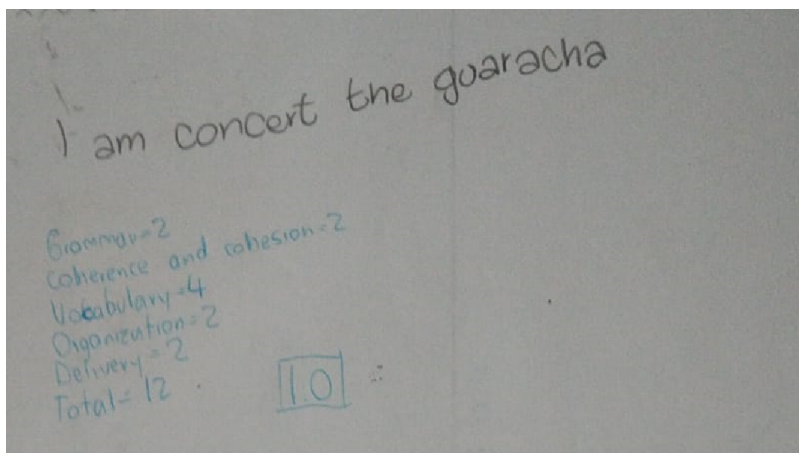
This first category emphasized the significance of incorporating comics as a medium that strongly resonated with students' interests in the writing activities. Considering what was mentioned by Seven (2023) "One of the most difficult aspects of teaching is how to motivate a language student. The secret is identifying the students' motivation then making the lesson relevant and enjoyable" (p. 62). In line with this, the survey results initially indicated that students expressed interest in working with comics. It was expected that by aligning writing

tasks with topics and themes that captivated their attention, their engagement levels would significantly increase. However, the findings from the first writing activity that served as diagnostic text to compare the first and the final creation revealed that the students did not find comics particularly interesting. This observation was supported by the comments made by students during the focus group interviews and the journal entries, which will be cited below:

“When I mentioned that I was going to work using comics, some of them seemed to be happy while others didn’t like the idea. They mentioned that they were not good at drawing. I told them that I was not going to grade the drawings, that it was more important the way they write.” (Journal 1, entry #1, February 21th, 2023)

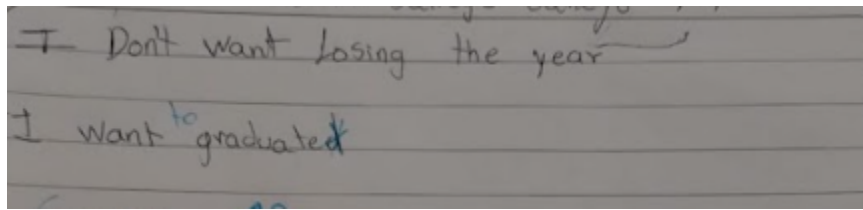
In addition, an interview with Student 4 supports the notion of students' limited interest in using comics during English classes: “Was it interesting for you to use comics during English classes? - Yes, but not for that long. I would prefer more reading and writing activities or group activities.” (Interview to Student 4, April 24, 2023). This response highlights Student 4's preference for alternative activities such as reading, writing, or engaging in group work, suggesting that the duration and emphasis on comics in the classroom did not align with their personal interests and learning preferences. Furthermore, this can be reinforced with the following citation of journal #4, in which I mention how students are getting tired of using comics in the English classroom: “Some of them seem to be bored of having to work with the comics. I explained once again why I have implemented those actions”. (Journal 4, entry #4, April 17, 2023).

