

Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede Pacífico  
Comisión de Trabajos Finales de Graduación  
Departamento de Filosofía, Artes y Letras  
Sección de Lenguas Modernas

Final graduation project to obtain the Licenciatura degree in the teaching of English.  
The Effectiveness of Using Feedback Instruments for Assessing Writing Short Stories in a  
Tenth Grade Group from CINDEA Judas, in the third school district at Dirección Regional de  
Educación of Puntarenas, during the second school term, 2020.

La Efectividad en el Uso de Instrumentos de Retroalimentación para la Evaluación de la  
Escritura de Cuentos Cortos en un Grupo de Décimo Año del CINDEA Judas del Circuito 03  
de Puntarenas, durante el segundo periodo del 2020.

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I term, 2021



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**Letter of approval of the members of the tribunal**

**Signed Affidavit by the Members of the Tribunal and Project**

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Defensa de tesis celebrada a las 10 horas del día 18 del mes de Junio del 2021, en la ciudad de la Puntarenas. Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede del Pacífico.

## **Dedication**

This research process has been a worthy academic endeavor and great experience that was full of challenges. At this moment, we want to thank our families for their unconditional support during some difficult moments. We do not have the words to thank you all who encouraged us to continue with this study. In Addition, we would like to thank our mentor of the project, Ph.D Jorge Andrés González Porras, who believed that we could succeed in this academic journey. As well, we want to thank the readers of the project, M.L. Rosberly López Montero, and MS.c. Jonathan Salas Alvarado for their unconditional collaboration. Similarly, we thank the high school principal at CINDEA Judas, MSc. Luis Fernando Elizondo Carrillo for providing us the opportunity to conduct the research study in this institution, and to Licda. Arelys Salazar Vargas for collaborating with the tenth-grade students considering the COVID-19 affectation in our country and the limitations faced during this time.

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## GLOSSARY

CEFR.....	Common European Framework for Language Reference
CINDEA.....	Centro Integrado de Educación de Adultos
EFL.....	English as Foreign Language
ESL.....	English as Second Language
IELTS.....	International English Language Testing System
MEP.....	Ministerio de Educación Pública
TOEIC.....	Test of English for International Communication
UCR.....	University of Costa Rica

## **Abstract.**

This study reports on the effectiveness of using feedback instruments for assessing the writing skill of tenth grade students using short stories. This action research study followed a mixed methodology. The participants were 11 students ages 15 to 42, in a tenth-grade group from CINDEA Judas in the third school district at Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas, during the second school term of 2020. The main objective of this research was to examine the possible effectiveness of implementing feedback instruments for assessing writing skills with a sample population through the creation of short stories. Interestingly, the researchers found that 73% of students (8 learners) improved their writing proficiency at the end of the fieldwork stage. The results obtained revealed that the use of feedback instruments is effective in upgrading a learner's writing mastery. For instance, 55% of the participants were able to increase their vocabulary repertoire. Also, for the final result, 45% of the students gained satisfactorily outcomes and 55% of the learners improved their scores in their grammar insights showing a marked improvement compared to the diagnostic test results. Finally, the researchers concluded that through the implementation of feedback instruments using short stories strategies EFL learners can improve their writing skills more effectively. Lastly, it is recommended that MEP authorities train their language instructors in the use of this pedagogical strategy.

**Keywords.** Effectiveness, Feedback Instruments, Rubric, Assessment, Short Stories, Ministry of Public Education.

## **Resumen.**

Este estudio informa sobre la eficacia del uso de instrumentos de retroalimentación para evaluar la habilidad de escritura de los estudiantes de décimo grado utilizando cuentos cortos. Este estudio de investigación utilizó una metodología mixta. Los participantes fueron 11 estudiantes de 15 a 42 años, en un grupo de décimo grado del CINDEA Judas en el tercer distrito escolar de la Dirección Regional de Educación de Puntarenas, durante el segundo período escolar 2020. El objetivo principal de esta investigación fue examinar la posible eficacia de la implementación de instrumentos de retroalimentación para evaluar las habilidades de escritura con una población de muestra a través de relatos cortos. Curiosamente, se encontró que el 73% de los estudiantes (8 estudiantes) mejoraron su dominio de la escritura al final de la etapa de trabajo de campo. Los resultados obtenidos revelaron que el uso de instrumentos de retroalimentación es eficaz para mejorar el dominio de la escritura del alumno. Por ejemplo, el 55% de los participantes pudieron aumentar su repertorio de vocabulario. También, en el aspecto de gramática en el resultado final, el 45% de los estudiantes obtuvieron buenas calificaciones y el 55% de los aprendices consiguieron muy buenos resultados mostrando una mejoría notable comparado con los resultados del examen diagnóstico. Finalmente, los investigadores concluyeron que a través de la implementación de instrumentos de retroalimentación utilizando estrategias de cuentos, los estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera pueden mejorar sus habilidades de escritura de manera más efectiva. Por último, se recomienda a las

autoridades del MEP dar capacitaciones a los docentes de idiomas en el uso de esta estrategia pedagógica.

**Palabras claves.** Efectividad, Instrumentos de Retroalimentación, Rúbrica, Evaluación, Cuentos Cortos, Ministerio de Educación Pública

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION**

## **Introduction and justification**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The English language has become a lingua franca in Costa Rica. In fact, it has been taught since the 1820's as an attempt from the Ministry of Public Education to launch a bilingual educational project. This goal is stated in the official governmental program named: *Costa Rica Multilingue*. Moreover, the teaching of English was developed to express ideas and thoughts in a written form and for long-distance communication; thereby making, writing one of the most relevant linguistic skills of the English language. Therefore, it is necessary to develop writing skills effectively for students as they need to communicate with others, and express their opinions and ideas about specific topics.

In fact, a study was conducted about the history of the teaching of writing in Costa Rica by Córdoba, Coto, and Ramírez (2005), who stated that the English teaching field merged in Costa Rica in 1825. At that time, teachers in charge of those classes were native speakers of the language (p. 3). However, in 1954 the University of Costa Rica (henceforth, UCR) began to teach English instructors in terms of pedagogy and didactics. Notwithstanding, in 1957 the Universidad de Costa Rica opened the English teaching major at the Faculty of Education at the main campus in San José. (Córdoba, Coto, and Ramírez, 2005, pp. 3-4). Nowadays, English is part of the curriculum developed by the Ministry of Public Education, in which English teachers are provided with the syllabus to be taught in the country whether at private or public institutions.

Currently, in order to be able to work as a language teacher at Ministerio de Educación Pública (henceforth, MEP), English instructors are required to take a language examination test to evaluate and certify their knowledge of the language based on the parameters established by the Common European Framework of Language References (henceforth, CEFR). This language evaluation can be assessed through different testing



exams, such as the *TOEIC* test, the *IELTS* test, and the *CAMBRIDGE* test, which are reliable language certifiers known worldwide. Based on the grade obtained by the test taker the authorities can determine if a candidate has the requested language level to be legible as a future teacher candidate (i.e. independent user C1). Having these tests provides students better opportunities to improve their language level as they attend classes with teachers who have truly mastered the target language. In addition, it is important to state that the English language is taught in Costa Rica from kindergarten through high school. In other words, the average Costa Rican will study English for over eleven years throughout the educational experience.

Another important feature to highlight in language teaching is the use of authentic materials, which plays a crucial role in the foreign language learning process. Moreover, it is necessary that the language instructor be knowledgeable in the implementation of a variety of creative teaching techniques to provide learners with opportunities to develop the target language accurately. For example, short stories have been used in language teaching in different educational contexts. Firstly, in the article, “Using Short Stories in the EFL Classroom” written by Zahra and Fahrira (2016) the authors point out that short stories have important advantages for language teaching:

Using short stories in the EFL classroom exposes learners to distinctive opportunities for educational, intellectual, cultural and linguistic development.

Short story is considered as one of the literary genres that can be used in the EFL classroom to enhance language skill, motivate students, and increase their cultural awareness and tolerance. (p. 12).

Secondly, in the article, “Using Short Stories to Teach Language Skills” published by Pardede (2011), he describes that short stories are more adaptable didactic resources for language teaching contexts as opposed to other literary genres such as: poetry, novels and

drama which have flaws and disadvantages at the moment of using them for academic purposes (p. 17). As a matter of fact, Pardede (2011) states that a short story contains one plot, few characters, and does not include details regarding setting, therefore implying that short stories are easy for students to follow a storyline. (p. 17). Equally important, the adaptability that short stories have in educational contexts transform them as a valuable pedagogical choice, which teachers can use in their classes. Moreover, it is important to point out that since short stories maintain a written structure, students can easily mirror their own writing skills by creating short stories based on a topic related to the academic subjects being covered in a school period.

Thirdly, in the article, “Towards an Understanding of the Benefits of Short Stories in Oral Communication Courses” by Sevilla and Méndez (2015), they conducted a research in which short stories were used as the basis for a reading project through different communicative activities. In addition, Sevilla and Méndez (2015) determined that: “student centeredness, self-confidence, and positive attitudes towards reading significantly increased when using short stories for oral communication in English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL) contexts, all this while a step is taken towards attaining the cultural competences that today’s multicultural and multilingual world demands” (p. 1). By and large, the use of short stories allows students to develop their oral language skills successfully.

Even though writing short stories does not tend to be a popular teaching strategy, the benefits that can be obtained by a group of students to start writing is valuable. As a matter of fact, employing writing skills as a learning practice may yield students to search for alternatives to present their own ideas in the target language. Besides, writing short stories based on educational themes would lead students to reinforce their writing skills and concepts learned in regular classes by means of different academic school content. As mentioned by Zahra and Fahrri (2016), the use of short stories has several benefits for students, for

example, the author suggests that learners can be motivated because of the format and layout of this material and hence increase their cultural awareness. In fact, these are important aspects that have to be considered by teachers and students when teaching and learning a foreign language.

Consequently, one of the benefits that short stories bring to the field of language teaching is their adaptability to be employed in different listening, speaking, reading and writing activities. This possible adaptation encourages teachers to have alternative pedagogical strategies, which generates positive linguistic results among learners. Also, it provides students authentic opportunities to improve their language skills. In brief, the exploration regarding the use of short stories in language teaching, it can be argued that short stories offer various educational advantages. In fact, they are feasibly adaptable to different educational contexts, and through its regular implementation students can develop their linguistic macro skills<sup>1</sup>. This research process has been a worthy academic endeavor and great experience that was full of challenges. Finally, we formally present this research paper.

In turn, the Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP) incorporates in the third cycle study program, the Communicative Approach as one of the language methodologies to be employed in the teaching of the English Language. The Communicative Approach is therein described as a pedagogical means to obtain fully bilingual students. In addition, the current study program by MEP (2016) for the teaching of English in third cycle was developed in 2016 in an attempt to improve the language proficiency level of students from public institutions as they were not reaching the language standards of English after eleven or twelve years of instruction (p. 12).

According to the MEP's English Study Program (2016), which is based on the Action Oriented Approach, students improve their language skills and communicative competences

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<sup>1</sup> Macro linguistic skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing.

by developing meaningful linguistic tasks. It is also argued that teachers must implement feedback instruments using either analytic and/or holistic scales, rubrics, progress indicators and checklists to collect evidence of the students' linguistic performance (p. 51). Thus, the importance of this study lies on the premise of determining the extent to which the use of feedback instruments improve the writing skills among the students of tenth graders at CINDEA Judas institution.

It is necessary to mention that there was an educational reform, which was applied in the current English Program where the Ministry of Public Education switched from using the Communicative Approach to implementing the Action-Oriented Approach. According to MEP (2016), the Action Oriented Approach is: "one of the latest communicative language methodologies which places emphasis on what learners know and do to communicate successfully by completing tasks, using general and specific competences in meaningful context and real-life scenarios" (p. 25). As established by MEP (2016), the Action Oriented Approach's main objective is student centered where the goal is focused on improving the student's communicative skills. This reform was implemented by MEP using the language parameters established by the CEFR. Therefore, it is valid to point out that there is a clear correlation between the program *Costa Rica Multilingue* and the English Study Program proposed by the Ministry of Education as they promote citizens who are fully bilingual.

In addition, it is remarkable to state that MEP's English Study Program develops necessary contents for mastering this language to high school learners; therefore, feedback is a fundamental element from the learning process where either students or teachers are involved. Considering the purpose established by the MEP of arranging bilingual students, the educational schools and highschools of Costa Rica should adapt the needed actions to achieve the objectives set out in the MEP's Study Program. In this context, the CINDEA institutions in Costa Rica uses this Study Program focused on developing bilingual students.

The current research was developed at CINDEA Judas institution in the third school district at Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas. The participants in this study were one group of tenth grade students and their respective English teacher. It is important to note that due to the 2020 worldwide pandemic that face to face research was not a viable option; therefore, the researchers applied the study instruments using different virtual platforms including *Microsoft Teams* and *Whatsapp* to gather the necessary information. The research team was able to conclude that the application of short stories and the use of feedback instruments were effective, which was then presented as a recommendation for the implementation of a proposal for English teachers from the third school district of the Puntarenas Dirección Regional de Educación, to use the aforementioned techniques as a valuable source to be implemented in the language classroom.

## **I.2 Justification**

As it is pointed out in this research, there is a pedagogical need of having students being able to master effective written English. Indeed in 2015, the National English advisor from MEP; MSc. Ana Campos reported to La Nación Newspaper that: “What our education system offers is insufficient. It focuses on teaching what reading comprehension is, without speaking and listening being practiced” (Barrantes, 2015, para. 5). However, in the current English Study Program proposed by MEP (2016) there are several language objectives that students are expected to reach and based on the claims stated by the National Advisor to that news outlet have not yet been fully achieved. In fact, those aspects involve the implementation of different activities for ESL learners develop linguistic macro-skills; for example:

- a) Use knowledge, skills, and abilities beyond school contexts.
- b) Express their own points of view
- c) Take action in favor of sustainability of local, national and global resources.

d) Use ICTs and access to knowledge networks as tools for communication, innovation, and proactive social service.

e) Reflect and use critical thinking processes. (p. 13).

It can then be inferred that the MEP's English Study Program is designed to provide learners with the necessary knowledge to be able to accomplish the objectives stated above.

