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**Implementing a Process-Based approach to enhance writing skills in 1st and 2nd graders**

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**Dedication**

To my family and my boyfriend who have always supported me during this long journey.

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I would like to thank my cooperating teacher Angela, my practicum teacher professor Elizabeth and my thesis advisor Danilo, for being patient and understanding with my process.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....07

Resumen.....08

Introduction.....09

Context.....09

Statement of the problem.....11

Theoretical Framework.....13

Writing.....13

Pedagogical approaches to L2 writing.....15

The socio-cultural strand.....16

Strategies to Develop Writing in Young.....18

Research Question.....19

Objectives.....19

General objective

Specific objectives

Action Plan.....20

Development of Actions.....21

**IMPLEMENTING PROCESS-BASED APPROACH TO ENHANCE WRITING**

5

**Data Analysis**.....22

**Findings and Interpretations**.....23

**It was not a lack of knowledge but a lack of exposure** .....23

**Different levels of scaffolding, explicit writing instruction and resources are needed for each of the process-based approach stages**.....26

**Scaffolding: the way to successful writing skills development**.....28

**Conclusions**.....35

**Recommendations**.....36

**References**.....37

**List of Figures**

Figure 1 Students write about the family members they love .....24

Figure 2 Students write a letter to a museum together as a whole class writing exercise.....25

Figure 3 Student revising stage: pointing out classmates’ mistakes .....28

Figure 4 Students answer questions about the teacher’s favorite toy with the red marker.....30

Figure 5 Contrast of one student's first and final writing piece .....31

Figure 6. Word wall and class roles posters as meaningful print examples in the classroom....34

**Abstract**

This study is an action research project carried out with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders of the course kids 1 at Centro Colombo Americano de Medellín, Belén site. The aim of this project was to enhance 1st and 2nd graders' writing skills in EFL classrooms by implementing a Process-Based approach to writing and integrating effective scaffolding strategies into the activities developed during the course. The data collection methods included teacher observations registered in the student-teacher's journal, one student survey, five class artifacts analysis and a Cooperating Teacher interview. Data was analyzed using the triangulation method with all the tools. The results showed that implementing the Process-Based Approach in the writing workshops enhanced students' writing skills by improving spelling, vocabulary knowledge, sentence construction, and written language communicative awareness.

*Keywords:* writing, young learners, process-based approach. Scaffolding, ZPD, print-rich environment.

### Resumen

Este estudio es un proyecto de investigación-acción realizado con estudiantes de 1° y 2° grado del curso Kids 1 en el Centro Colombo Americano de Medellín, sede Belén. El objetivo de este proyecto fue mejorar las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes de 1° y 2° grado en clases de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE) mediante la implementación de un enfoque basado en el proceso de escritura e integrando estrategias efectivas de andamiaje en las actividades desarrolladas durante el curso. Los métodos de recolección de datos incluyeron observaciones del maestro registradas en el diario docente, una encuesta a los estudiantes, el análisis de cinco artefactos de clase y una entrevista con el maestro cooperante. Los datos fueron analizados utilizando el método de triangulación con todas las herramientas. Los resultados mostraron que la implementación del enfoque basado en el proceso en los talleres de escritura mejoró las habilidades de los estudiantes al mejorar la ortografía, el conocimiento del vocabulario, la construcción de oraciones y la conciencia comunicativa en el lenguaje escrito.

*Palabras claves:* Escritura, jóvenes aprendices, enfoque basado en el proceso, andamiaje, ZPD, entorno rico en texto.



## **Introduction**

This work aims to determine How implementing a Process-Based approach will enhance writing skills in 1st and 2nd grade EFL students. This project consisted of two stages developed between February and November 2024. The first stage was devoted to observation and familiarization with the context, while the second phase focused on addressing an identified issue within that context. During my observations, I noticed very few instances of written production during the class. The only written production students had was limited to reinforcing students' letter formation, spelling, and occasionally vocabulary knowledge. This was attributed to the common belief that students need to be able write in L1 before starting writing in L2. Moreover, teachers normally feel undertrained to teach this skill at such young ages. For this reason, in order to improve that situation, an approach to writing considering the student's writing stage, literacy development in L1, and the teacher's scaffolding should take place.

The following pages will provide a description of the theoretical references I used to design the writing activities, the actions implemented and the impact they had in the teaching and learning process. My hope is that future student-teachers risk trying the Approach with their learners and see the positive impact it has in their literacy development.

## **Description of the Context**

The institution where I implemented the action research is the Centro Colombo Americano de Medellin (CCAM) which is a non-profit Bi-National center (CBN) whose principal objective is to promote the cultural and academic exchange between Colombia, USA, and other countries. The institution has established sites all around Antioquia in places such as: Medellin, Apartadó, Bello, Envigado, and Rionegro.

The institution's mission is to foster social and human development through meaningful cultural and academic experiences between Colombia, the USA, and other countries. As for the vision, by the year 2025, the CCAM intends to continue being a national and international cultural and educational reference, positioned with inclusive cultural and academic programs that respond to society's needs through innovation and the use of technology.

My cooperating teacher (CT) holds a bachelor's degree in preschool teaching from Universidad de Antioquia and an MA in Education and Social development from the Universidad de Manizales in association with the CINDE. She has been connected to the CCAM for many years since she studied and learned English at Colombo Medellin and worked as part of the administrative area before becoming an English teacher. She has around 9 years of teaching experience, mostly done at Colombo; nonetheless, she has worked in a public school in Girardota, where she taught for about a year.