Furthermore, as mentioned in the problem statement, the seventh-grade students were accustomed to using traditional materials such as grammar-focused worksheets and examples of the verbal tense and sentences written on the board. Consequently, some students found it challenging to adapt to the incorporation of comics, as they missed the familiar teaching methods. Moreover, the lack of students' interest in working with comics was further supported by their decreased attention during the activities. This can be illustrated through the following two excerpts from the journals, which provide concrete examples: "I gave them some minutes to read the comic on their own, however most of them were talking". (Journal 2, Entry 1, February 27th, 2023): "I think that some students are annoyed by my presence and the work we are doing, they don't seem to care at all, they are always talking when we are doing an activity or looking at their phones". (Journal 2, Entry 2, March 2nd, 2023). These journal entries provide evidence of students' lack of interest and diminished attention when working with comics, reinforcing the need to explore alternative approaches to engaging them effectively in writing activities. This can be also supported by the students' performance in the first text:



(Student 1, diagnostic text, February 23th 2023)

Although this was a diagnostic text and they were not given instruction about comic creation, the Cooperating Teacher had already made an activity where she taught the parts of the comic. During this task students were supposed to create a four strips' comic, however this student only made one sentence, without drawings, and since they had forty minutes to complete this activity, this leads me to consider that Student 1 was not interested in using comics as a means to learn the language. This can also be evidenced in the case of student 6 during a class activity that was made with the purpose of analyzing students performance and interest. The little amount of text and the missing drawings can lead to conclude that there is a lack of interest in working using comics during a class activity.



(Student 6, class activity, March 23th 2023)

Students' improvement of their writing practices

The second category is focused on students' writing practices highlighting the positive impact of utilizing comics as a tool to enhance their writing practices. Through the use of comics, students were able to express their thoughts and ideas more effectively. The visual and narrative elements of comics provided a supportive framework for students to develop their writing practices, leading to improving their coherence, sequencing, organizing and outlining their written work. In response to the question whether comics helped in the development of writing practices, the appreciation made by students 1 and 3 during an interview can serve as

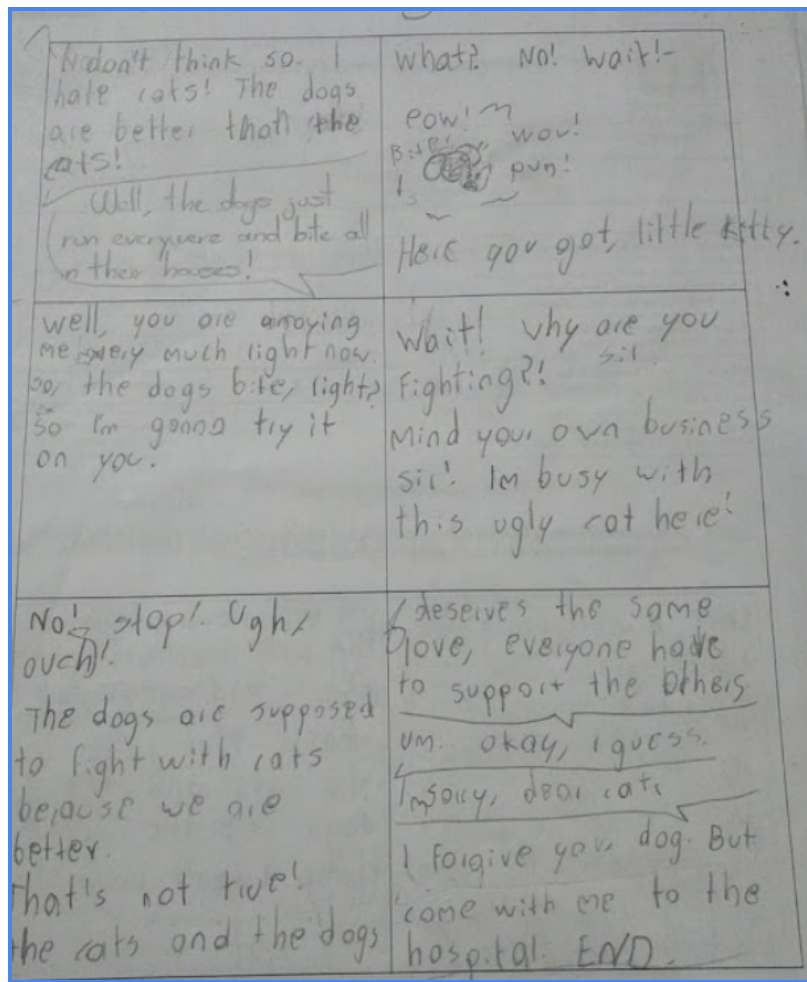
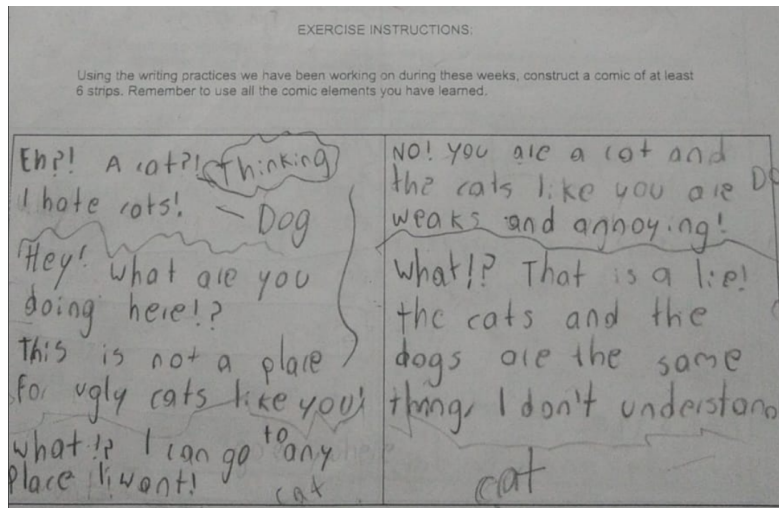
evidence: “Do you think that the comic helped to establish writing practices? - Yes, because you did teach us to analyze things well before writing, correct the texts, to make a draft... but I feel that there was not much focus on how to write sentences and use verbs well. (Interview to Student 3, April 24, 2023). Despite the fact that this student is mentioning that he wanted to focus more on the grammatical aspects, he mentioned that he could learn some aspects of writing practices, especially the pre-writing practices.