On the other hand, feedback is another aspect to be analyzed in this paper. In a research study titled "An Analysis of Written Feedback on ESL Students' Writing", published by Pei Leng in 2014, feedback is presented as a gap between the lecturer and the students, in her words: "The teacher provides feedback to enable students to read and understand the problems and use it to improve future writing" (p. 2). That is, by providing feedback teachers become pedagogical mediators in charge of leading the learning process. In addition, for Hyland and Hyland (as cited in Pei Leng, 2014) the authors mention that an efficient feedback approach creates a sense of direction to the students based on their educational needs. This is because when students are corrected effectively, they gain confidence on the subject of study (p. 7). In fact, it is necessary to state that based on the Action Oriented Approach proposed by MEP, students are requested to produce diverse pieces of writing including sentences, paragraphs, essays, and even short stories. Additionally, as stated in such program, it is expected that students can:

consciously assess their language performances (using rubrics, checklist and other technically designed instruments that are provided and explained to them in advance).

Teachers assess performance, provide feedback in the form of assistance, bring back useful words and phrases to students' attention, and provide additional pedagogical resources to students who need more practice (p. 38).

Therefore, it is expected that through the use of feedback and assessment instruments learners can self-assess their writing progress. Additionally, with the teacher's collaboration

and suggestions about writing, students are able to become aware and hopefully overcome any possible difficulty in the writing area. Indeed, this investigation was focused on determining the possible effectiveness of using feedback instruments to improve writing skills by means of short stories. Moreover, the researchers from this study utilized the MEP's learning outcomes, which are based on the language band descriptors depicted by CEFR. In other words, the researchers examined the Study Program for the teaching of English in third cycle, as a reference to identify the written language proficiency level expected from the target population. Indeed, according to the curriculum students should attain the A2 language proficiency band (i.e., low beginner) as the outcome required for primary school. In turn, according to MEP, (2016) for high school students the language level required is intermediate (i.e., B1 or B2) (p. 5). In addition, this curriculum was designed with the aim that by the year 2021, learners enrolled in seventh grade would reach a B1 level at the end of Diversified Education" (MEP, 2016, p. 5). Using such information, the investigators developed a language diagnostic evaluation to determine the starting language level of the participants. After that, based on the results gathered from the diagnostic test, the researchers were able to provide the participating students the necessary input to write short stories at the B1 proficiency level.

### **I.3 Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this research was to examine the possible effectiveness of implementing feedback instruments in the assessment of writing skills with tenth grade students by providing them feedback based on a rubric that measured their written language performance when developing short stories. Moreover, from a more detailed perspective, feedback is herein perceived as the basis for this research, due to the fact that it would create awareness of their weaknesses, which in turn would facilitate the improvement of their writing techniques. Lastly, the importance of this research lied on the premise that by

implementing the feedback instruments strategy through the use of short stories tasks, students from tenth grade at CINDEA Judas would be able to improve their writing skills and therefore would be able to communicate in the target language effectively, as well.

## **I.4 Research Objectives**

### **I.4.1. General Objective**

To analyze the effects of using feedback instruments to assess the writing skills of students from tenth grade using short stories at CINDEA Judas in the third school district from Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas.

### **I.4.2. Specific Objectives**

1. To identify the extent to which the current study program proposed by Ministerio de Educación Pública for the teaching of English in tenth grade includes a reference of the writing language proficiency level expected from the students by means of a comparison chart and a diagnostic evaluation to the target population.
2. To recognize the effects of using feedback instruments employed by teachers when assessing students' writing skills through the production of short stories with a tenth Grade from CINDEA Judas in the third school district from Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas.
3. To examine the effects on using feedback instruments as a means to foster the writing language skills of students from a tenth grade at CINDEA Judas through the implementation of short stories.
4. To determine the teachers' perspectives when using feedback instruments in the assessment of the writing language skill by means of an interview to the collaborating teacher from the CINDEA Judas in the third school district from Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas.



## **CHAPTER II**

# **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **II.1 Key concepts defined**

For English teachers in Costa Rica it might be challenging to assess the writing skills of language learners properly. Furthermore, the need to propose alternative and innovative assessing strategies becomes a significant pedagogical undertaking, especially during the current worldwide pandemic situation, which requires teachers to employ creative techniques to help learners achieve their language goals. Thus, this section defines key terminology related to the assessment of writing skills through the implementation of short stories, using feedback instruments as a way to thoroughly highlight the complexity which it implies.

#### **II.1.1 Study Program**

Having a study program is absolutely necessary in almost all educational organizations around the world. In fact, a study program includes the learning outcomes which are expected to be achieved by the learners in a specific period of time. In turn, Pukelis (2011) mentioned that: “a study program can be simply described as the basis of competences” (p. 44). In other words, the study program depicts the competences, abilities, and capabilities to be achieved by a single learner or a specific group of individuals. Briefly, a study program is related to competences; however, various scholars mention that it is preferable to refer this term as learning outcomes rather than merely competences. According to Pukelis (2011) learning outcomes and competences refer to different phenomena; however, they do not differ in connotation, but rather in the generalized expression of this meaning: a competence does not elaborate knowledge and skills while a learning outcome should be elaborated in three dimensions: knowledge, skills and competence (p. 44). In other words, a competence is a non-detailed learning outcome. That is, it is not described in terms of

knowledge and skills while a learning outcome is a detailed competence described in terms of knowledge and skills.

This previous statement is essential to this study as it clearly defines the necessary pedagogical aspects a study program should include. Indeed, the researchers of this study thoroughly examine the Study Program proposed by MEP for the teaching of English in the third cycle, with the purpose of analyzing the theoretical foundation contained in the document for the assessment of the writing skills and the role of the language instructors.

#### **II.1.1.1 MEP's English Study Program**

In Costa Rica, the English Study Program proposed by the Ministry of Public Education for the teaching of English in students from seventh to eleventh grade was published in 2016. As a matter of fact, according to MEP's authorities (2016) one of the reasons that resulted in the elaboration of a new English Program was the fact that: "learners who receive English lessons in elementary and high schools are not reaching the expected English proficiency levels after eleven or twelve years of instruction" (p. 12).

MEP's authorities (2016) deemed it essential for the Costa Rican educational system: "to achieving this goal of having bilingual citizens in two or more languages by means of a comprehensive, articulated curriculum from kindergarten through high school" (p. 4). As illustrated by the MEP (2016), the current English Study Program was designed with the purpose of having students throughout the country reaching the expected English proficiency levels since this language is taught from kindergarten to high school. That is, students in Costa Rica spend an average of eleven years studying English, and yet they were not achieving the MEP's main objective of having fully bilingual citizens in two, or even more, languages.

An important aspect to be further developed is that the study program proposed by MEP (2016), hints at the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to be taken into consideration in the Costa Rican context:

a) It provides a common basis for the development of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, textbooks, and assessment.

b) It describes what language learners do at different levels of proficiency within particular domains and scenarios.

c) It defines 6 reference levels of proficiency, defined by means of appropriate “Can Do” performance descriptors to assess learners’ performance at each stage.

d) It provides a common terminology that can be adapted for all languages and educational contexts. (pp. 21-22).

As illustrated in the study program implemented by MEP (2016), there are important aspects that the CEFR facilitates for the teaching of languages in the public educational system. For example, the common foundation laid for the development of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, textbooks, and assessment shows accessible adaptation to the Costa Rican educational context. Secondly, it helps language teachers to determine how learners are expected to perform at different linguistic proficiency levels taking into consideration several language domains and scenarios. In addition, it provides three main language proficiency bands as a reference to assess learners at each stage of their learning process. Finally, the terminology provided by CEFR can be easily adapted to the Costa Rican educational context.

Another aspect that is included in the MEP’s English Study Program is the role of teachers when providing feedback to students to assess different skills, in this case, the writing skill. In fact, the MEP’s English Study Program considered it as a means to help students. “Teachers assess performance, provide feedback in the form of assistance, bring back useful words and phrases to students’ attention, and provide additional pedagogical

resources to students who need more practice” (MEP, 2016, p. 36). In other words, the implementation of feedback contributes to the student’s written language development process in different areas such as: grammar use, syntax development, vocabulary building, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, coherence, and cohesion.

### **II.1.1.2 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)**

As mentioned before, the Common European Framework of Reference for Language has been included in the Study Program proposed by the MEP to be applied in Costa Rican public schools and high schools, as a reference to assess the learners’ language proficiency level. First of all, it is necessary to understand what this international framework represents. Moreover, this European Framework also measures English proficiency level by stating the language proficiency parameters which are intended to measure learners' language mastery language ability on a scale: from A1 (beginners) to C2 (Advanced), going through A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2. In regards to the application of the CEFR in Costa Rica’s educational context, the English study program established by MEP (2016) indicates that:

The CEFR defines communication as a social act, where learners are social agents, developing a range of general and specific communicative language competences, moving from learning about the language to learning to communicate in the language in active, spontaneous, and authentic language interaction. (p. 22).

As stated before, the main objective established by MEP is to enable students to participate actively in class and practice the target language. Moreover, it is important to highlight that the language tasks that test takers are asked to carry out to demonstrate their linguistic skills have a communicative objective; for example, to solve a given problem or situation in a specific scenario. Therefore, the main objective pursued in the Study Program is to provide learners with every day-like situations in the classroom, that they could eventually

face in different contexts. Noticeably, the English teachers must incorporate the corresponding adaptations in their lesson plan to fulfil their students' particular needs and sociodemographic features. An important fact to mention is that for language learners to improve their language proficiency mastery as depicted in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) it is necessary to include a long-term teaching-learning process.

In addition, the CEFR refers to competences as the language knowledge acquired by a person to be used in interactions performed using the target language. The study program from MEP (2016) indicates that those competences are divided into "General Competences" and "Specific-Language Competences". Undoubtedly, such competences are necessary to be achieved especially when learning and using a foreign language properly; in this case, the English language.

In regards to the general competences, they refer to those class activities that teachers implement for students to interact and learn the target language. On the other hand, the specific competences include three detailed components:

- 1) Linguistic component: it deals with the knowledge of phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax.
- 2) Sociolinguistic component: this refers to the sociocultural conditions of language use such as social group repertoires or politeness rules.
- 3) Pragmatic component: This component covers, among others, speaker's and receptor's attitudes and beliefs, their understanding of the context of an utterance and the functional use of language; for example, the use in specific scenarios of how to act in a given social event or how to participate in a job interview. (MEP, 2016, pp. 22-23).

The following chart describes the English proficiency levels and descriptors according to the CEFR which are included in the English study program proposed by the MEP.

**Table 1**

*English Proficiency levels and language descriptors provided by the CEFLR.*

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Basic User	A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.</li> <li>● Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has.</li> <li>● Can interact in a simple way, provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</li> </ul>
	A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment).</li> <li>● Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.</li> <li>● Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need.</li> </ul>
Independent User	B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.</li> <li>● Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken.</li> <li>● Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest.</li> <li>● Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</li> <li>● Can understand the main idea of complex text on both concrete and</li> </ul>

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abstract topics, including technical discussion in his/her field of specialization.

- Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.
- Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

- Can understand the main idea of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussion in his/her field of specialization.

B2

- Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.
- Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

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Source: MEP's English Study Program, 2016, p. 24

As mentioned before, linguistic competences take into consideration different aspects of language, such as: grammar, lexicon, syntax, social interaction, and even the context in which the language is spoken or written. The importance of describing these competences lies in the fact that they are also used as descriptors to assess language proficiency according to the parameters established by the CEFR. For instance, the English Study Program from MEP includes only four out of the six proficiency levels stated on the CEFR (MEP, 2016, pp. 23-24). Those levels are depicted as follows:

Basic user: A1 and A2

Independent user: B1 and B2



### II.1.2 Effectiveness

This research focuses on the effectiveness of using feedback for assessing writing skills of the participating students through the implementation of short stories; therefore, it is necessary to clarify how this concept is analyzed and interpreted. According to Vlasceanu, Grunberg, and Parlea (2007) effectiveness is defined as the accomplishment of specific objectives (p. 54). In other words, it refers to the results acquired through the development of competences; however, when it comes to improving a specific language skill regarding English learning not all the pedagogical techniques nor linguistic strategies are effective for every student, especially when considering that learning a foreign language is an individual process that also depends on inner and outer factors.

Nonetheless, for Adhikari (2017) effectiveness is a term that reflects the achievement of goal in a long term (p. 13); for example, a student who studies a specific topic is more likely to be knowledgeable in a given content as opposed to a student who does not care about the contents provided by the teacher and rarely studies for a test. In other words, the term *effectiveness* refers to the length of time spent performing a specific task with the purpose of improving it, whose results are perceived in the long term.

For instance, the concepts of *effectiveness* are herein defined as the desired language outcome obtained from the students' writings after receiving feedback and comments from their teacher over a limited period of time.

In addition, there are concepts that are involved when referring to effective assessment. These concepts are reliability, validity and objectivity. According to Sampieri, Fenández and Baptista (2010) every evaluating instrument requires those three elements (p. 200). Specifically, for the purpose of this study, the concept of *effectiveness* is understood by taking into consideration the possible usefulness of the feedback instruments to be applied to the participating students as a strategy to improve their writing skills in the English language.

### **II.1.2.1 Reliability**

According to Sampieri, Fenández and Baptista (2010) reliability refers to the frequency of times that a given instrument is applied whereby its results maintain coherent results (p. 200). In other words, it refers to the process of reaching the same result, or score obtained, several times since the first time the instrument was applied. For example, a scale would be reliable when the weight measures obtained are consistent over time.

### **II.1.2.2 Validity**

Moreover, validity is another element to be considered when it comes to defining *effectiveness*. According to Sampieri, Fenández and Baptista (2010) validity refers to the degree to which an instrument actually measures the research variable that is being the object of analysis (p. 200). For example, when a person uses a thermometer to measure the temperature of a sick person, the result obtained is valid because of the strict relationship regarding the variable and the instrument. Furthermore, the authors explain that *research validity* is composed of three sub-categories, which are the following:

1. Content validity: it is the degree in which an instrument reflects a specific content domain of what is measured.
2. Criterion validity: it refers to a correlation between the scores resulting from the instrument applied and the scores obtained from another external criterion or instrument that aims to measure the same.
3. Construct validity: the construct validity must explain how the measurements of the research variables are linked with other measurements of theoretically correlated concepts (pp. 201-203).

After reviewing the sub-categories related to *validity* stated by Sampieri, Fenández and Baptista (2010), they state that when creating and applying a research instrument it is important to take into consideration these subdivisions as they help

investigators to elaborate accurate instruments, which allow them to obtain reliable results.

### **II.1.2.3 Objectivity**

Another sub-category from *validity* is the concept of *objectivity*. Mertens (2005, as cited in Sampieri, Fenández and Baptista, 2010) refers to objectivity as the extent to which an instrument is permeable to the bias influences from the researchers' predisposition who apply it, grade it, and interpret it (p. 207). In other words, *objectivity* deals with achieving a research result without allowing those feelings, emotions, or thoughts that interfere in the interpretation of the data collected. For example, standardized tests assess students' general knowledge on a specific topic, where each answer provided is equally graded without making any distinctions.