Participants in the study included 16 students, 10 girls and 6 boys that were just starting the kids program; however, some of them have studied in Colombo in previous courses in the preschool program, and the others are new to the institution. Students were between 6 and 7 years old and are currently in first or second grade in elementary school. They were students who come from well off families that live around the area (strata 4, and 5), and all of them studied in private schools in Belén, Laureles and the Stadium sector. Most of them have been exposed to the English learning and teaching process since a very early age in their preschool and some of them are currently studying in a Bilingual school (San Ignacio de Loyola).

The academic department at Colombo is divided into two programs: the adult's program and the Kids and Youth program. The Kids and Youth program is divided into 3 more mini-

programs that differ according to the student's ages and schedule availability. The one I accompanied for my research was the kids 1 and kids 2 in Belen site in Medellin; the kids' program is divided into 18 courses for kids from 7 to 18 years old. Each course is semestral, and the classes last 2 hours per week, so they have a total of 18 sessions.

### **Statement Of Problem**

During my observations, I noticed very few instances of written production during the class. The only written production students had was limited to reinforcing students' letter formation, spelling, and occasionally vocabulary knowledge. Although the development of these features is pivotal to developing writing skills, one of the main purposes of writing for young children should also be to communicate ideas and thoughts with a purpose and public in mind (Zerin, 2007). In my observation, the CT primarily developed activities such as flashcard games, word repetition, and recognition of spoken vocabulary, favoring the development of oral skills; however, printed words were not presented until later, in a short worksheet activity in which students had to trace words or copy from the board the vocabulary previously presented in the images (journal, 30/03/2024- 11/04/2024).

The phenomenon presented in my class is not an isolated case. Multiple sources agree that writing production for young learners in EFL and ESL classrooms is often neglected and limited, and even though the field of writing in L2 has significantly developed in the last 30 years, it has failed to reach teachers' practices (Hope, Gerden, Tanya, Wright, & Bingham, 2019). The common belief is that in preschool and kindergarten, the primary source of English teaching should be oral skills (speaking and listening); according to Cameron (2001), speaking and listening are the

mediums with which children encounter, understand, practice, and learn a foreign language for the first time, that is why, oral skills should be the base for language teaching for young learners.

Additionally, when literacy activities are implemented in the preschool English classroom, teachers feel more confident in teaching reading than writing, which makes writing a skill that is almost completely neglected in the classroom. VarNess et al (2013) and Shin (2014) suggest that this issue is caused due to teachers often feeling ill-equipped and inexperienced in teaching writing and the belief that children should be able to write in their L1 to be able to do it in L2. In my classroom, the teacher developed reading activities such as recognizing printed vocabulary when writing on the board and bringing big books or stories to read together with the students. However, the only opportunities students had for writing were when the teacher gave them handouts where they needed to complete some sentences with a vocabulary already provided on the board; the teacher would write the answers on the board exactly as students needed to write them in the spaces, thus the activity became a copying exercise where there was no communication involved in the task.

The lack of opportunities for writing in English results in preschool and 1st-grade classrooms where little writing instruction and a print-rich environment are provided to students, which is detrimental to their overall second language acquisition process. Writing in the early years of elementary school is as important as reading since children's print knowledge and early writing skills are significant predictors of later literacy development. Furthermore, research shows that writing predicts literacy skills, spelling, and narrative writing up to 3rd grade (Gerde, Hope, Wright & Bingham, 2019). In my context, I could evidence that most of the students had reading proficiency according to their literacy stage; by demonstrating visual, phonological, and lexical knowledge (Shing & Crandall, 2018) and they were willing to be more active writers since they

asked to get involved in writing activities when playing games. However, it is also evident that they did not feel comfortable when writing because handwriting is still challenging for them. (Journal, 04-18/04/2024).

To conclude, writing development in young learners has visible benefits for their language proficiency in a foreign context. Writing assists children's oral language development, fosters future literacy development, and supports the literacy process learners are experiencing in their native language (Shin, 2014). The development of writing skills starts from a very young age, even before formal writing instruction. However, young learners must be explicitly instructed in writing to foster language development and ensure literacy success in further education. (Shin & Crandall, p. 185, 2018). That is why, an approach to writing considering the student's writing stage, literacy development in L1, and the teacher's scaffolding should take place in order to improve writing skills significantly. My research project aimed to enhance 1st and 2nd graders' writing skills by implementing a series of writing workshops under the approach of Process-Based writing, which contains different stages that helped students develop the skill little by little. Moreover, during the development of the activities in each stage, different scaffolding strategies were implemented to ensure students' support during the process.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Writing**

Writing refers not only to the act of scripting text, but also refers to the act of thinking, composing, and encoding language that entails discourse interactions within a sociocultural context (Cumming, 1998). Writing has many purposes: to communicate, interact, remember,

inform, and learn; and these same purposes are the ones students in L2 contexts should learn with a focus on self-expression which reinforces oral language development (Shin, 2014).