“Do you think that the comic helped to establish writing practices? - Yes, because you had us analyze the comics and write down the ideas before creating the comics ourselves. You had to follow a sequence and have the ideas connect.” (Interview to Student 1, April 24, 2023).

Additionally, during my teaching practice, I perceived that learners understood and made use of the writing practices that were explained before the writing process:

“While I was passing by checking their progress, I was able to notice that most students were planning, sketching, and doing a draft of their final comic”. (Journal 4, Entry 4, April 17th 2023). This observation highlights the active participation of the students as they dedicated themselves to the process of comic creation. This also demonstrates their willingness to incorporate writing practices before executing their final work. The following artifacts are evidence of the process that one of the students had and how she put into practice the theory creating a complete draft of the dialogues before doing the drawings :

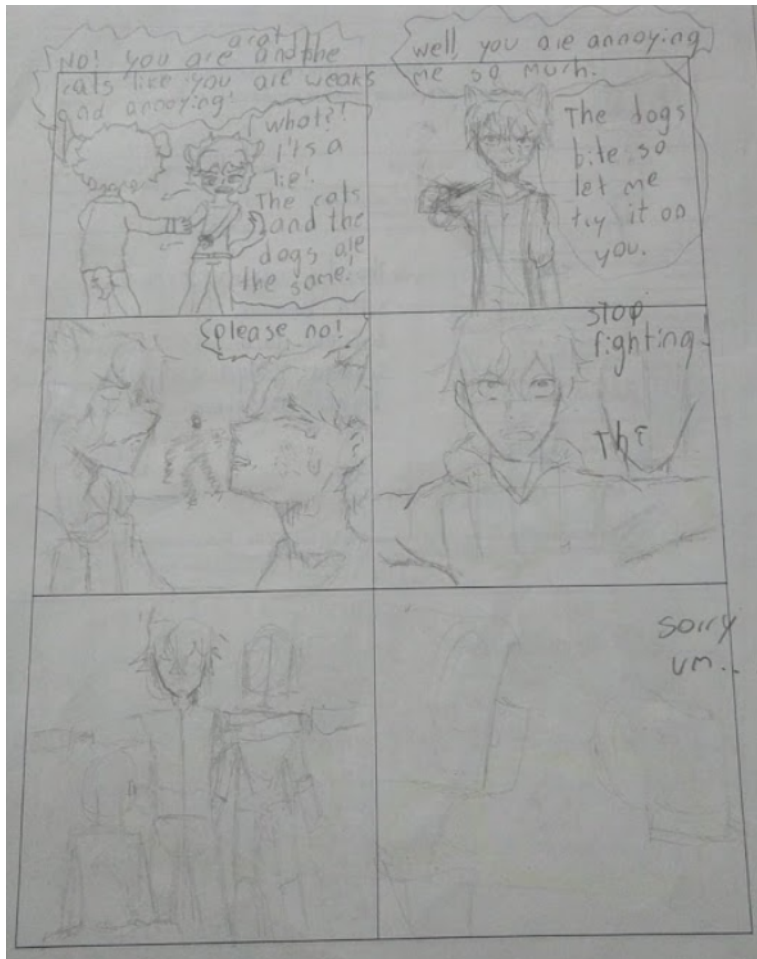
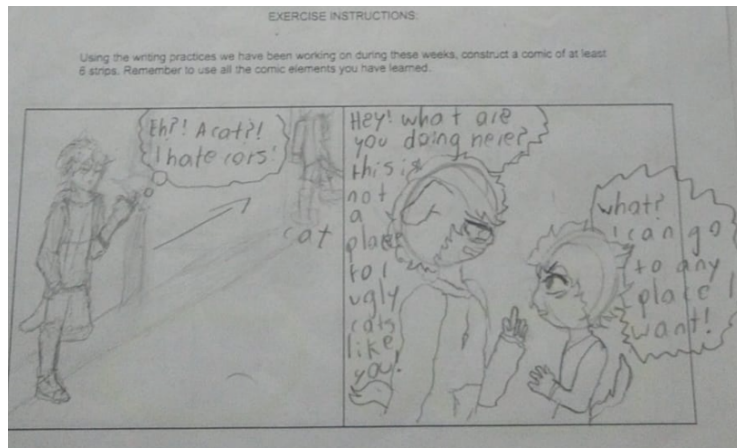
IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING PRACTICES THROUGH THE USE OF COMICS



(Student 8, draft of final text, April 18th, 2023)

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING PRACTICES THROUGH THE USE OF COMICS

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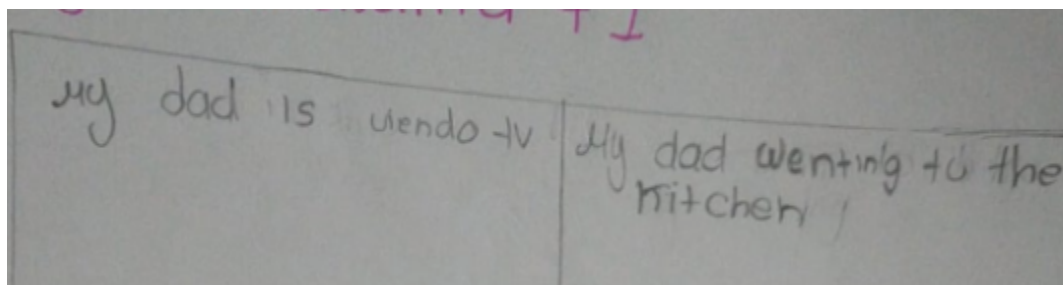
(Student 8, final text, April 18th, 2023)

In addition, the artifacts provide tangible evidence of the students' writing progress and the successful implementation of the writing practices. They show the students' growth and development throughout the process, demonstrating their ability to apply theoretical concepts such as making a draft, establishing main and supporting ideas, doing an initial reading, making corrections, and doing a final reading.