### **II.1.3 Feedback Instruments**

In the field of teaching, it is important to assess the students' performance in class and their academic improvement during the school year. For instance, a useful technique for interpreting the results of what students have learned in a specific term or period is by the implementation of feedback instruments applied throughout the learning process. As a matter of fact, feedback instruments can be used to assess different language skills (i.e Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking). For the purposes of this research, the applied feedback instruments were focused on the assessment of the writing skill.

According to Pei Leng (2014) teachers should provide constant feedback to language learners for them to be able to improve their writing skills. As Pei Leng (2014) explains that the concept of *feedback* can be considered as a tool whose main purpose is to inform students about their own linguistic performance, including their strengths and weaknesses (p. 390). Moreover, it is essential to determine that when applying feedback instruments to assess the writing skill, there could be a particular focus on grammar use, word choice, coherence,

cohesion, and syntax, which learners should receive prior to writing. Foremost, the use of feedback instruments in language teaching is meant to clarify what features of language students have to consider in order to improve their writing skills.

The use of feedback instruments during the learning process is relevant and helpful for both teachers and students. For instance, students can recognize their own writing mistakes and correct themselves using the feedback or comments provided by the teacher. In addition, teachers can monitor student progress and keep track of how students can improve their writing skills. Similarly, Pei Leng (2014), argues that feedback: “is one of the most common and favorite methods used by teachers to maximize learning” (p. 390). On the other hand, rubrics are valid assessment resources that teachers can employ to provide meaningful feedback to students.

Silvestri and Oescher (2006) as mentioned in Chowdhury (2018) argue that a rubric: “can be used to state standards, instructional goals and objectives for the type of performances that students should be able to achieve while completing a task.” (p. 62). Using rubrics in classes help students to be aware of their most common mistakes when conducting presentations, doing homework, writing essays and short stories. Additionally, Chowdhury (2018) mentions that: “a well-designed rubric is one that helps instructors not only to judge students’ work effectively but also help students acquire certain skills and knowledge” (p. 61). That is, teachers can use different types of feedback instruments for assessing writing skills; however, in this paper, only rubrics and rating scales were selected to assess written short stories obtained from the strategies applied in this research.

### **II.1.3.1 Rubrics**

As stated before, rubrics are applied in every educational level to evaluate the teaching objectives depicted in a course program. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that the criteria presented in the rubric can be modified by each teacher depending on the

circumstances of the class and particularities of the learners. According to the Faculty Innovation Center from the University of Texas at Austin (2017) a rubric defines what is expected from the students and the contents to be assessed. Furthermore, a rubric indicates what the tester will assess from the test taker according to specified criteria by means of grading and ranking simpler, gauzier, and fairer (p. 1). In short, rubrics are useful for teachers and students due to the fact that both are aware of the aspects being assessed in a given course program. In this case, students are better prepared for the expectations proposed by the teacher.

On the other hand, it is fundamental to highlight that rubrics have different components or indicators which are aimed at assessing students' performance. In turn, The Faculty Innovation Center (2017) describes a rubric and its pre-established sections, as the following:

On the left side, the criteria describe the key elements of a student work or product. At the top, the rating scale identifies levels of performance. Under each section of the rating scale, the indicators provide examples or concrete descriptors for each level of performance (p. 1).

For instance, at Ministerio de Educación Pública, English teachers usually employ pre-designed rubrics to track their students' writing improvements. However, teachers may add or eliminate certain sections or items based on their professional judgement. It is required from teachers to show and discuss the rubric with the students-before they apply such instruments. Additionally, teachers have to explain every section and the elements or components that will be assessed to the learners.

As a matter of fact, there are two particular rubrics, which can be used to assess a writing task, in this case, writing a short story, which are analytic and holistic rubrics. According to Chowdhury (2018) an analytic rubric is useful when applied in formative

assessments. Although analytic rubrics are time consuming when grading, these rubrics provide detailed information and feedback to the students about their strengths and weaknesses in a specific skill (p. 62-63). Moreover, Kayaoğlu and Turgut (2015) stated that: “analytic rubrics are suitable when assessing a student's performance in detail and giving students specific feedback on their skills. Moreover, analytic rubrics facilitate the-creation of a student's profile regarding his/her strengths and weaknesses (p. 49). Essentially, an analytic rubric is organized through a group of columns filled with descriptive information for each criterion that will be assessed in the task or activity; usually, descriptive labels and numbers are used in such rubric.

Recent research suggests that the holistic rubric is another type of rubric that teachers can use to assess student progress. After a detailed analysis, Chowdhury (2018), concluded that the holistic rubric assesses several criteria simultaneously and provides an overall score. Besides, this type of rubric consumes less time as opposed to the analytical rubrics and are indeed more suitable for summative assessments (p. 62). In other words, a holistic rubric has a format similar to that of a scale; however, it gives a general description for each criterion providing both numerical and qualitative classification. In contrast, the analytic rubric is more descriptive since it enumerates columns and provides an ascendant order; moreover, each column has specific requirements for defined criteria aspects, which compose the rubric.

For this research, the analytic rubric is the one to be used with the participants, given that it is more suitable, as it defines and describes each column and criteria to be assessed. Therefore, by using the analytic rubric the teacher can provide more detailed feedback comments to the students; as a result, students are expected to reflect on their writing problems and improve their own writing skills.

### **II.1.3.2 Rating Scale**

Another feedback instrument that can be used to evaluate students' writing performance is the rating scale. The Faculty Innovation Center (2017) states in its article that: "Rating scales can include either numerical or descriptive labels. Usually, a rating scale consists of an even number of performance levels. If an odd number is used, the middle level tends to become a catch-all category" (p. 2). The most important aspect for the purpose of this thesis project is the use of numerical or descriptive labels for providing feedback to students, which allows them to improve their writing skills.

Indeed, English teachers are able to assess learners, either formatively or numerically by writing or grading students to help them understand and be aware of their own writing mistakes as well as their strengths in this skill. In this case, having qualitative and quantitative feedback allows students to obtain a precise idea of their performance in a specific area.

In addition, rating scales can be applied to assess different writing styles, where the teacher decides the rating scale that best fits for the activity's purposes. Referring to Furr (2013): "occasionally, researchers create scales to measure specific constructs for a study. Of course, scale development is important for psychological research, and there are good reasons to create new scales" (p. 6). Moreover, scales must be neutral to help teachers assess students' performance in order to avoid unclear indicators or labels could lead to eventual misunderstandings. This allows the instructor to include his/her own perspective while the language learning process is carried out.

Also, there must be a balance between what is expected by the teachers in terms of learners' knowledge. Pupils are challenged to improve and learn more with every task, and assessment attempts to measure such improvement through a specified period of time. Moreover, the scales have to be measured and adapted to the students' pedagogical needs. In fact, in order to create effective instruments to assess their learning progress it is mandatory to follow the procedures listed before given by the Faculty Innovation Center from the

University of Texas (2017) for creating a scale. Consequently, teachers are able to assess the contents, abilities, or skills that are pointed out in the study program. Likewise, Schneider & North (as cited in Nivja De Jong and Claudia Harsch, 2016) state the following principles for scale construction:

1. The descriptions of the levels are meaningful on their own.
2. They enable dichotomous decisions.
3. They describe abilities or knowledge in a positive way.
4. They are concrete, clear and concise.
5. They do not contain technical terminology.
6. They describe rather narrow bands. (p. 21).

To elaborate reliable assessment instruments, it is necessary to follow the steps described by Schneider and North (2000). However, the instrument to be applied must be well constructed to assure its efficiency to collect the requested information, while avoiding possible issues that could affect the gathered results. For instance, rating scales must be elaborated in such a way in which teachers, students, parents, the school principal and any other person can understand its construction, what it measures, and how it does it. Regarding this project two different types of rating scales were applied. The first one is the ordinal scale; according to Multon and Coleman (2012), an ordinal scale is:

A measurement scale that allocates values to variables based on their relative ranking with respect to one another in a given data set. Ordinal-level measurements indicate a logical hierarchy among the variables and provide information on whether something being measured varies in degree, but does not specifically quantify the magnitude between successive ranks. (p. 2).

These types of scales are useful when language teachers aim at providing feedback through comments instead of assessing by means of numerical grades. By using ordinal



scales, teachers are able to give students comments or ideas about their writing accuracies and deficiencies. Ordinal scales offer qualitative data about students' performance and other specific details which could not be numerically analyzed. In contrast, Rukmana (2012) presents the interval scale as:

The level of measurement in which the attributes composing variables are measured on specific numerical scores or values and there are equal distances between attributes. The distance between any two adjacent attributes is called an interval, and intervals are always equal. (p. 2).

To apply interval scales it is necessary to collect enough quantitative data regarding students' written performance to identify what aspects they have improved. Furthermore, the numerical results reflect the writing elements that students are enhancing as well as those which require pedagogical reinforcement. Also, interval scales provide teachers and students a wider point of view of students' knowledge of the language.

Ultimately, both types of scales were used in this investigation to provide students clear feedback on their writing. The ordinal scale conveys analyzed categories for students to comprehend the major points of the evaluation; whereas the interval scale represents the obtained results numerically.

#### **II.1.4 Formative Assessment**

This type of assessment is related to the learner's development through a period of time. According to Stiggings and Dufour (as cited in Alzina, 2016) formative assessment contributes to understanding the student's level of understanding in the learning process while it is happening (p. 10). For instance, formative assessment takes place a few weeks after the teacher's explanation of a topic and not necessarily at the end of the course. For Alzina (2016): "Formative assessments involve the teachers and/or the student making judgments about the quality of the student's work and then using those judgments immediately to make

adjustments to improve students' understanding and comprehension" (p. 12). Indeed, formative assessment reinforces the students' background knowledge in order for learners to be aware of their shortcomings and offer them the possibility to improve progressively.

In the current MEP's English Study Program (2016) formative assessment plays an outstanding role given that it takes into consideration the Action-Oriented Approach. For this reason, both teachers and students can identify their weaknesses and strengths and to improve their competences (p. 51). In short, the formative assessment relies on the tasks and activities developed by the teacher; however, students play an important role since their linguistic skills are being tested using different kinds of practices, projects and assignments.

### **II.1.5 Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment differs from formative assessment since its main objective is to obtain a final score based on learner's performance. According to Neibling (2014): "Summative assessments often take the form of end-of-unit or chapter tests, end-of-term or semester exams, but can also serve a dual purpose with official assessments in the form of interim or benchmark exams, state assessments, and standardized national assessments" (p. 5). For instance, this type of assessment evaluates students' performance at the end of a course or unit. Moreover, summative assessment categorizes students' achievements based on a scale of scores in which the final result is considered a reflection of the learner's effort or knowledge; in which exams or assignments generally represent a significant percentage of the final grade.

### **II.1.6 Assessing Writing**

Assessment is one of the essential parts of education around the world, which fulfills the role of testing the extent to which the objectives set at the beginning of a period were achieved. Nowadays, studies present different points of view about assessment in which

authors discuss its importance and how it should be delivered. Interestingly, Houston and Thompson (2017) mentioned that: “Assessment is seen to have value in helping inform students’ learning” (p. 2).

Currently, assessment is meant to inform students and parents about the progress which learners have acquired during the course program in every academic subject. In fact, assessment is aimed to provide students information about their own advancement. In addition, one of the assessment purposes is to communicate with teachers, parents, and students about the outcomes achieved from the didactic strategies applied by instructors. In turn, the MEP (2016) refers to the main purpose of assessment outcomes as:

The assessing techniques should reflect the dynamic classroom procedures and should promote critical thinking among the students in any learning task they perform such as: information-gap, opinion-gap, problem-solving, games and critical cultural incidents which help the learners appreciate their own culture and the culture of the target language. (p. 52).

Essentially, assessment is described by the MEP as a strategy to engage students in an educational environment in which critical thinking applied in different tasks is the tool to solve those activities. However, assessment is essential because it shows students’ improvements by analyzing the possible weaknesses of both the educational process carried out by teachers and the learners.

According to Acar-Erdol and Yildizili (2018) the term of assessment was used to validate students’ learning outcomes in their practices after the teacher’s explanation (pp. 587-588). In other words, assessment referred to a method for estimating students’ competences on a given topic. However, this concept has changed through time, and has become less stern in the evaluation and learning processes. For Brown (2002) (as cited in Neibling, 2014): “the purpose for assessing students’ knowledge, skills, performances, or

general understanding on a subject is to generate accurate information that leads to valid changes in teaching practices or student learning such that improvement in student achievement can be facilitated” (p. 13). In general, assessment refers to a process for improving learner’s skills, which includes either teacher’s or student’s performance by means of a set of practices and techniques which are designed for ensuring understanding on diverse topics. Nevertheless, assessment focuses more on the improvement process; rather than obtaining successful final results.

#### **II.1.6.1 Writing Process**

When it comes to teaching writing, language teachers or instructors and students must consider that writing is a long-term process that involves consistency. The ability to communicate in English exceeds the mere action of taking notes from a board or answering questions using information taken from a reading. In other words, learning how to write is a process, which is progressively constructed. Since students are not native speakers of English, they are unable to reach a high command of the language in a short-term period. In fact, even professional writers face certain difficulties when writing a given paper.

In regards to the writing process, Lacksmi (as cited in Aziz, 2015) states that “it is suggested that the writing process: include prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing” (p. 132). As stated before, this is a process which follows five main steps that must be taken into consideration when writing essays, summaries, short stories, or even academic research papers. These stages are necessary and must be followed in order to write coherently and to ensure understanding from the reader. For example, the stage of organizing ideas and that of editing are equally important as the publishing stage of a final written version of a document. Hence, each of these steps or stages are strictly necessary to be followed to obtain a coherent and cohesive written paper.

To continue, each writing step is explained to clarify their significant importance in the writing process. As a matter of fact, Aziz (2015) mentions the specific characteristic each writing stage has within the writing process. In the prewriting stage, learners or writers should start by selecting a proper topic, organizing ideas, and employing writing techniques such as: brainstorming, freewriting, looping, listing, and clustering. Afterwards, students start the drafting stage, in this stage, learners focus on mechanics rather than on content.

As stated by Aziz (2015) writers elaborate a rough draft which consists of a first script that usually contains several writing, grammar, punctuation or vocabulary inaccuracies. Nevertheless, this is a common issue that writers encounter which can be easily solved following the next stages.

According to Aziz (2015) during the revising phase, students pay attention to content and mechanics. This is precisely when students are capable of identifying errors and correcting themselves. In academic contexts, teachers' support becomes necessary to help students improve their writing. Correspondingly, in the editing stage, students concentrate on developing and improving their written pieces by executing a thorough revision of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar. Finally, as for the publishing stage writers are able to distribute their final version of the writing work. (pp. 132-136).