Writing encompasses various stages and conventions that children learn throughout their literacy journey. In the first years of preschool and kindergarten, children start with awareness and exploration of text by drawing and scribbling until they are finally able to write letters. At the emergent and early literacy stage, children as young as 5 years old start developing phonetic awareness and understanding of how sounds and spoken words relate to speech and vice versa (NAEYC/IRA, 1998). Starting in elementary school, children start to clarify the concept of words by developing word awareness in meaningful contexts; spelling and writing language conventions; explicit writing instructions start to happen, and the process of reading and writing are intertwined since the development of one represents a substantial advantage for the development of the other.

Additionally, spelling instruction becomes an important component of the literacy process. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), students in second grade should be able to read more fluently and write different types of texts on an ample variety of topics to communicate with different audiences; students should use common letter patterns and conventional spelling of words; moreover, they have to use simple sentence structures, punctuation and be able to proofread their work.

According to Shin (2014), at the beginning of the 1st and second grade, writing can consist of activities where students write words or complete sentences according to a specific grammatical structure or write the model text the teacher writes on the board; however, children also need the opportunity to create authentic text for authentic purposes that is meaningful to them and to the audience to whom they are writing. To guarantee the meaningfulness of the writing assignment,

Shin presented the FAT-P model which describes the specifications that every writing assignment should consider. First, we have the Form, which indicates the type of writing or genre of the text (letter, e-mail, journal, story, etc.); second, is the Audience, which consists of the people who will read the text; third, is the Topic, which is the thing that will be communicated; lastly, Purpose, which answers the question of what is the reason to write? (to inform, entertain, remember, express feelings, etc.).

### **Pedagogical approaches to L2 writing**

According to Shin (2014) and Hudelson (1988), the knowledge that children have of writing in their native language will transfer to the second language, so they will be aware of the purpose of writing and how to bring their knowledge of the world to the construction of text. There are two major approaches to writing in a second language: a product-based approach and a process-based approach. The first one focuses on the final product and the latter focuses on the process of writing. Nonetheless, as we understand writing not only as the final product of a course but as the process of self-expression and construction of meaning through interaction, the Process-based Approach contains the features necessary to reach the mentioned goal.

#### **Process-Based Approach**

This approach sees writing as a creative process that requires time and the teacher's intervention in all the steps of the writing process until reaching a final product. In the first stages, accuracy of spelling and grammar is not sought, since the main goal is for students to express their ideas and construct meaning by exploring linguistic and other resources (Shin, 2014). Just by the end of the process, when the product will be "published", it is when the accuracy of grammar and mechanics will be revised and corrected.

According to Shin (2014), the Process Approach encompasses different stages that can be better instructed with Writing Workshops; these are a series of activities that will help students create their own pieces of writing step by step. The stages of the Writing Workshop are:

- Brainstorming and discussing in this step, students together with the teacher will be able to identify the topics for writing. The activities that should be implemented during this stage are brainstorming individually or with classmates and activating previous knowledge by having developing discussions.
- Drafting: after having a rough idea and topics on what to write about, students will write focusing on getting ideas on paper rather than worrying about spelling, grammar, or accuracy.
- Conferencing: students will share the first draft with another student so they will help to point out what is understandable or what needs to be clearer and what content is more desirable for the piece.
- Revising and Editing: students will improve their pieces of writing by considering their classmates' suggestions and correct the text according to the teacher's suggestions. Controlled and guided writing activities could be developed in this stage.
- Publishing: Students will share the writing with a real audience in their educational environment.

### **The socio-cultural strand**

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is crucial for L2 teaching and learning since human knowledge of language is shaped through the interaction of an expert and novice (Vygotsky, 1978 cited by Maeso, 2016). Vygotsky's theory proposes that children's development and learning unfold



within a social context in which interpersonal interactions facilitate children's learning processes. Adults have a pivotal role in this process by acting as mediators who introduce new ideas, concepts, and objects into the child's world; consequently, they serve as crucial facilitators, operating within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Cameron, 2001).

### **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

ZPD is defined as the disparity between a child's independent problem-solving ability and their potential with guided assistance (Shin & Crandall, 2018). In the English classroom context, this concept highlights the significance of teachers in supporting children's first and foreign language acquisition; since through accurate instruction and meticulously planned lessons, teachers contribute to children's linguistic development. In order to narrow the ZPD, the concept of scaffolding appears which signifies the social and affective support the participants provide to each other in the process of learning (Maeso, 2016).

### **Scaffolding**

For Bruner, language holds an important role in a child's cognitive development, therefore he introduced the concept of Scaffolding to explain the way language can be used to support a young person in carrying out an activity. Transferring this concept to the classroom and teacher-student interaction setting, scaffolding can be used as a teaching strategy for helping children be more competent in a language (Cameron, 2001, P. 9). By directing attention and remembering the task goals, the teacher is helping students attend what is relevant in the class. Some examples of this strategy are when teachers: suggest, praise the significance of an activity, encourage rehearsals, are explicit about organization, model, remind, and provide part-whole activities.

Another useful idea for language teaching derived from Scaffolding is the notion of Formats and Routines. According to Cameron (2001), formats and routines are the events in which scaffolding can take place since they can provide opportunities for meaningful language development as they allow the child to actively make sense of a new language from a familiar experience, promoting language growth. The context and familiarity of an event is the perfect opportunity for children to predict meaning and intention, and with time teachers can mix familiar language with variety and novelty using more complex language.