Effectiveness of comics on improving writing skills

The study revealed that incorporating comics into the English classroom and providing appropriate guidance and feedback generate improvements not only in writing practices but also when it comes to writing production such as use of the correct sentence structure, writing complete and coherent sentences, and including more text in the strips.

In the following evidence, we can see how this student in the first diagnostic text wrote two isolated sentences, using code switching, and even combining verbal tenses such as simple past with present continuous.



(Student 2, diagnostic text, February 23th 2023)

Consequently, we can see that after the implementation activities, the same student was able to construct a complete comic, that had a sequence and well-structured sentences:



(Student 2, final text, April 18th, 2023)

These results can also be supported in two interviews with two different students that stated to have a better performance in writing, since they were able to build longer, well-structured sentences to improve the dialogues: “Do you feel that the use of comics helped you improve your English level? - Yes. It was cool and I learned vocabulary and a little bit of grammar to write better sentences and dialogues” (Interview to Student 1, April 24, 2023). A similar answer was given by Student 2: “Do you feel that you have improved your vocabulary and writing ability through the use of comics? - Yes, as I said before, I learned new words and to write sentences a little better. (Interview to Student 2, April 24, 2023). These interviews provide additional evidence of the positive impact of incorporating comics as a learning tool for English language development.

Conclusions and suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the impact of comics on students' writing practices. First, the initial survey indicated that students were interested in working with comics, but during the implementation of the activities, the engagement levels were not as high as the initial survey showed. The incorporation of comics into the writing activities did not captivate the students as expected. This could be attributed to their familiarity with traditional teaching methods and their preference for more conventional materials.

By teaching the visual and narrative elements of comics, students were able to express more effectively their thoughts and ideas. The study also demonstrated that incorporating comics into the English classroom, along with appropriate guidance and feedback, resulted in

improvements in writing practices and production. Students showed improvement in using correct sentence structures, writing complete and coherent sentences, and including more text in the comic strips. This indicates that comics can be an effective tool for enhancing writing skills.

However, some students expressed the desire for more focus on grammatical aspects and sentence structure. The incorporation of comics into the English classroom did not motivate the students as much as expected, this leads me to consider that additional strategies may be necessary to improve student engagement when integrating comics into the curriculum because using the same type of activity during the whole term made students get tired of it and lose interest in it.

Overall, the use of comics had a positive impact on students' writing practices, however, individual student interests and preferences should be considered to ensure better engagement. The visual and narrative nature of comics provided a supportive environment for students to develop their writing skills. Nevertheless, it is important to note that some students mentioned that they wanted more emphasis on grammatical aspects and sentence construction. Thus, while comics proved to be effective in enhancing overall writing practices and production, it is important to balance fostering creativity through comics and providing explicit instruction on grammar and sentence usage.

Reflection

Personally, the teaching practice in foreign languages and engagement in teacher action research has been a transformative journey that has greatly contributed to my professional development. Throughout this process, I have come to recognize the immense potential of innovative approaches in enhancing my teaching practices and enriching the learning experiences of students, particularly in the domain of English language education.

The insights and findings derived from this study have not only expanded my knowledge but also ignited my passion for incorporating creative and engaging activities in language teaching. This also helped me to be more aware that although students initially showed a lot of interest in comics, this was actually a personal interest because their engagement decreased over time, and that we as teachers should consider a wider variation of activities that involve multiple students' passions.

I must admit that I have not always been fond of engaging in research activities. However, I have come to appreciate its significance in shaping effective teaching methodologies and improving student outcomes. The teaching practice in foreign languages and teacher action research have provided me with a newfound perspective on the value of research in informing and enriching my teaching practices. Through this experience, I have learned to embrace research as a means of personal and professional growth, recognizing its potential to bring positive changes in the classroom.

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