In short, these are the steps to be followed in the *writing process*. However, it is important to highlight that for the purpose of this study, the participating students carried out these stages before they submitted their short stories.

#### **II.1.6.2 Writing Micro Skills**

According to Damayanti (2009) "micro skills apply more appropriately to imitative and intensive types of writing performance in which they tend to describe the mechanical of writing and at the level of word; for instance, these micro skills involve the implementation of cohesive devices, use of grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and organization." (p. 19). In

regards to these aspects, they were assessed in this study by means of the research instruments that were applied to the target population.

#### **II.1.6.2.1 Content**

Regarding content as one of the main writing micro skills, Costaris and Wiener (2012) refers to it as: “the core message they want to communicate to clients, parents, and teachers in terms of content (what they want to communicate) and process (how they intend to communicate the content)” (p.126). In writing, *content* refers to what the writer aims to state, a specific written message. For instance, content refers to the topic or theme which is being written about. In this case, content is understood as the information contained within the short stories developed by the participating students.

#### **II.1.6.2.2 Grammar**

When learning English as a foreign Language, grammar is essential. In turn, Huang (as cited in Benitez, González, Ochoa and Vargas, 2018) highlighted that: “teaching English grammar as a Foreign Language (EFL) mainly in terms of enabling students to achieve linguistic competence” (p. 225). As a matter of fact, grammar is an essential language component. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how the grammar structures work in order to be able to use the target language correctly. In short, grammar rules are fundamental to writing or speaking effectively, which demonstrates the language proficiency level of a person. For instance, tenses and subject-verb agreement are two common examples of topics that language students usually have difficulties with.

In fact, Benitez, González, Ochoa, and Vargas (2018) have claimed that grammar is a key component of language, which has the purpose of enabling students to reach the necessary linguistic competence to understand and produce oral or written discourse. (pp. 226-227). Therefore, as it has been depicted above, grammar is essential for speaking and writing accurately.

### II.1.6.2.3 Vocabulary

Regarding vocabulary as a micro skill, according to Cullham, GDOE and Spandel (they all cited in Hestad, 2014): “one area that is used to determine a student’s writing proficiency is the use of word” (p.36). As seen before, vocabulary selection demonstrates a student’s ability to express their ideas in the text. In addition, Hestad (2014) states that: “word knowledge is a complex skill that needs to be addressed in writing instruction from kindergarten through high school” (p. 36). Hestad (2014) highlights the importance of the relationship between writing and vocabulary. Essentially, words can be used for expressing ideas and even feelings in one text. Moreover, word choice and organization of ideas are important when writing a short story.

### II.1.6.2.4 Punctuation

Punctuation is an essential aspect of written language when creating a sentence, a paragraph, or an essay. According to Brown (2007) (as cited in Thanh, 2016), writers may: “use acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralization), patterns, and rules” (p. 4). The main symbols for punctuation are recognized as *punctuation marks*. For example, the period, braces, question mark, hyphen, exclamation mark, apostrophe, comma, ellipsis, semicolon, parentheses, colon, dash, brackets and quotation marks. The following table illustrates the punctuations marks that are generally used in writing.

**Table 2**

*List of punctuation marks, symbol, use, and example*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Period	.	To end declarative statements. It is placed at the end of the sentence.	Sophia and Marcus went to the cinema yesterday.
Exclamation mark	!	It goes after many abbreviations.	Dr. / John Jr. / Oct.
		To express outcry.	Oh my God!
		To add emphasis to a statement.	Her attitudes make me furious!

Question mark	?	It is placed at the end of a direct question.	Do you want coffee?
Comma	,	Separation of ideas or complete sentences.	I have to do the laundry, and then I will go to the movies.
		Separation of elements within a sentence.	Celia bought red, green, and yellow apples.
Colon	:	It goes after a word that introduces a list, a quotation, an example, or an explanation.	Diego's favorite subjects are: math, English, and science.
		It is placed between two independent clauses when the second explains the first one.	I arrived late: There was a terrible traffic jam in the way.
		To give emphasis to a specific item in a sentence.	There was something he enjoyed more than anything else: to dance.
Semicolon	;	To link, in a single sentence, two independent clauses that are in equal position.	Some people like to sing; others prefer to dance.
		To separate items which contain internal punctuation such as commas.	My biggest dream is to visit Honolulu, Hawaii; London, England; Madrid, Spain.
Hyphen	-	To form compound terms. It is not separated by spaces.	He got a part-time job.
Dash	-	To indicate connections or differentiations.	He lives in Princeton-New York. His cellphone number is 555-209-346.
		It can be used in the place of a comma, parenthesis, or colon to emphasize the conclusion of a sentence.	She said the last word – Bye!
Brackets	[ ]	To clarify meaning or to give technical explanations. The information within brackets can be omitted and the sentence still makes sense.	My friends [Josh and Anne] are working in the same institution.
Parentheses	( )	To add further thoughts or qualifying remarks.	The lady (who is now the teacher of your son) is very young and intelligent.
Apostrophe	'	To show the omission of a letter or letters from a word.	I'm telling you she didn't come yesterday.
		To indicate possession.	Silvia's house is the one with a blue door.



Quotation marks	“ ”	To make lowercase letters into plural form. To cite a passage from another person.	Look! This word is full of a's and o's. “I want a cookie”, the girl said.
Ellipsis	...	To indicate the omission of words.  Within a quote to omit unnecessary information.	She starts counting: one, two, three, and four...  When Newton stated, "An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion..." he developed the law of motion.

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**Source:** Own elaboration (2020)

In short, it is necessary to point out how punctuation marks must be employed as they guide the reader through the text. Each symbol has a specific role and they are necessary for understanding the written text. Therefore, language teachers have the responsibility to provide students the necessary theoretical explanations regarding punctuation rules and the correct use of markers to improve the learners' writing.

### **II.1.6.2.5 Organization**

According to Grabe, Kaplan, Jamieson, Eignor, Grabe and Kunnan (cited in Gebril and Plakans, 2017):

Organization and connection have long been accepted as foundations for academic writing and features of written performance. Patterns that structure the overall discourse in a text are used to organize writing. To connect ideas in a text, coherence provides a logical flow of ideas across a text while cohesion links specific propositions. These features have been represented in constructs, frameworks and rubrics in second language writing (p. 99).

The order in which the writer decides to arrange the ideas is extremely important when developing a story's plot. Ultimately, organization is tightly linked with overall

coherence. Organization and connection go beyond just the way in which ideas are arranged, this component can also be considered as the form in which words are chosen and written to build sentences and paragraphs.

### **II.1.7 Short Stories**

A short story can be defined as a brief fictional piece of writing. Indeed, Parkinson and Thomas (as cited in Sevilla and Méndez, 2015) declare that short stories have less contextualization than other types of fiction texts and are usually less linguistically complex when compared to poetry or drama. (p. 2). Moreover, it can be stated that since short stories are less complex than other written genres, it allows English teachers to adapt them to their educational contexts.

On the other hand, students are able to write short stories regarding topics of their interest. Short stories are categorized as having an exposition, a rising action, a climax, a falling action and a resolution. Moreover, it can be argued that these kinds of stories deal with few characters and one single argument; however; it has specific literary components that are further explained.

Additionally, Pardede (2011) describes that a short story is usually structured by means of a plot, in which few characters are portrayed and the setting does not have a detailed description. Moreover, this author argues that short stories are feasible for students to read and to comprehend the storyline (p. 17). In addition, it is clear that the length for a short story depends on the author's perspective, where the person who writes decides how to develop the plot, the argument, and the characters' functions.

Therefore, Zahra and Farrah (2015) in their article propose that: "short stories have the potential of enriching students' language skills, enhancing their motivation, and increasing their cultural sensitivity and awareness" (p. 12). Through the assessment of writing short stories for the participants in this investigation, the researchers were able to use feedback

instruments that have the purpose of helping students to improve their writing abilities. Moreover, as Zahra and Farrah (2015) mention the use of short stories as having other important advantages regarding their motivation and cultural awareness.

For the most part, short stories do not have a set of content rules which must be followed. However, short stories have some vital components and elements that must be considered as a guide for understanding broader the short stories functions.

#### **II.1.7.1 Short stories literary components**

For writing short stories, it is vital to know what the elements that define them are. Although, most of them are not highlighted when writing a short tale, it is necessary to know their place in the story, their functions, and how they are analyzed. In the writing field, teachers consider the study of short stories elements the theoretical side of writing; however, knowing the concepts explained in this section becomes an advantage for writing a short story using each component correctly according to its respective function.

According to Khalaf (2010), there are some important elements that exist in short stories. First, the setting refers to time and place where the story is involved in terms of description of the location, scenery, weather, season, year, and every aspect connected to the background of the story. Second, the characters that are humans or animals who take part in the development of the short story. In third place, the conflict element is well known as the problem presented as the struggle between two characters in a short story. Fourthly, the plot is basically a timeline, recognized as the sequence of ideas the author previously had to create the story.

Moreover, each link in the story helps to build suspense in the resolution of the problem. In fifth place appears the solution, presenting the outcome of the actions done in the short story to resolve the problem or conflict. Finally, the theme is the controlling idea of the story which brings a basic meaning to a literary work. (p. 182). However, a short story is

divided into five separate elements, those elements match each other and provide meaning to the story. The setting gives context in place and time, the conflict shows what a character faces and believes, and the plot says what is happening and how it finishes. The characters and the conflict are related because the characters take the actions to solve the presented conflict in a short story. The solution presents the final acts the characters made to solve the problem. The theme is the part in which the meaning to the main argument is shown. As explained before, every detail and event inside the short story must be used for calling the reader's attention.

In this context, the plot takes an essential role into a short story. Here, the plot is considered a sequence of ideas known also as a timeline divided into five scenes. Damodaran (2017) in his book chapter mentioned a structure followed since the nineteenth century which was proposed by Gustav Freytag regarding the plot's most important components. Firstly, *the exposition* or the inciting moment at the beginning of the short story. In this part, the author mentions the characters and reveals details about the setting and partial information of the conflicts in the story. Secondly, the *rising action* or the complication part appears presenting the main conflict of the short story and the characters involved in it. Thirdly, *the climax* or turning point is the crucial part in the story in which the protagonist deals with the last events presented in the story. In this part the events of the story can go from a tragedy to a happy moment or vice versa. Fourthly, *the falling action* or *reversal* occurs after the climax bringing details about the consequences that the characters have to assimilate after the main events occurred. Finally, the resolution or the denouement part is known as the end of the story exposing the readers to what happened to the characters after the conflict is solved. The story ends as a catastrophe, if it is a tragedy, or in a resolution showing the protagonist either winning or losing. (p. 25). For writing a plot it is important to follow the steps or sequences depicted above due to short stories usually do not start by the resolution or the falling action;

in other words, short stories keep a chronological timeline from a beginning to an end. In this perspective, it is important to recognize the plot, the setting, the theme, the characters, and the conflict of a short story.

## **II.2 Literature Review**

After studying the different concepts related to assessment in writing, it is also important to review recent studies conducted in Costa Rica and abroad regarding the implementation of short stories and feedback instruments to analyze its degree of success. For instance, there are previous studies that have been conducted which are aimed at analyzing the improvement of a specific language skill. Moreover, the following literature review focused on the role of providing feedback to students and the outcome obtained as to improve the writing skill of ESL learners.

### **II.2.1 International antecedents**

In Turkey, Beyreli and Ari (2009) studied the existent concordance among the assessment of writing and the use of analytic rubrics in a Turkish language course for sixth and seventh graders from five different schools in Istanbul. The researcher aimed at determining the objective criteria in the assessment of students' writings. To achieve the objective stated in the study, the researcher used the mixed method for analyzing 200 writing texts from a population of nearly 623 students from sixth and seventh grade and six rating teachers during a period applied from 2007 to 2008. Moreover, the researchers applied the Pearson correlation analysis through SPSS 11.5 software and Kendall's coefficient of concordance to organize the obtained results.

In China, Binglan and Jia (2010) conducted a research by using two different groups, one control and one experimental group respectively, as to demonstrate how different feedback granted by a given teacher affected students' long-term writing accuracy. The

researcher aimed at analyzing how feedback affected and changed students' skills after being applied in different ways through a determined period of time. The participants in this study were 44 EFL Chinese learners from the university in Heifei, ages 18 to 20. The 44 participants were divided into two groups (control and experimental, correspondingly). The main conclusion yielded by the researchers demonstrated the differences among the control and experimental group when it comes to writing tasks; where the experimental group showed better writing results than the control group.

Moreover, in New Zealand, Parr and Timperley (2010) analyzed the written feedback applied to writing assignments. This research aimed at determining how to make that written response more effective, how to help the learners fill the gap between the current and the desired level, the authors defined that as a "quality feedback". As for the objective stated in the study, the researchers studied a population of 375 individuals from six different primary schools and 59 educators participated in the research. At the end, the researchers found a very close relationship between the instructors' quality feedback and learners' progress.

In addition, in The United States of America (U.S.A.), Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum and Wolfersberger (2010) analyzed the meaning of feedback from different perspectives, as a necessary component of the learning process. The main purpose of the researchers aimed at offering alternatives for interpreting, planning and presenting feedback to change its value when being implemented in the writing class. The authors applied their study to 27 ESL students during two separated 13-week semesters at universities in the U.S.A. The participants were asked to complete different writing tasks, and the feedback was given in a 6-step process, in which learners wrote paragraphs and the instructor gave feedback in different ways. At the end, researchers concluded that feedback must be considered as a pedagogical practice inside the classroom, and not only to give summative grades.

Additionally, in Arizona, Biber, Nekrasova, and Horn (2011) explained the usefulness of providing and receiving feedback when students write. The researcher aimed to understand the influences that different types of feedback have in writing development. In this case, the researchers conducted a quantitative meta- analysis over 112 studies; however only 23 papers were selected, comparable and suitable for the study. The researchers found that feedback is tightly connected to the evaluation process. For instance, regarding language, feedback includes aspects like content, grammar, punctuation, organization, and fluency.

Moreover, in the United Kingdom, Wharton (2013) examined written feedback given from tutors to students' work in order to interpret the grammar and content choices from the teacher; in this way, it was possible to analyze if feedback was an interaction based on a knowledge exchange or an activity exchange. The researcher aimed to analyze tutors' feedback comments from their interactive purpose and potential. As a means to achieve her objective, the researcher conducted a qualitative study regarding 149 feedback comments from 26 texts. The researcher found that feedback comments were classified in three different groups: mood, speech function and communicative act and depending on that feedback comments can be insufficient or useful to increase the formative potential.