### **Strategies to Develop Writing in Young Learners**

As in the Process-based approach, developed through the writing workshops, teachers' intervention is fundamental, and as writing is seen as an interaction process, there should be a series of strategies implemented in the teachers' instruction to support students' writing development step by step. The strategies that will be used are meaningful print in the classroom environment and using scaffolding strategies for promoting writing.

Print in the environment involves any print that is displayed around the classroom or the available printed resources (Gerde, 2016). Meaningful print is useful and functional for children. For instance, an attendance chart where children sign in and a menu in the dramatic play corner are examples of meaningful print. Additionally, books and magazines provide children with valuable examples of printed material that support their own writing endeavors.

The scaffolding strategies refer to the ones developed in Quinn, Gerde and Bingham's *Help Me Where I Am: Scaffolding Writing in Preschool Classrooms*. In this article, the authors propose 3 strategies named Low-level. In the Low-level scaffold, the child requires the least effort and the

teacher's highest level of support. Low-level scaffolds include modeling, reducing choices, and guiding.

- Modeling refers to the demonstration the teacher does of a task that students need to develop later, hoping they imitate the teacher's actions when they perform the task by themselves (Quinn, 2016).
- Guiding refers to the direct cognitive and physical support teachers give to students so that they start having autonomy in a task before they completely develop the task independently (Quinn, 2016).
- Reducing choices means limiting available response choices to help students narrow their focus and cognitive demand (Quinn, 2016).

### **Research question**

How do implementing a Process-Based approach will enhance writing skills in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade EFL students?

### **Objectives**

#### **General Objective:**

To enhance 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders' writing skills in EFL classrooms by implementing a Process-Based approach to writing and integrating effective scaffolding strategies in the activities developed during the course.

#### **Specific Objectives:**

- To diagnose students' current writing skills according to their literacy development level in L1 and L2.

- To Implement the Process-Based Approach to writing in two cycles of writing workshops to be able to support their writing process throughout the different stages.
- To Support the implementation of the Process-Based approach by developing in each of the stages high-level scaffolding strategies such as extending, explaining, and comparing and low-level scaffolding strategies such as modeling, reducing choices, and guiding
  - To Explore the use of the Process-Based Approach on students' writing by determining the enhancement in conventional letters, and spelling patterns; the use of simple sentence structure and punctuation; and the ability to proofread and revise their work.
- To Evaluate the perception of the implementation by interviewing the teacher and conducting a survey with the group of students about their perception of the activities and strategies developed during the course.

### **Action plan**

To conduct this research and after considering the Statement of the Problem, the Research Question, and the Specific Objectives already mentioned, I planned to carry out different writing workshops in two cycles, in which I introduced little by little the approach stages. In the first two weeks, I did a diagnostic writing activity that served as the starting point to analyze students' current writing skills and plan the activities based on the results. Then, I shared the project information with students and parents and got permission to collect data with the consent form.

From week three to five, I modeled the Approach before developing with students since this could be a brand-new methodology they were not accustomed to. For modeling the approach, I used the Language Experience Approach LEA as reference by Shin & Crandall (2018). Once the approach has been modeled, weeks six to eight would be used to implement the Writing Workshops stipulated by the Process-based Approach. In the first classes, students did activities related to brainstorming, drafting, revising, and conferencing, and in the second class they would be editing and publishing their works. Once they finished all the stages, a survey was carried out to find out more about students' perceptions of their writing skills and an interview with the CT was held to find out her insights into the process. Based on students' results, data was analyzed in the following weeks to organize a second cycle of workshops that were implemented from week nine to ten and yet have another round of data analysis that was developed in weeks eleven and twelve.

### **Development of the Actions**

The plan had to be modified a little bit due to some circumstances regarding the number of students and time management. The number of students from February to June was 10 in total; however, this second semester, six more students were added to the group which made it difficult to have a continuity from last semester. Consequently, we had to dedicate the first classes to getting to know the new students and let them get familiar with the group and teacher before carrying out the actions. After that, the action plan was developed without major disturbances, in the first 5 weeks we got to do the diagnostic and modeling activities following the LEA to emphasize in developing students' writing skills supported by constructing text together with the teacher. With the teacher's journals and class artifacts, we could collect data on this important initial stage of students' writing process.

Then, in week 6, the first writing workshop was implemented. I decided to modify and unify some of the approach steps, therefore it was a simpler and friendlier process for students since we could diagnose that they were still lacking many skills for sentence completion and punctuation. On September 26<sup>th</sup>, we decided to do the brainstorming and planning process and then the drafting and reviewing. Students could complete the stages, and they submitted their text, so the teacher could collect the data, and analyze it together with the journals. The next week, revising and publishing stages were implemented to develop students proofreading skills. The idea was to develop a second cycle of the same stages; however, due to lack of time, this was not possible, so it was decided to get the finding and interpretation, analyzing the existing data.

### **Data Analysis**

This study was carried out following the action research method. Stringer (2014) defined action research in the field of education as “systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to the problems that confront their everyday lives” (Stringer, 2014, as cited in Hendrick, 2017). Following this idea, the gathering process for this project was made using four sources: Observation journals, five class artifacts, one student’s survey, two and a CT interview.

Once the data was gathered, I decided to undertake the interim analysis proposed by Hendrick (2017). The author explains that interim analysis is an “informal process of ongoing data analysis and reflective planning, which means looking at and thinking about data as they are collected and then making changes, if necessary.” The steps proposed for this type of data analysis are: 1. Reducing data by analyzing the most formal and structured one. 2. Interpret data, and 4. Draw conclusions.