Similarly, in London, Evans (2013) analyzed research evidence on assessment feedback received in coursework from higher education. The researcher aimed to examine the nature of assessment feedback in higher education through the undertaking of a systematic review of the literature. To attain the objective stated in the study, the researcher conducted a qualitative analysis through SPSS version 18 database by reading 991 articles related to assessment feedback using several online databases. The researcher found that the origin, perspective, and feedback interventions differ from one to another, and eleven cores themes were identified, some of them are: peer feedback, e-learning to support self- and peer

feedback, self-feedback, technicalities of feedback, student perceptions, curriculum design, process of feedback, individual needs, feedback gap, performance, and affect.

In Taiwan, a study developed by Pan (2015) analyzed the effect teachers' feedback had on students' writing accuracy. The researcher applied the methodology to three male students enrolled at one university in Taiwan. The participants were asked to complete a writing assignment of 100 words. After that, they received written and spoken feedback as well. Finally, the three learners were required to revise their comments and do the necessary modifications to their writings. Then, they compared and contrasted the first draft with the final version. As the main conclusion, the author found that feedback given by the teachers proved to be useful because the students improved their writings after receiving feedback that was seen in the final version.

In Indonesia, the research conducted by Fithriani (2017) regarding Indonesian students' perceptions of written feedback in second language. The researcher aimed to investigate students' perceptions of different constructs of written feedback in a college-level second language writing classroom. The researcher conducted a qualitative study in a population of 11 participants; however, the researcher analyzed the data of 7 students who were in the sixth semester from the major of English Education at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in Medan, Indonesia. Moreover, the researcher applied questionnaires, reflective journals, face to face interviews and writing drafts. The researcher found that students prefer indirect forms of feedback. Also, when it comes to local writing issues students were comfortable receiving feedback from their peers, but when it comes to global issues students opt to teacher's interventions.

A year later, in Indonesia, Fithriani (2018) developed a research study which was aimed at analyzing the differences between feedback given from teachers and peer feedback. Fithriani focused this research on Asian societies. The researcher aimed to determine how the



“hierarchical relationship” affected the way in which students perceived feedback. Therefore, the researcher applied a qualitative case study approach. The chosen population was seven students majoring in English Education at a state university in Medan, Indonesia. The researcher applied different questionnaires and interviews. At the end, the author found that learners pay more attention to the feedback given by the teacher, the population studied affirmed that they prefer to know the instructor’s opinion because he or she knew more about the topic, they were not interested neither in receiving nor giving peer feedback.

### **II.2.2 National antecedents**

In Costa Rica there have been developed research related to feedback since this is an important element in the educational field; teachers and students get more benefits when this is given right on time. Moreover, some relevant Costa Rican researches related to this study are stated in this section.

In Costa Rica, González (2012) examined the student-teachers’ perception of feedback sessions in an ESP course due to students considering the supervisors’ opinion in post-observation sessions as problematic. The researcher aimed to change student-teachers’ perceptions of feedback sessions into a more enriching and positive experience because this view is more productive for learners and teachers-in-training. To achieve the objective stated in the study, the researcher conducted a qualitative study in a population of 4 postgraduate students from an ESP course. Moreover, the researcher applied three collecting instruments: questionnaires, observations and interviews to the participating students. The researcher found that students felt the need to please their teachers; for this reason, learners felt frustrated regarding the negative feedback received from their teachers.

In addition, Hernández (2012) determined the importance of establishing an evaluation rubric in the course of Clinic of Exodontia and Surgery with the purpose of offering an objective mechanism that standardizes the indicators to be assessed based on the

performance shown by the student. The researcher conducted a qualitative study in a population of 6 instructors that were part of the clinical area. Then, he applied a semi-structured interview to the 40% of the teachers in charge of the course. Finally, the researcher found the rubric allowed teachers to provide feedback to the students according to the obtained results; in other words, the instrument indicated the areas that students needed to improve.

Jiménez (2015) studied the use of feedback as an evaluation strategy from teachers' perspective. The main purpose the researcher aimed at analyzing how teachers use feedback and how they could improve it as an evaluation strategy for helping students in the learning process. Jiménez (2015) conducted a qualitative research over 9 instructors, and those participants (teachers) were from different areas of study. The researcher applied interviews to the participants. At the end, the author stated that feedback is for helping students, and that it must be analyzed deeply for instructors and learners as well.

Navas (2017) studied the importance of feedback and the effect it produced on students after being applied during a period of time in a writing course. Navas' objective was to observe the improvement reached by learners to identify and correct mistakes. Indeed, Navas applied the instruments to two different groups enrolled in the course (LM-1235) at Universidad de Costa Rica. The participants were 31, the first group had 14 students, and the second one had 17 students. This study was focused on helping learners to identify and to correct their mistakes, the researcher asked the two different groups to write six compositions throughout the semester. At the end, one questionnaire was applied to students to determine their perception about the feedback received and the challenges they found during the process. As the main conclusion, the author mentioned that feedback is sometimes time-consuming and difficult, especially in writing; however, it must be done, as Navas affirmed.

Moreover, Chao and Durand (2019) examined the use of a rubric as a tool of assessment and feedback of expression in French. The researcher aims at recognizing the rubric's usefulness for written production to help teachers to provide effective feedback to their students. Therefore, the researcher conducted a qualitative collaborative method in a population of nearly 50 students and 3 instructors of the written expression course from the major of French at Universidad de Costa Rica. Moreover, the researcher applied interviews, group discussions and a rubric for assessing the writing papers using the program QD Miner. Finally, the researcher found that teachers considered the rubric helpful to provide effective feedback to the students; meanwhile, the learners considered the rubric useful for self-assessment of their papers.

Although the studies cited herein shed important light on the need to incorporate innovative strategies to assess the writing performance of English language learners, as well as on possible didactic techniques of doing so, and even when similar studies have been conducted in Costa Rica, a thorough analysis revealed that no prior research on implementing short stories and feedback instruments have been found.

As a result, the literature consulted served as a reference for understanding the different concepts and topics that were discussed in this study. In the theoretical framework there has been an analysis about effectiveness which is the first category developed in this paper. Also, the means to clarify these findings are the feedback instruments; specifically, using rubrics and rating scales to evaluate the written short stories obtained from the activities applied in this research. This procedure helped the investigators evaluate the students' progress and their improvements in the writing area. In addition, the task students performed, they relied on having students writing short stories which are shorter and have few characters. The completion of these activities provided the required material for teachers to bring the

corresponding feedback on learners' performance to help students improve their writing skills.

As a whole, the research has the purpose of providing reliable information about the effectiveness of using feedback instruments in the assessment of writing short stories with a tenth-grade group from the CINDEA Judas. The terms developed in the theoretical framework are of vital importance for the success of the investigation regarding its connection to the methodological framework. The methodological framework provides a guide to the application of the instruments and the methodology used in this research.

## **CHAPTER III**

# **METHODOLOGY**

## **Methodology**

### **III.1 Methodological Design**

Based on the objectives stated in this investigation, this research design followed a mixed methodology. According to Johnson et al. (as cited in Schoonenboom and Johnson, 2017) mixed method research integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to generate a broader and deeper understanding (p. 108). In other words, the mixed-method approach helps researchers to obtain a more detailed understanding regarding the situation or problem being analyzed, creating an alternative research perspective to be applied to link the research problems to the conclusions and the use of the results. Additionally, the mixed-method approach allows the researchers to identify the effects of providing feedback to the students through writing short stories and observing potential improvements among students' writing skills.

Grafton, Lillis and Mahama (as cited in Brierley, 2017) argued that pragmatism is the most appropriate paradigm for mixed research methods given its flexibility in terms of applying a research study and providing a concise answer to the study question (p. 15). Likewise, Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014) agreed that: "pragmatism is a method that connects dualisms by focusing on the inquiry process that is set out to solve problems. Pragmatism is built on two interrelated conceptualizations of philosophical inquiry: (1) interpretation of meaning and (2) interpretation of truth" (p. 3). In other words, using this method, the researchers can deal with the human experience and perceptions of the participants involved in a study. Indeed, the main feature that pragmatism demonstrates is the possibility to construct methodological strategies to gather information using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies considering the research question proposed.

For instance, the current study was based on the mixed methodological design since it employed a variety of qualitative and quantitative instruments. In fact, these instruments were

used to analyze the effects of using feedback instruments when assessing the writing skills of students from a tenth-grade group at CINDEA Judas. Furthermore, this paradigm allowed the researchers to validate and present the results by means of establishing conclusions based on observations, interviews, tests, that were comparatively and numerically analyzed.

### **III.2 Research Approach**

The current study employed an Action-Oriented Approach. In this case, Johnson and Christensen (2014) defined the Action Research Approach as: “combination of research and action. According to the authors it generates local knowledge, and it often results in changes in practices” (p. 116). Therefore, based on the claims stated by these authors, in terms of this study, it was feasible to implement this research approach to determine the effects of using feedback instruments as a means to assess the writing skills of tenth graders at CINDEA Judas.

Based on claims stated by Johnson and Christensen (2014) the Action-Oriented Approach fosters the employment of diverse strategies and procedures that researchers can utilize to obtain reliable information (p. 116). In other words, through the Action Research, the researchers determined how effective the use of feedback instruments was in the assessment of writing skills through the use of short stories.

According to Frey (2018) the Action Research Approach is a method in which the teachers’ and students’ role is to improve their own practices by means of analyzing and interpreting different data with the aim of fulfilling existent gaps among the desired and actual results (p. 1). As Frey mentioned, the Action Research Approach involved learners improving their writing abilities through the implementation of short stories and feedback strategy. This study was carried out under the premises of action research approach and the mixed method to get precise information, to analyze the findings about feedback under

quantitative methodology and the use of qualitative reasoning to provide new perspectives of feedback.

Therefore, it was the belief of the researchers that by using the action research approach and the feedback giving strategy, such implementation, may lead to an upgrade in writing production. Also, it was expected that the participants would learn about how to write short stories and its literary components.

### **III.3 Participants**

#### **III.3.1 Participating Students**

The following study was conducted with a group of tenth graders from CINDEA Judas in the third school district of Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas. The students enrolled in this tenth grade group were 34 learners who represented the 45.33% of the entire population of individuals registered in this grade. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that 24 identified themselves as females, and 10 as males, their ages ranged from 15 years old to 42 years old. Nonetheless, the sample population was reduced to 11 students due to internet connection issues. These students live in the surrounding areas of the institution, which include the district of Chomes and a community from this district named Judas in the province of Puntarenas. Additionally, it is important to state that they were granted parental permission to take part in this study. It consisted of a consent form, which was e-mailed by the researchers.

#### **III.3.2 Collaborating Teacher**

To conduct this research project, it was necessary to find collaborators to help researchers to carry out the fieldwork stage. In this case, the collaborating teacher at CINDEA was Licda. Arellys Salazar Vargas, who has seven years of experience as a language teacher. In fact, she has worked at CINDEA Judas since 2014 with students from third and fourth



educational cycles. This 34 years old female teacher graduated from Universidad de Costa Rica where she obtained a Bachelor degree and a Licentiate degree in the teaching of English. This teacher lives in the county of San Ramón, in the province of Alajuela. Moreover, she participated in a training session provided by the researchers on the application of the feedback instrument to be used as well as two virtual sessions explaining the elements and components of the plot to write short stories.

### **III.3.3 Context of Study**

As it has been pointed out above, this research was conducted at CINDEA Judas. According to the high school principal, MSc. Luis Fernando Elizondo Carrillo, the institution had two facilities outside Judas County, which are located in Chomes and Costa de Pájaros.. In this high school, the academic and technical offer included several technical careers including: Computing, Accounting, Executive Secretary, Logistics and Productivity. According to the collaborating teacher, Licda. Arelys Salazar Vargas (personal communication, 2020) CINDEA was founded in 2013; though, the MEP decided to implement the technical careers in 2016.

As a matter of fact, Judas, Chomes, and Costa de Pájaros are rural areas, which have been positively impacted by technical education. Indeed, having a CINDEA institution provides young and adult students different possibilities to study a technical career and enroll in educational programs or courses that exceed academic learning. In other words, this type of institution fosters direct employment in the region and learning English becomes a necessary communicative skill to be acquired.

### **III.4 Research Categories of Analysis**

When developing this research project, it was essential to define the different categories of analysis to be studied. According to Mezquita and Rodríguez (as cited in

Carballo and Guelmes, 2016) the definition of category is any value from a determined group that is called domain of the variable (p. 2). Meanwhile, for Nuñez and Flores (as cited in Reguant and Martínez, 2014) a research category is a studying area that can be examined in qualitative research. (p. 2). The research categories to be examined in this study are the following.

#### **III.4.1 Category 1. MEP English Study Program**

Based on the information depicted in the study program proposed by MEP (2016) it is stated that:

The purpose of studying English in the Educational System is the development of the learner's communicative competence as well as the knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and competences of a 21st century citizen. This requires the implementation of innovative communicative language teaching methodologies. These methodologies are supported by principles established in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR), the Action-Oriented Approach, and the Educating for a New Citizenship Framework. (p. 21).

As a matter of fact, the researchers applied a triangulation of the information to analyze the study program. First, it has to be highlighted that the current study program was published in 2016, and it was thoroughly examined as a reference to determine the writing proficiency level expected from the students by means of a comparison chart. According to Morris (2018), the triangulation of information is seen as a way to add regulation to qualitative and quantitative research. Moreover, the use of triangulation required researchers to analyze the data critically, identify methodological weaknesses, and employ alternative ways of testing outcomes. (p. 2). As a basis for analyzing the students' writing proficiency level expected by MEP, this triangulation of information allowed such results.

A comparison qualitative chart was created by the researchers to analyze the MEP's English study program. This comparison chart (Appendix A) included the object of analysis, the English study program proposed by the MEP, and a brief discussion of the literature consulted.

#### **III.4.2 Category 2: Effectiveness**

In this case, the researchers utilized a writing rubric (Appendix. C) to assess students' progress in their writing skills. The technique used was the Likert scale, according to Sampieri, Fenández and Baptista (2010) the Likert scale is a set of items to measure the reaction of a person by using three, five, or seven categories (p. 238). In addition, the rubric to be applied in this study was designed following these parameters:

1. This instrument was intended for identifying the writing level that the participating students presented in the diagnostic activity.
2. This rubric allowed the researchers to analyze a student's progress and the development of their writing skill.
3. This rubric included five writing features (content, grammar, punctuation, organization and vocabulary).
4. This rubric incorporated a Likert scale, which includes six main assessment degrees such as: 5: Excellent, 4: Very Good, 3: Good, 2: Fair, 1: Poor, and 0: Needs Total Improvement.
5. The researchers applied this instrument to the participating students from a tenth group from CINDEA Judas in the Circuit 04 of Puntarenas.
6. The data gathered through this instrument allowed investigators to analyze the information acquired by using the mixed method approach.

### **III.4.3 Category 3. Short stories**

According to Pardede (2011) a short story has a concise plot, few characters, and does not include details of the setting. Indeed, this author mentioned that short stories are easy for students when following a storyline (p. 17). To analyze this category, the researchers developed a diagnostic evaluation (appendix. B). In addition, the diagnostic test was applied to determine the current writing proficiency level of the participating students at CINDEA Judas institution.

### **III.4.4 Category 4. Assessing Writing**

For Brown (2002) (as cited in Neibling, 2014): “the purpose for assessing students’ knowledge, skill, performance, or understanding is to generate accurate information that leads to valid changes in teaching practice or student learning such that improvement in student achievement can be facilitated” (p. 13). In fact, to identify the teacher’s perceptions regarding assessment the researchers elaborated and applied a structured interview (appendix. D). According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) a research interview is “an interview where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 2). Moreover, this interview consisted of one closed and ten open questions and it was conducted during the third week of October 2020 via Zoom meeting. Moreover, the interview instrument was designed to recognize the perceptions of the teacher in regards to the use and effects that feedback instruments provoked when assessing the writing skills tenth grade students.

### **III.5 Research variables**

As this research followed a mixed design, it implied that there were not only qualitative categories of analysis; but also, there were quantitative research variables. Therefore, it was essential to develop, analyze and operationalize the variables by means of quantitative instruments.

### **III.5.1 Variable 1. Feedback instruments**

As Pei Leng (2014) mentions in her article: “The teacher provides feedback to enable students to read and understand the problems and use it to improve future writing. Thus, written feedback is used to teach skills that are able to help students improve their writing” (p. 390). To assess the effectiveness in the implementation of the feedback instruments applied to the participating students, the researchers elaborated a questionnaire. This questionnaire applied to students requested their perceptions on the instruments from question 1 to question 10, which correspond to the study objective #3. (Appendix. E).

### **III.5.2 Variable 2. Writing Process**

Lacksmi (as cited in Aziz, 2015) stated that: “it is suggested that the writing process: include prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing” (p. 132). As it was mentioned before, the writing process follows five main steps to write essays, summaries, short stories, and academic research papers. These stages were essential to the overall understanding of the reader.

## **III.6 Research Instruments**

For the purpose of collecting the necessary data for this investigation, the process involves five different instruments. The instruments were a comparison chart used by the investigators to analyze the MEP’s English Study Program, a diagnostic test to be applied to the participating students, a rubric employed to evaluate the students’ writing performance, an interview for the collaborating teacher to be carried at the end of the fieldwork stage, and finally, a questionnaire applied to the participating students. These instruments were applied to the target population from the first week of September to the third week of October, 2020.

### **III.6.1 Comparison chart**

The researchers created a comparison chart (Appendix. A) to evaluate the MEP’s English study program, which has four different columns. The first column was for the

feature to the object of analysis. The second one was for the researchers to write about the English study program proposed by the MEP. The third column included a discussion of scholars and experts on the topic. Finally, the last column presented an analytical discussion written by the researchers.

### **III.6.2 Diagnostic test**

First, the researchers addressed a diagnostic evaluation applied the second week of September (see Appendix. B). It is necessary to state that such test was applied to the target population to determine the background knowledge on the students' writing skills. The investigators created an instrument to request the students to write short stories. In this way, the researchers evaluated five specific writing components: content, grammar, punctuation, organization, and vocabulary. The researchers collected the students' written work, which consisted of asking the learners to write a free short story using the pictures provided in class as visual support. Besides, students needed to include at least three different characters, and the length of this short story was about one-page long. The instructions of this instrument were written in Spanish as to ensure general understanding from the students.

### **III.6.3 Writing Rubric**

Additionally, the collaborating teacher in charge of the experimental group was granted a quantitative feedback instrument provided by the researchers (Appendix. C) for testing the students' writing skills through the production of short stories. The rubric was created by the researchers. This rubric included relevant linguistic aspects to be evaluated when assessing a writing task, such as: *organization, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and content*. The collaborating teacher explained the rubric to the participating students eight days before they had to write the short story. Additionally, the teacher reminded them of the aspects regarding the evaluation criteria utilized when students write a short story. Plus, it is important to highlight the fact that this rubric was written in English. Another aspect to point

out is that this rubric was used for evaluating students' writing performance by means of the short stories; however, the collaborating teacher was the one in charge of using it for assessing students' performance.

#### **III.6.4 Interview to the collaborating teacher**

Moreover, the researchers created and applied a structured interview (see Appendix. D). This instrument included one closed and ten open ended questions addressed to the collaborating teacher in this study. The purpose of this instrument was to collect information about the use and possible effects that feedback instruments may have when it comes to evaluate or assess students writing skill performance. The researchers administered the instrument to the collaborating teachers during the third week of October, 2020.

#### **III.6.5 Questionnaire to the collaborating students**

The researchers created the questionnaire (Appendix. E) that was applied to the participating students, which consisted of two closed and eight open ended questions. This questionnaire aimed at identifying students' perspective regarding the role of feedback instruments that are employed during the writing activities proposed in class. This quantitative instrument was applied to the participating students during the fourth week of September, 2020. Moreover, it is important to mention that this questionnaire was written in Spanish as the researchers deemed it essential to ensure students' full understanding of the instructions.

### **III.7 Data collection process**

During the first week of August, the researchers compared specific information depicted in the English study program proposed by MEP with theory contained in the theoretical framework by means of a comparison chart. The purpose pursued in this section was to identify the extent to which the current study program includes a reference of the

writing mastery English level that is expected from the students of tenth grade from a public high school. For instance, the comparison chart was a qualitative instrument that included the following aspects: the feature of analysis, the literature consulted on the topic, and an analysis from the researchers of this investigation.

In addition, it is important to state that the methodological design allowed the researchers to collect the necessary data in a virtual class. Therefore, it has to be stated that the application of the instruments started a month after designing the comparison chart due to time constraints and certain school limitations regarding the accessibility and permission granted by the CINDEA's principal. Additionally, it has to be pointed out that due to the virtual modality applied at CINDEA high school the researchers had to adapt the research itinerary to the institutional dispositions, which somehow interfered in the development of this study. During the data collection process, the researchers worked with the participating students through synchronous virtual working sessions, via *Microsoft Teams*. Besides, it is significant to add that the collaborating teacher created a *WhatsApp* group with those learners as an alternative means of communication with those individuals.

Moreover, during the first week of September, the researchers applied a workshop for the collaborating teacher. The goal pursued by the researchers in this session was to explain to the collaborating teacher the study procedures to be applied with the participating students at CINDEA Judas institution and the plot's components, and the particularities of the rubric designed by the researchers, which was used for assessing learners' writing proficiency mastery. In fact, the researchers elaborated a PowerPoint presentation to deliver the workshop as a mediation activity between the researchers and the collaborating teacher to present the purpose of the research, explain the writing steps to be followed when working with related to short stories, and illustrate the materials and instruments that may be applied with the students (see Appendix. F). This mediation activity was carried out through a Zoom meeting



with the collaborating teacher. Also, it is important to state that during the workshop the collaborating teacher was given a guide from the researchers regarding the plots' components that she was required to explain to her students during the first and second sessions.

Besides, the researchers explained to the collaborating teacher how to apply the diagnostic test to the group. Then, the researchers presented and explained the rubric to be used for assessing the writing proficiency level of students. Moreover, the language proficiency indicators described in the CEFR were discussed with the collaborating teacher as a means to establish a comparison between their writing proficiency and a possible language band that could range from low beginner to competent user (i.e. A1 to C1). Also, the researchers shared with the collaborating teacher the necessary materials to implement the research strategy including, tests, worksheets, practices, visual aids, rubrics.

In addition, during the second week of September the collaborating teacher required the students to write a short story on their own using a set of pictures contained in the diagnostic instrument as visual support. Hence, this short story served as a diagnostic test for the researchers to determine the English written language proficiency level of the participating students. During this week these tenth graders were asked to write a page-long short story on their own, including at least three characters that were selected from a topic of their choice, using two pictures of farm animals provided by the researchers. Foremost, the instructions of this instrument were written in Spanish for students to avoid possible language misunderstandings. Moreover, the participating students were granted a week for returning their diagnostic writing test to the collaborating teacher, through their *WhatsApp* group.

Afterwards, the collaborating teacher included in a Google Drive folder the diagnostic's tests, the class sessions writing practices and the final short story written by the participating students. In addition, the teacher shared with the researchers the Google Drive file for them to analyze the drafts and determine the writing proficiency English level from

those students, according to the parameters established by the CEFR. To evaluate the diagnostic tests, the researchers created a rubric considering different writing aspects such as: *content, grammar, punctuation, organization, and vocabulary*. The results obtained from the learners' tests were compared and correlated with the linguistic indicators described in the CEFR and which were also depicted on the rubric. Thus, the researchers were able to assign students a language proficiency band for their writing competence, which varied from low beginner to lower intermediate user (i.e., A1 to B1). Consequently, the researchers compared and contrasted the language proficiency level of the participating students before the fieldwork stage commenced. As a matter of fact, the analysis of the effects obtained from implementation of specific feedback instruments to the students allowed the researchers to establish valid generalizations.

Additionally, a total of three sessions were conducted with the participating students. In each class session, the collaborating teacher explained the procedures for writing short stories, assigned the writing practices, and sent explanatory videos to the participating students through their *Whatsapp* group. Moreover, the participating students received from the collaborating teachers a summative evaluation grading and formative feedback assessment with comments using the feedback instrument created by the researchers. Additionally, the researchers applied a questionnaire to the participating students to determine the extent to which the feedback instrument application promoted an improvement in their writing competence. This quantitative instrument was applied during the fourth week of October, 2020. Moreover, it was written in Spanish as the purpose of the researchers was to identify the students' perspective regarding the implementation of feedback instruments as a means for improving their writing competence level.

### **III.8 Procedures for data analysis**

The data collected were obtained from five main instruments: a comparison chart, a diagnostic test, an assessment rubric, a questionnaire, and a structured interview. The purpose of the comparison chart was to compare and contrast each research variable and category of analysis stated in this study. To do so, the researchers analyzed the English study program proposed by MEP and the literature review consulted in this study to understand the assessment of the writing skill depicted in the study program, with the prior international and national studies.

On the other hand, the diagnostic test allowed the researchers to determine the starting writing's proficiency level students from the experimental group had prior to the implementation of the feedback instruments. This information was essential as it discloses the background language knowledge students had regarding their writing skill performance. The instructions of this instrument were written in Spanish to ensure students' full understanding. This mixed research instrument was applied during the second week of September to the participating students. Additionally, this information was organized using frequency calculation tables. Then, the results were tabulated in an Excel document. After that, the researchers graphed and explained the results obtained from the diagnostic instrument.

Likewise, the assessment rubric (Appendix 3), which was a mixed research instrument, allowed students to identify their strengths and weaknesses regarding their own writing performance when developing short stories. It is important to recall that the academic assessment is a fundamental practice in the learning process. That is why, the students' questionnaire had the purpose of recognizing the perspective of the participating students regarding the implementation of feedback instruments. Their answers allowed the researchers to raise awareness regarding the perception of learners about the effects of implementing

feedback instruments. The collected data were analyzed using a mixed method approach. For this reason, the information from the students' questionnaire was numerically coded. Additionally, the results obtained were tabulated in an Excel document. After that, the researchers graphed and made an analysis of this information.

In addition, the interview with the collaborating teacher was conducted to examine her background knowledge about the implementation of feedback instruments to improve and assess students' writing skills through short stories compositions. This interview was qualitatively analyzed considering the thoughts and perceptions provided by the teacher. In other words, her insights were contrasted with the theoretical foundation. After organizing and tabulating the collected data, the researchers analyzed the gathered information based on the mixed methodology with the purpose of examining the possible effectiveness of implementing feedback instruments in the assessment of writing skills with tenth grade students.

## **CHAPTER IV**

# **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

## **Results and Analysis**

This section thoroughly describes the analysis of the collected data. Firstly, a detailed discussion of the Study Program proposed by MEP was included. The main purpose was to analyze the different features related to assessment and writing that are contained in the program. Secondly, a description of a workshop as a mediation activity provided to the collaborating teacher was presented. The goal pursued in the workshop was to guide the teacher in the correct application of the feedback instruments designed by the researchers.

Moreover, this chapter included an academic discussion of the results obtained from a diagnostic test that was applied to the participating students to determine their starting writing proficiency level. In addition, this section contains a discussion of the three class sessions that were observed with the participating group. Finally, in this section the researchers developed an interview summary to the collaborating teacher and a thorough analysis of students' insights obtained from a questionnaire applied to those learners.

### **IV.1 The English study program proposed by MEP**

According to MEP (2016), the current English study program is intended to develop learner's communicative competences in the target language. Indeed, to achieve this language goal, it is essential to implement innovative communicative language teaching strategies. These strategies were taken from the linguistic principles depicted in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). For example, the study program calls for the implementation of the Action-Oriented Approach, and the Educating for a New Citizenship Framework, which advocates for a true mastery of the target language (p. 21). Moreover, one of the aims established in the study program is to foster critical thinking among language learners. To attain such aim, teachers take on the role of a facilitator. Therefore, pedagogical activities like speaking debates and collaborative undertakings are suggested in the program

as a means in which students reflect on their own reality and express their concerns and thoughts in the English language.

In regards to a definition for a study program, Pukelis (2011) highlights that a study program is defined in the basis of specific educational competences. According to EQF<sup>2</sup> (as mentioned in Pukelis, 2011) the importance of a study programs relies on the learning outcomes presented as “Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence” (p. 43). Thus, an accurate study program should establish the goals and objectives to be achieved during a specific time. Moreover, for Dooley et al. (as mentioned in Kennedy, Hyland and Ryan, 2009) referred to competence as: “Competency-based behavioral anchors are defined as performance capabilities needed to demonstrate knowledge, skill and ability (competency) acquisition” (p. 9). For this reason, it can be pointed out that the current MEP study program reflects the development of competences in which learners not only know the content of a topic, but also demonstrate it through challenging and recreational activities.