Initially, I gathered the data for the first weeks of implementations and started analyzing the journals and students' artifacts to conclude which parts of this information were more relevant. Then, I collected the second part, that included another set of journals, class artifacts, students' surveys and CT interviews, created a graphic, and wrote text that described and interpreted the information to have a better structure. After that, I coded the structured data into 15 codes that described the factors related to the research question to later group the most repetitive and similar into families. Afterwards, I used the triangulation approach proposed by Patton (1999) to crosscheck the codes in the families, structuring them in such a way that 4 categories were found. Finally, I interpreted each category to finally reach the 3 findings that will be explained in the next session.

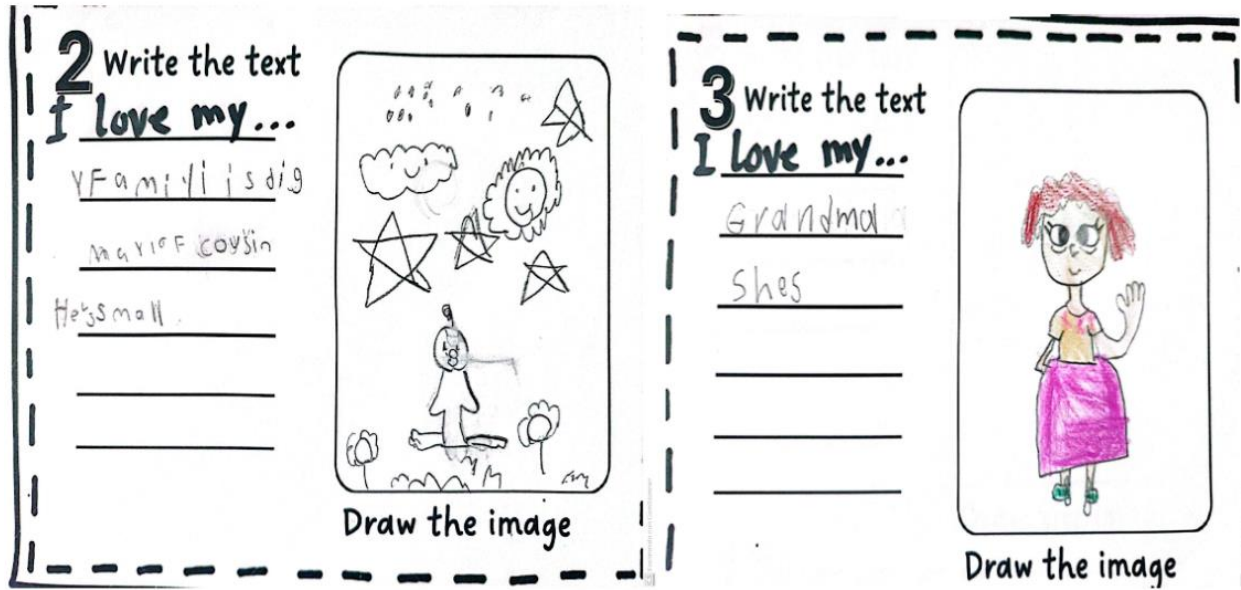
### **Findings and Interpretations**

The data analysis showed interesting results in terms of the positive impact the Process-Based approach had. Three main themes emerged from this analysis: first, it was not a lack of knowledge but a lack of exposure, second, different levels of scaffolding, explicit writing instruction and resources are needed for each of the process-based approach stages, and third, Scaffolding: the pathway to successful writing skills development.

#### **It was not a lack of knowledge but a lack of exposure**

After analyzing the data, I found That exposing students to writing instruction during the class, enhance their writing skills. In this sense, the results of the diagnosis activity portray the lack of writing skills activities in the class. When I implemented the diagnostic activity, the results showed that students had deficiencies in almost all aspects of their writing skills; for example, In the figure one, we can observe how students struggled with letter patterns and conventional

spelling. We can also observe that they weren't able to structure complete sentences; they did not have a notion of punctuation, and some students did not even finish their writing, prioritizing



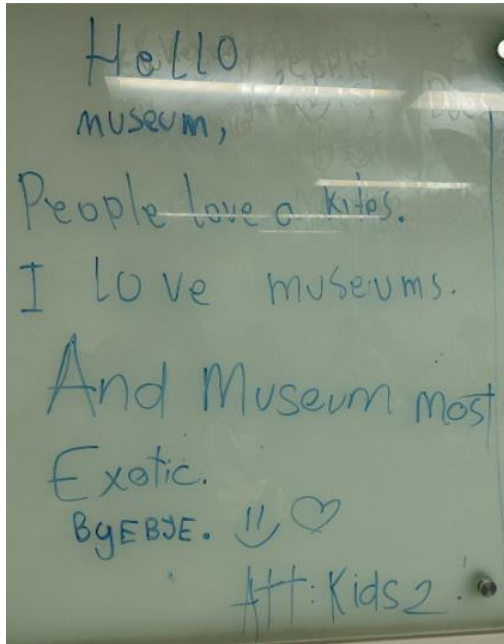
drawing over writing.

Figure 1. Students write about the family members they love. (Class artifact 1, 08/08/2024).