When analyzing the English study program proposed by MEP (2016), it is evident that it was designed to provide bilingual citizens to the Costa Rican society. Additionally, the study program underlined a parallel development of the communicative competences process of the learner’s cultural background, oral and written skills, socializing abilities, and personal values. For instance, the Ministry of Education (2016) took into account the Action-Oriented Approach as a core language method for their academic framework named: Educating for a New Citizenship. Lastly, it can be affirmed that the study program proposed by MEP, complies with the linguistic principles and required theoretical foundation that a language curriculum should contain. However, the study program does not state the incorporation of

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<sup>2</sup> European Qualifications Framework

feedback instruments for assessing the writing skill through the use of short stories. In fact, those instruments are only used in tasks where students summarize and give opinions about short stories, videos, and blogs (p. 246).

#### **IV.1.1 Feedback instruments suggested in the Study Program Proposed by MEP**

The study program proposed by MEP (2016) for the teaching of English in third cycle and diversified education grades stated that the use of feedback instruments such as: rubrics, checklists, and other instruments are adaptable materials which are addressed to provide students with pedagogical feedback. Moreover, the study program highlights that those instruments must be explained in advance for learners to understand the linguistic aspects to be evaluated and how to enhance their language skills (p. 36). Additionally, the study program indicates that teachers are responsible to raise student's awareness about their learning process and assess their own language performance. In this way, both teachers and students are committed to be part of EFS learning progress.

According to Pei Leng (2014) “teachers provide feedback to enable students to read and understand the problems and use it to improve future writing” (p. 390). In addition, Silvestri & Oescher (as mentioned in Chowdhury, 2018) argued that “rubrics can be used to state standards, instructional goals and objectives for the type of performances that students should be able to achieve while completing a task” (p. 62). In other words, rubrics are assessment instruments for teachers and students to identify the evaluating aspects to be considered in an assignment and a path to accomplish the expected objectives from the educational program.

Regarding the importance that feedback instruments have for MEP and scholars, it is important to recall that before providing feedback, learners need to obtain a deep understanding of the topic and materials provided by the teacher. After that, students have to be presented with authentic and contextualized assessment instruments. By doing this,



learners were aware of the competences expected from them. In brief, the evaluating instruments have to be perceived as a valuable guideline in which students can be aware of their own mistakes and progress.

#### **IV.1.2 The writing process established in the Study Program Proposed by MEP**

According to the English study program *writing* is considered as a process which involves different stages: brainstorming, organization (outlines), drafting and editing (p. 49). Likewise, developing and improving the writing skill among EFL learners can take time and dedication given that it involves following a structure. The study program also states that when requesting learners to write a text, the language instructor has to consider specific aspects such as: learners' age, learner's inner interest, and language mastery levels (p. 46). Moreover, the study program emphasizes the importance of facilitating students to acquire sufficient language knowledge about grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary to become "proficient writers". Thus, students' writing skills evolve from a simple sentence to a well-organized paragraph based on the progress they do in their writing practices.

In regards to the writing process, for Hayes and Flower (as mentioned in Wiener and Costaris, 2012) the authors defined the writing process as a "goal directed which requires the writer to engage in planning, sentence generation, and revision" (p. 125). In other words, before developing a written paper, students should visualize the topic they pursue to write, also they have to present concise ideas. Moreover, Graves (as mentioned in Aziz, 2015) states that there are five stages that form the writing process, which are: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (p. 132). Aziz (2015) points out that the prewriting stage is characterized by choosing a topic and organizing ideas. During the drafting stage, the writer puts his/her ideas into complete thoughts and short paragraphs. Moreover, in the revising phase the writer usually submits his/her paper to an external partner to gather recommendations on the general piece of work. In the editing stage, writers focus on giving

formality to the paper thorough examination of either content or mechanical aspect. Finally, the publishing stage refers to the final version of the writing, and its release to the audience. (pp.132-136).

In terms of the writing process, it was evident that the study program integrates the different writing stages proposed by authors. The researchers noticed that when it comes to academic writing, EFL learners do not usually perceive the importance of writing activities. According to Aziz (2015) the writing process involves different stages that must be followed to obtain accurate and coherent writings to ensure understanding from the readers (p. 132). For this reason; the study program remarks the writing stages as for learners to be more confident during the development of this language skill.

#### **IV.1.3 The use of short stories depicted in the Study Program**

The use of short stories in the current English program is presented as a didactic resource for the development of different language activities. For example, short stories are suggested to be employed as a reading activity material to promote such skill and engage students in the writing process. (MEP, 2016, p. 124). Moreover, it is also stated that short stories can be used to develop the listening skill through recognition of sounds, phonics, syllabification, vocabulary, some key terminology, identification of the main idea (MEP, 2016, p. 127). Also, the implementation of short stories is therein stated as a recommended didactic material to be employed by teachers when developing speaking activities. (MEP, 2016, p. 161). Besides, short stories are also claimed for the development of the writing skill through activities such as, writing personal opinions of a short story, creating a short story play and elaborating essays or poems (MEP, 2016, p. 246).

In the light of establishing an accurate definition for short stories, Pardede (2011) described that a short story is usually guided by one plot, involves few characters, and the story setting does not have a detailed description. In addition, this author claimed that short

stories are easy for students to read and follow a storyline (p. 17). Moreover, Parkinson and Thomas (as cited in Sevilla and Méndez, 2015), pointed out that short stories are less contextualized than other types of fiction literature and are less linguistically complex as opposed to poetry and drama. (p. 2). Therefore, it can be assured that short stories are feasible materials which allow readers to be engaged when reading.

The use of short stories depicted in the English study program and its different definitions are discussed by several authors. Moreover, it is noticeable how short stories can be used by teachers when developing the four language skills in EFL students. In fact, the researchers observed that the recommended use of short stories in the study program is oriented to develop learners' language skills in the four macro linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). As argued by Zahra and Farrah (2015) short stories can be customized to improve not only the learners' writing skill, but also other linguistic abilities. Therefore, this study is aimed at analyzing the possible effects that the implementation of short stories can have in the participants' pieces of writing by means of a regular exposure to such practice and constantly receiving either written or spoken feedback

#### **IV.1.4 How to assess the writing process according to the study program**

According to the study program, assessment is considered as an academic process and not as a pedagogical goal per se. In fact, it is aimed at collecting information about the learners' language skills, abilities, and competences through real life situations by means of integrated tasks (p. 50). In addition, the study program (2016) points out four mandatory questions that teachers should consider before assessing a student.

1. Why assess learning?
2. What to assess?
3. How to assess it?
4. Which are the pedagogical implications? (p. 50).

In this way, English teachers are aware of the educational needs of each learner and can design specific assessment strategies. As a matter of fact, the study program states that assessment is not a goal itself; instead, it defines that it is one of the teachers' roles in the class. Therefore, English teachers must find the type of assessment that best suits the particular features of students. In fact, this study is intended to examine the effects of using feedback instruments to improve the writing skills of students from ten grade through the development of short stories.

In regard to a definition for assessing writing, Brown (2002) (as cited in Neibling, 2014) establishes that “the purpose for assessing students' knowledge, skill, performance, or understanding is to generate accurate information that leads to valid changes in teaching practice or student learning such that improvement in student achievement can be facilitated” (p. 13). Likewise, Alshakhi (2016) argued that: “an appropriate writing assessment is characterized for using its local context by means of new practices” (p. 2). As can be seen, Alshaki (2016) highlights the importance of using contextualized materials.

Based on the information depicted in the study program proposed and the perceptions of experts on the subject matter, it is evident that assessing writing is quite a detailed process that also involves learners' context. In fact, the program proposed refers to assessment as an essential practice for obtaining positive results in the educational process. The main objective established by MEP regarding assessment is to collect students' information about their academic performance, language skills, linguistic abilities, and communicative competences.

This research compares the results obtained by the participating students in a diagnostic test to those achieved at the end of the fieldwork stage. Essentially, the effectiveness of the feedback instruments provided by the researchers can be measured through the assessment of short stories. In other words, the improvement in the participants' writing skill demonstrates the benefit of receiving constant feedback using short stories. Since

the participating students were in tenth grade, it was expected that these students would have had previous knowledge on short stories. Surprisingly, the students claimed that they learned about short stories components for the first time when the researchers started to develop this study at CINDEA Judas. In this perspective, the role of the collaborating teacher was essential to gather the results considering that the innovative feat of the use of feedback instruments in this research falls on the use of short stories, their components, practices and a final version embodied in a process that led to the collaborating teacher being able to obtain results to measure if the students enhanced their writing mastery.

Moreover, it is important to point out that according to MEP, teachers are expected and required to use assessment strategies in the development of contents proposed in the study program. On the other hand, authors like Brown (2002) (as cited in Neibling, 2014) stated that assessment is seen as a process in which students can improve specific language features and reinforce their own strengths.

Once the study program was thoroughly analyzed it is important to mention that despite the fact that it is a well-structured curriculum there is still a significant gap that has to be covered. Indeed, it does not include a reference to provide language teachers with well-developed feedback instruments regarding the writing skill as to assure standardized assessing pedagogical tools. Unfortunately, the study program does not promote the overall explanation of the literary components of a short story nor it included a description regarding the assessment of such writings. This is one of the gaps that the researchers found and hence it is valid to state that it should be covered.

Conversely, through the application of this study it was attempted that by implementing a progressive assessment, learners familiarize themselves with the writing process, the writing micro skills and the short stories' components that implies a focal point in the improvement of writing competencies and abilities. This is why, this study was conducted

in a correlated pedagogical strategy that involves the application of authentic feedback through the elaboration of short stories as a strategy to improve the writing skills of tenth grade EFL students at CINDEA Judas.

## **IV.2 Diagnostic test to the participating students**

To evaluate the participants' writing skills and their knowledge on developing short stories, the researchers designed and applied a diagnostic test to the collaborating students before the fieldwork stage commenced. Since the goal pursued in this study was to improve the writing performance of language learners, firstly, the researchers were required to determine the starting writing proficiency level of the participants. Hence, students were asked to write a one-page short story based on two images of farm animals that were provided by the researchers. Moreover, it was necessary to indicate that those pictures were included, not only as visual support; but also, as guidelines for students to develop their short stories using all of the images that were previously granted.

### **IV.2.1 Diagnostic test applied to the participating students**

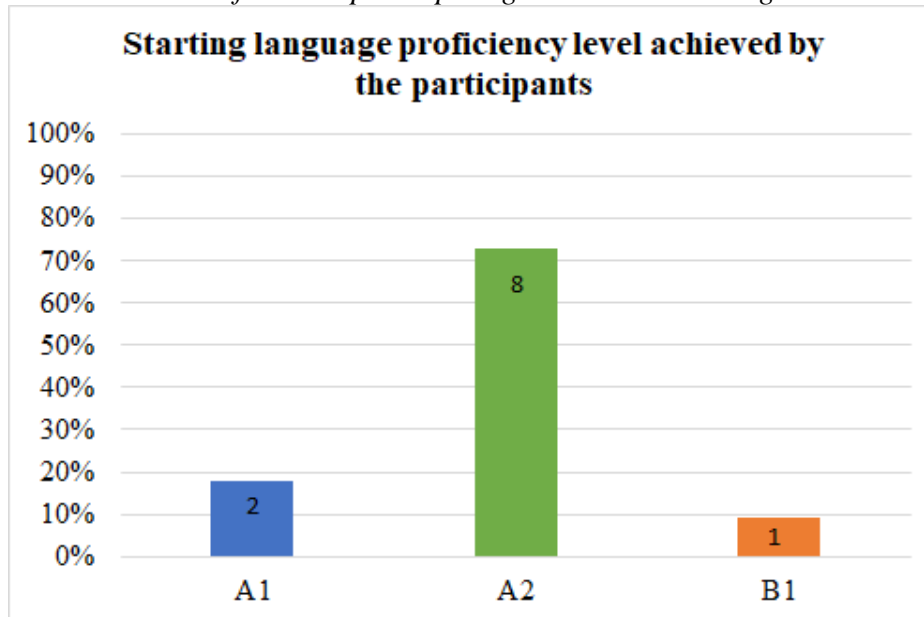
This diagnostic test was sent to the participants via WhatsApp during the first online session, and the collaborating teacher explained it to students through the virtual meeting session on *Microsoft Teams*. In this case, the collaborating teacher suggested the WhatsApp application to send this instrument to the participants because it was the electronic means through which she usually used to send supplementary materials and self-study assignments to the learners. In addition, the participants voiced that they preferred to receive the diagnostic test via *WhatsApp* as it was easier for them to download it and return it as opposed to other platforms like e-mail or Google Classroom, which they were not familiar with. Furthermore, the students had a week to write the short story. After the application of the diagnostic test, the collaborating teacher was requested to grade the tests. Then, the researchers correlated

those grades to a language band to determine the participant's writing proficiency level.

Graph 1, illustrates the language bands in which the students were classified.

### Graph 1

Obtained results from the participating students in the diagnostic test.



Source: Own elaboration (2020)

As it is presented on Graph 1, the results obtained from the diagnostic test revealed that 18% of the participating students (two students) achieved certain indicators that are described in the A1 English writing proficiency level according to the CEFR. That is, they were basic writing users whose language mastery was limited to the implementation of basic sentences using simple present tense. On the other hand, 73% of the participants (eight students) were classified as A2 speakers based on the parameters and language goals depicted on the CEFR. In this case, the data revealed that three quarters of the sample population possessed an upper low beginner level of mastery of the writing skill. These findings support the arguments stated by MEP's authorities (2016) when they stated that language learners from public schools in Costa Rica were not reaching the expected English proficiency levels after eleven or twelve years of instruction (p. 12). For instance, these students were able to employ irregular verbs in past tense correctly, though they lacked of coherence and cohesion

when writing a narrative paragraph. Surprisingly, 9% of the participants (one student) reached a set of communicative goals that belong to the B1 language band in writing according to the CEFR. To illustrate, those learners were capable of improving their grammar use, they expanded their vocabulary, and improved their use of punctuation markers. In addition, as Aziz (2015) points out it is necessary to elaborate a rough draft before writing; however, the majority of the participants rather employed a free writing technique, which contained plenty of inaccuracies. For instance, based on the results obtained in the test it can be claimed that most of the participants had a starting level of language mastery in terms of English writing skills. In fact, it is necessary to search for different teaching strategies that help language learners improve their English language mastery level.

### **IV.3 Class Sessions**

The following section presents the analysis of the first, second, and third class sessions developed from September to October 2020. During three class sessions students developed short stories and received feedback from the teacher in regard to their writing performance. The collaborating teacher shared with the researchers the link for accessing the virtual classes through *Microsoft Teams*. Moreover, due to the institutional dispositions the English class lessons were carried out every two weeks. Then, the collaborating teacher created a *WhatsApp* group with the participating students as a secondary means of communication. As a matter of fact, not all the participating students could connect on the quarterly basis to the synchronous class sessions, because of different internet connectivity constraints; though, they participated through their *WhatsApp* group with the collaborating teacher.