Including writing workshops in class played a crucial role in evidencing that students' writing skills could be improved since early stages. From the very first-time students were given the opportunity to participate in the teacher-students-joined writing workshop, with few explicit writing instructions, students displayed a more sophisticated vocabulary, spelling and writing mechanics knowledge. For instance, when students were asked to retell some information about a story, a student could write a complete sentence such as "in the museum you can see a picture" "in the museum, they can see dinosaurs, animals and a dollhouse" (journal 1, 05/09/2024). Another example is when students were asked to write a letter to a museum on the board, with the help of her classmates, one student was able to write on the board "people love museums" (teacher's journal, 12/09/2024). During this activity, students were able to construct a somehow complete and



clear paragraph which shows a big improvement in comparison to the diagnostic activity (see figure 2).



*Figure 2.* Students write a letter to a museum together as a whole class writing exercise. (Class artifact 3, 12/09/2024).

To conclude, in the diagnostic activity, students showed little knowledge of writing skills in regards of conventional spelling, vocabulary, sentence completeness, capitalization and punctuation. Nonetheless, when students were given the opportunity to write, following structure guides with LEA and Process- Based approach, we could see a great improvement in the writing abilities they were lacking before. This means that the positive performance of students, since the very first actions of the research, supports what the authors stated that young learners were not given enough space and opportunity to write, limiting their second language development (Hope, 2019; VarNess et al 2013; and Shin, 2014).

**Different levels of scaffolding, explicit writing instruction and resources are needed for each of the process-based approach stages.**

Supporting students' progress in some stages from the approach implies different challenges due to students' perceptions, motivations, engagement, type of activities, and materials that were needed to support their progress. This was particularly evident when students during the brainstorming, planning and drafting process highly participated and engaged during almost all the activities, resulting in excellent outcomes. opposed to the revising and publishing stages, in which students could not even submit the results of their work because they could not finish or did not understand the activity proposed.

During the brainstorming and planning process an emphasis in whole-class interactive activities, games and exposure to stories, toys and videos were used to support the scaffolding strategies. Students responded to these strategies positively as described multiple times in the teacher journal entries: “ Students were very enthusiastic to retell the parts of the story they remembered...” (journal 2, 05/09/2024); “When doing whole-class brainstorming activities, there is high engagement by more than half of the students” (Memo 1); “Students were enthusiastic and willing to participate in the guessing” (journal 3, 12/09/2024). Student reactions, and high engagement in the activities during the stages made evident that the scaffolding strategies such as modeling, guiding and reducing choices, and materials used were accurately selected and implemented to support students' performance.

On the other hand, when the drafting stage started, a shift in students' behavior was visible since several students showed initial reluctance and anxiety to the process of writing. They expressed their concern about not knowing how to write in English, despite having done it before with the teacher, and they asked the teacher if they could write in Spanish instead of English (journal 26/09/2024). Students' attitudes towards writing independently indicated that students felt a big gap in supporting strategies from one stage to the other. To help students cope with the lack

of confidence they felt about writing on their own, additional supporting material was required, namely, writing process posters, brainstorming and writing sketches formats to help them comprehend the nature of the process. Nonetheless, as time went by, the learners noticed that by following the models the teacher previously presented in the previous stages, they could construct their own text, encouraging their engagement little by little resulting in well-written paragraphs.

Finally, revising and publishing were the most challenging stages due to lack of time, supporting material and scaffolding strategies adaptations. During these stages, students were supposed to revise their peers' writing pieces to develop proofreading and editing skills to later be able to apply it in their own writings. However, students took more time than expected to perform this task, therefore, they could only do the corrections to their pairs and not to their own writings. Additionally, when students were correcting their classmates' texts, many of them did not understand the conventions used to point out the mistakes, using them in inadequate situations (class artifact 5 memo, 03/10/2024). For example, in figure 3, we can see a student that wrote the convention "S" for spelling to correct the word "My", which is not incorrect, and used the convention "P" for punctuation to correct the punctuation of the sentence with " my Dog", but more probably the student wanted to correct capitalization, which used the convention "CP".



Figure 3. Student revising stage: pointing out classmates' mistakes. (Class artifact 5, 03/10/2024).

By analyzing the data from these artifacts, we can conclude that students needed a more direct, formal and individualized instruction of the punctuation and capitalization mechanics in writing. As this is quite difficult in a group with numerous students with different levels of writing skills development, Varness (2013) suggested a way to cope with this difficulty, by grouping students in levels of writing performance development, and in this way the teacher can prepare more personalized writing instruction based on each group's needs. The scaffolding strategies of modeling, guiding and reducing choices as implemented in the previous stages were unsatisfactory to support students' performance on the task. Moreover, materials such as a checklist could have been a better and simpler support to students than the conventions. Nonetheless, revising and correcting was one of the most enjoyable stages for them because they could move around the class, interacting with the teacher and other classmates (class artifact 5 memo, 03/10/2024).

### **Scaffolding: the pathway to successful writing skills development**

The low levels of scaffolding: modeling, guiding, and reducing choices were the pillars of the successful achievements we encountered along the way of the writing process. They allowed students to increase vocabulary knowledge, develop brainstorming and planning skills to generate and organize better ideas and improve sentence structure, and finally they helped to improve students' awareness of the communicative aspect of the written language as they could interact with a real public through their writings.

**Modeling.** The modeling scaffolding strategy of translating ideas into complete sentences through an inquiry process helped with students' writing enhancement. In most of the sessions, where students had to write together with the teacher, the teacher modeled the questions to ask yourself in order to write the content you need for the required type of text. According to (Varness,

2013) think-aloud strategy is the type of modeling that better works for exemplifying thinking processes. For example, after reading a text the teacher told students they were going to write a letter to a museum and then asked aloud “what information do I include in a letter? How do I start a letter? Etc. (journal 2, 12/09/2024). She wrote students' answers using complete sentences following the structure subject+ verb+ complement, including capital letter and punctuation. This modeling of translating ideas from the form of inquiries to complete written sentences helped students later to write in the same paragraph the sentence “I love museums.” (see figure 2) which followed the same pattern.

Another successful example of modeling happened when the teacher, together with the students, wrote on the board complete sentences answering the questions. The teacher previously modeled the way they had to answer the same questions using a text and then they did the same exercise but then students were shown a different visual and they had to answer using complete sentences. In figure 4, we can see that students successfully answered the questions using complete sentences. The modeling the teacher had done is the sentences with black marker and the sentences students constructed are written with the red marker.

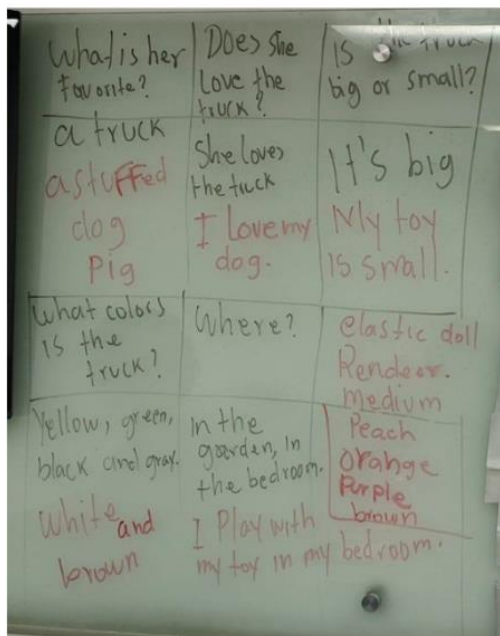


Figure 4. Students answer questions about the teacher's favorite toy with the red marker (Class artifact, 2024)

Finally, students achievement of brainstorming and planning skills enhanced students' ability to write independently. All students in the workshop could write a meaningful and complete paragraph. According to the analysis of students' texts "we can evidence that following the teacher's model of writing students' could easily write well-structured sentences that followed the pattern S+V+C. Students could write their own compositions by following the model of the beginning and structure of sentences but modifying the information to write about their own toys." (class artifact memo, 26/09/2024).

The contrast between one student's first texts in the diagnostic activity and the one he presented after following the writing workshop validates the premise that modeling enhances sentence writing skills (see figure 5). In the image below, we can see how students not only improved the sentence structure but also word separation and spelling, showing an increase in awareness of the importance of sentence structure to convey a message.



Figure 5. Contrast of one student's first and final writing piece. (Class artifact, 26/09/2024)

Modeling is a powerful tool for writing instruction since not only sets the expectations and standards students will follow when developing the task but also fosters engagement and involvement in the process, making them feel part of the construction of a tangible and purposeful communicative piece.

**Guiding.** Guiding made students more aware of the importance of writing as a communicative tool that facilitates interaction with the public. In all the sessions, when any of the actions were implemented, there was always an inquiring process of generation questions and answers from text (printed or visual). Through questioning and answering dynamics, students could see examples of how oral communication can become words that have the purpose of giving information, allowing interactions among the people present in the classroom. Examples of this are described multiple times in the teacher's journal. For instance, in the session students read

information about a kite museum, the teacher asked students questions related to the content of the text which they would later use to write a letter to the same museum:

“...we could brainstorm the information we learned from the text. The questions were the following: What can we see in the museum? Do people love or don't love museums? Does the museum have big kites? Fish kites? Small kites? Cat kites? Dog kites? Butterfly kites? Bird kites? While they answered the questions, I wrote the answers on the board, using keywords, complete sentences, and symbols.” (journal 3, (12/09/2024).

Another instance of interaction was when students, in the same session, had to write a letter to the museum

“I started asking How do we start a letter? And What greetings do they know? They answered hello. I asked students what the letter for the “h” sound and they said the answer with the letter some of them in English, some others in Spanish.” (journal 3, (12/09/2024).

Another example of this idea is depicted in this extract:

“Later, the teacher asked again, “what else do you want to write in the letter?”, one student raised her hand and asked for writing on the board what she wanted to say. She wrote “And museums most Exotic.” Finally, the teacher said that they needed to say goodbye in the letter, so one student offered to write the farewell and wrote: “bye-bye att: kids 2” (see figure 2). (journal 3, (12/09/2024).

With the exercise, students could more evidently observe how the ideas they brainstormed before and the sentences they wrote together with the teacher when they were reading, supported them to write a text that had the purpose of interacting with an audience, the people from the museum. Moreover, spelling and vocabulary aspects were important to convey the message.



Finally, students demonstrated their understanding of this communicative purpose in the publishing process when, as the CT mentioned in the interview, they were asking throughout the sessions what parts of the text were pending to have everything ready for their toy museum presentation (CT's interview, 14/10/2024)

**Reducing choices.** Supported by print-rich environment activities, this strategy served as a tool for increasing student's vocabulary knowledge and so their conventional spelling knowledge, which ultimately reflected on students' improvement in understanding of the print language, allowing them to write with higher levels of sophistication and accuracy (Gerde, 2016). This evidence was reinforced by the CT when she mentioned in the interview that the greatest improvement she saw in students after the implementation was the vocabulary and spelling (CT' interview, 14/10/2024). The strategy of having posters of the roles of the day and useful expressions to use in every class paved the way for introducing the strategy of a word wall (see figure 6). The purpose of the word wall was to make them feel supported when they needed to start writing independently, and this proved to be very effective when, in the drafting stage, students eagerly used the vocabulary in word wall to write their text about their favorite toys “ During the activity, many students asked how to write certain words, fortunately, many of these words were the ones we already reviewed and they were on the board. The words that were not in the word wall, I added them.” (journal 3, 26/09/2024).

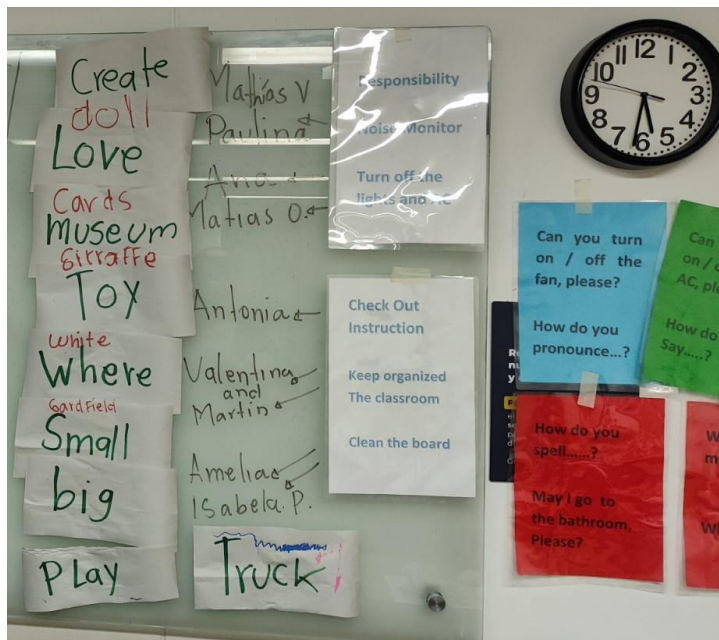


Figure 6. Word wall and class roles posters as meaningful print examples in the classroom. (Class artifact, 26/09/2024)

Reducing choices by using print-rich environment proved to be helpful in supporting students' writing skills development because it helped students be more aware of the meaningful purpose that print language has, increasing students' vocabulary and reinforcing their use of conventional spelling and common letter patterns.

To conclude, the success these strategies brought to the writing process was invaluable since they served as a teaching tool for almost all students' needs. Young learners need a lot of support in the writing process since they are just starting their literacy process, and every part of composing text is new to them. That is why, these low-level scaffolding strategies are 1st and 2nd grade teachers' best friends. On the other hand, we can see in the different journal extracts that in order to successfully implement one, the other have to happen before, after, or at the same time to finally be effective.

## Conclusions

The implementation of a Process-Based approach to writing has enhanced writing skills among 1st and 2nd grade EFL students by improving spelling, vocabulary knowledge, sentence construction, and written language communicative awareness. There were some challenges related to students' need for differentiated and more individualized writing instruction and time constraints. However, the approach demonstrates potential for significant positive impact when supported by effective scaffolding and interactive learning strategies.

The findings suggest that teacher guidance and Scaffolding are Critical for writing success. Modeling, guided practice, and resources like word walls and structured questions were essential in helping students progress. However, clear instructions and consistent routines are necessary to address variability in comprehension and ensure all students understand and complete tasks effectively.

On the other hand, this project was limited by different situations. Firstly, while the scaffolding activities proved to have impacted greatly on students' outcomes, additional examples and guided practice may help students better internalize the expectations for the revising stage of the process. In this vein, having better time management to allocate a space for students to correct their work based on peer feedback is crucial. This step was omitted due to time constraints, which limited the opportunity for students to learn from the revisions.

Furthermore, there was a need for differentiated support during some stages of the writing process. Providing tailored support for students who struggled, particularly with spelling and paragraph completeness, may help them build confidence and competence in these areas. So, in this sense, splitting students in smaller groups and preparing specific writing instructions for each

of them could ensure not only a major support but also improve focus and accountability, ensuring all students are actively engaged.

Finally, these results are relevant because writing production for young learners in EFL and ESL classrooms is often neglected and limited, and has failed to reach teachers' practices (Hope, Gerde, Tanya, Wright, & Bingham, 2019). There is also a common belief that in the first years of elementary school only oral skills should be fostered and practiced during the English course. Nonetheless, this study demonstrates that not only are students more than capable of receiving writing instruction with the aim of enhancing more sophisticated writing skills, but also that they are highly motivated and engaged while developing them.

### **Recommendations**

For further research, I recommend expanding the implementation of the Process-Based approach to writing joined with the LEA because these two approaches, although one is mostly to reinforce reading and the other writing, complement each other so much that we could say that the positive results in students writing were directly connected to the synergy of both approaches. Also, dividing writing skills to be taught in throughout several workshops could be a better approach to give students space to understand concepts that could be a bit more advanced such as capitalization and punctuation.

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