### IV.3.1 First Session

The first session was carried out during the third week of September 2020. In this session there were four students connected via *Microsoft Teams*. Then, the collaborating teacher proceeded to explain the three first phases of the plot that included, *exposition*, *rising action*, and *climax* stages. The explanation was delivered in approximately fifteen minutes in which the collaborating teacher provided students with examples of the three phases. Certainly, the teacher clarified doubts and explained the instructions of the first assignment. For this task, students had to write the beginning of a short story comprising the phases of the plot. *Table 3* contains the results obtained by the participants in regards to the language features that were examined in the diagnostic test.

**Table 3**

*Results obtained by the participating students in the first writing practice*

Writing Features Assessed						
Students	Content	Grammar	Punctuation	Organization	Vocabulary	Grade Obtained
Student A	3	3	1	2	3	48
Student B	4	3	3	3	4	68
Student C	4	3	3	4	4	72
Student E	3	3	1	2	3	48
Student G	3	3	2	3	4	60
Student I	4	4	4	4	5	84
Student J	3	3	3	3	3	60
Student M	3	3	1	2	3	48
Student O	3	3	2	3	3	56
Student P	3	2	2	2	3	48
Student Q	3	3	1	3	3	52

Scale: 5= excellent, 4=Very good, 3=Good, 2= Fair, 1=Poor, 0= Needs total improvement.

**Source:** Own elaboration (2020)

In addition, during this session, 73% of the students (8 individuals) obtained *good* results in the use of content, taking into account the Likert scale that was employed for this test. Nevertheless, as it was a first draft from the participants, it was expected that certain

inaccuracies would appear. Recall that Aziz (2015) stated that in the drafting stage, learners focus on mechanics rather than on content (p. 36). According to the gathered data, the students depicted an overall average in the content evaluation aspect.

Likewise, in the grammar evaluation aspect 81% of the students (9 individuals) maintained similar results. In other words, it was noted that learners had *good* results on grammar. As illustrated by Aziz (2015), the editing phase is crucial for improving the written piece in which a revision of spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar is needed. These results on grammar demonstrated students have a similar grammar proficiency level among themselves. Moreover, the grammar outcomes depicted basic mastery by the students with certain mistakes that interfered with the comprehension of the text.

Besides, when analyzing the participants' punctuation 36% of the sample (4 learners) obtained *poor* performance affecting the understanding of the short story. In contrast, 27% of the participants (3 students) showed *fair* results, but with some misuse of periods, question marks, colons, semicolons, and commas. On the other hand, according to Brown (2007) (as cited in Thanh, 2016), writers may: "use acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralization), patterns, and rules" (p. 4). Moreover, 27% of the individuals achieved good results. Likewise, the obtained data in organization was positive given that 45% of the students (5 learners) obtained upgraded results whereas 36% (4 students) of their peers attained a low grade on organization.

The researchers determined that the students' writing mastery was basic. In fact, it was evidenced that they rather lacked the use of transitions, linking words, coherence, and cohesiveness when developing the short stories. In regards to the assessment of vocabulary there was an important improvement in the results obtained from a majority of students. Despite the academic context in public education in Costa Rica due to COVID-19 and all the adaptations made to continue with the 78 educational processes, it is necessary to highlight

the improvement that learners achieved. In a short period of time, the participants were able to enhance their writing skills and improved the use of punctuation, vocabulary, and grammar. As a matter of fact, the results revealed that 63% of learners (7 students) were able to improve their vocabulary repertoire. Likewise, nearly 36% of individuals also showed positive results. However, the current vocabulary mastery level of learners is still limited as it was reflected in their writings. In turn, during the first writing assignment, the collaborating teacher pointed out several spelling mistakes in most of the written works from the students. After revising the information reported by the collaborating teacher it was clear that students needed to improve their writing skills in various aspects such as punctuation, organization, and vocabulary.

#### **IV.3.2 Second Session**

The second session was carried out during the fourth week of September 2020. In this session, due to internet connection issues there were only two students from the group synchronously connected through *Microsoft Team* meeting platform. Moreover, the session included the presentation of the short story components namely, *falling action* and *resolution*. These two literary features were clearly explained by the collaborating teacher. At the end, the teacher created a summary of all written parts that are necessary in a short story and sent an explanatory short video to students, which was elaborated by the researchers about the two last plot's elements through the WhatsApp class group. Additionally, the teacher explained the second practice which was related to these literary features. Besides, the collaborating teacher reminded students about the rubric to be used to assess this writing evaluation. The purpose was to create students' awareness about assessment and to make students conscious in regards to the language features that were evaluated. After the students carried out the writing task that was requested, the collaborating teacher along with the researchers revised

and graded the learner's short stories. *Table 4*, depicts the evaluated features and grades that were established.

**Table 4**

*Results obtained by the participating students in the second writing practice*

Students	Writing Features Assessed					Grade Obtained
	Content	Grammar	Punctuation	Organization	Vocabulary	
Student A	3	2	1	1	3	40
Student B	5	4	4	3	4	80
Student C	5	5	2	4	4	80
Student E	5	3	1	1	3	52
Student G	4	3	0	0	3	40
Student I	5	5	3	2	5	80
Student J	4	5	5	4	5	92
Student M	4	4	1	0	4	52
Student O	3	5	4	0	5	68
Student P	4	5	0	0	5	56
Student Q	3	2	0	0	3	32

Scale: 5= Excellent, 4=Very good, 3=Good, 2= Fair, 1=Poor, 0= Needs total improvement.

**Source:** Own elaboration (2020)

The results provided from the second session practice revealed that students improved their writing skills in two major aspects that were content and vocabulary. Indeed, 36% of the participating students evidenced high performance in these areas after receiving the teacher's feedback. According to Bear et al., (2008) (mentioned in Hestad, 2014) there is a linguistic correlation among reading and writing skills. The authors added that constant reading is a practice to boost vocabulary learning. Similarly, these writers claimed that writing is a language skill in which learners can put into practice such knowledge. (p. 39). Therefore, based on the results obtained in this study and the arguments stated by Bear et al., (2008) it can be claimed that indeed there was a relationship between the knowledge students acquired from previous reading activities and the production of writing content by using short stories. Furthermore, considering the features that both language skills (reading and writing) have in common, students put into practice the grammatical structures, vocabulary, and punctuation

aspects learned through this reading material. Indeed, this can be seen when students recognized words on literal texts and were able to apply them meaningfully on writing practices.

Additionally, 45% of the students showed a high proficiency level in grammar; which suggested that learners mastered certain grammar structures and were knowledgeable regarding basic verb tense conjugations. According to Damayanti (2009) every structural language element learned in the present does not replace the gained knowledge, but it also enriches the native language. For this author, the writing structures acquired in the first language are involved in the writing development in a second language learning directly (p. 26). Likewise, the feedback provided by the collaborating teacher allowed students to improve writing micro skills; which was given through the assessment rubric and personalized comments regarding each student's writing performance.

#### **IV.3.3 Third Session**

The final short story was created by the participating students during the third week of October. In this third session, the participants had to present their final short story in which they had to develop a complete short story considering the elements of the plot that were explained by the collaborator teacher in the first two sessions. The teacher sent the material to students via WhatsApp. The students had a week to complete their final version. The topic for the final short story was free; however, the students were asked to use their creativity by incorporating certain illustrations about four different characters to write the short stories. In turn, the participating students returned their final short story to the teacher. *Table 5* compiles the grading assigned by the collaborating teacher in regards to several writing features.

**Table 5***Results obtained by the participating students in the final writing assessment*

Students	Writing Features Assessed					Grade Obtained
	Content	Grammar	Punctuation	Organization	Vocabulary	
Student A	3	3	2	4	3	60
Student B	4	4	3	4	4	76
Student C	4	4	3	4	4	76
Student E	4	3	3	3	2	60
Student G	3	3	3	2	3	56
Student I	3	4	2	4	3	64
Student J	5	4	4	4	4	84
Student M	4	3	3	3	3	64
Student O	4	4	3	3	3	68
Student P	4	4	2	3	4	68
Student Q	3	3	3	3	3	60

Scale: 5= Excellent, 4=Very good, 3=Good, 2= Fair, 1=Poor, 0= Needs total improvement.

**Source:** Own elaboration (2020)

According to the results obtained by the participants, there was a significant improvement in the students' writing skills. For example, in the content aspect 36% of the learners obtained *good* results and 55% obtained *very good* results. Therefore, these findings revealed that there were five students whose use of content was still basic. For example, they omitted to mention a character or failed in the resolution (climax) of the story, which in turn diminished the interest of the reader in the story. This finding also indicated that there was certain misuse of simple sentence structures. For example, the participants often wrote several statements containing *run-ons* and *fragment* mistakes.

It was possible to determine that six students attained *very good* results in content development. For instance, they employed at least three different characters, but somewhat limited detail provoking interference of the cohesion of the text. In addition, these students provided complete simple sentences, but with basic use of words. In the grammar evaluation aspect, students obtained bright results since 45% of the participants obtained *good* outcomes and 55% were assigned *very good* grades.

Interestingly, when comparing these results to those obtained by the participants in the first and second, it was possible to determine an important improvement among the students who indeed upgraded their grammar proficiency. Nevertheless, the results obtained from the first and second practices compared to the final practice, it was evident students maintained their scores on grammar in ranges between *good* and *very good* performing parameters. This result shows that 5 students achieved basic grammar mastery with some mistakes, which partially interfered in the cohesiveness of the text. Additionally, 6 students evidenced clear use of grammar which enabled them to use the target language accurately through the short stories. Moreover, regarding punctuation, 65% of the students obtained *good* results which revealed that their proficiency level in this aspect remained when compared to those obtained in the two sessions before. In organization, students showed improvement comparing these results to those from the first and second sessions. On balance, 45% of the students were granted *good* and *very good* results correspondingly. Therefore, based on this finding, the researchers determined that nearly two halves of the participants showed basic mastery of writing organization of statements in the sentences and paragraphs from the stories they created with only few mistakes in the use of transitions, linking words, coherence and cohesiveness.

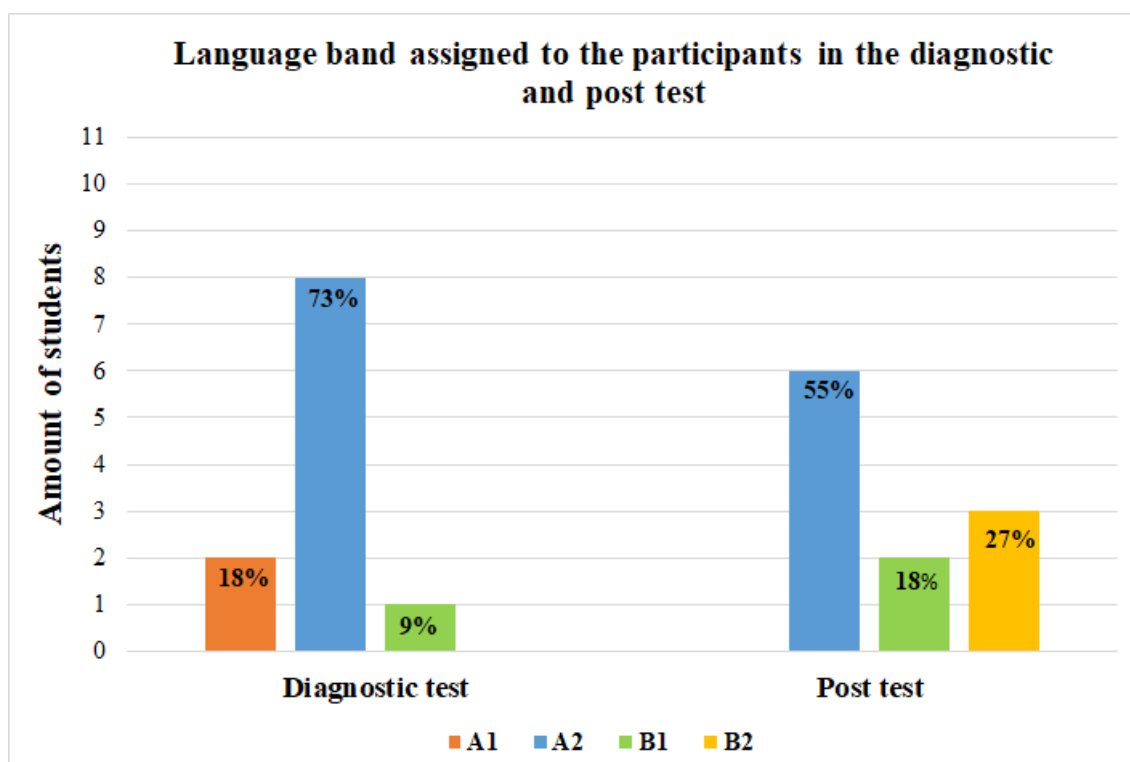
Finally, in the vocabulary evaluation aspect, the researchers determined that students depicted an average grading in their results when contrasted to the two previous practices. In this case, 55% of the students attained *good* results whereas 36% obtained *very good results*. Consequently, it can be claimed that 6 students demonstrated a basic use of vocabulary and 4 students presented clear use of vocabulary.

#### IV.4 Pre and post test analytical comparison

After the virtual session stage ended, the researchers compared the results obtained by the students of tenth grade from CINDEA Judas in the diagnostic test to those obtained during the third story application. In fact, the data collected revealed a noticeable improvement in the students' writing proficiency band assigned according to CEFR.

##### Graph 2

*Obtained results from the participating students in the diagnostic test and the final short story test*



**Source:** Own elaboration (2020)

Indeed, based on the information depicted above it can be determined that the students who showed a low language command which could be categorized as an A1 band in the diagnostic test upgraded to an A2 level (55% of the students) in the final short story writing assessment, given the fact that the participants reflected mastery of specific language aims that are established in such band. Indeed, the results evidenced that in the diagnostic test 18% (two students) of the participating students achieved a low language proficiency.



In particular, 55% of students slightly improved their language use of grammar and vocabulary; however, they still had to make an effort on the development of ideas and the use of transition words. As mentioned before, Hestad (2014) points out that vocabulary building is a “complex skill that needs to be addressed in writing instruction from kindergarten through high school” (p. 36). Indeed, this finding suggests that there is significant improvement in the vocabulary building process among the participants. Such language development can be derived from the implementation of the feedback strategy when writing short stories. Not surprisingly, as it was expected by the researchers 73% of students (8 learners) who obtained an upper beginner level in writing (i.e. an A2 language band) during the diagnostic test considerably improved to a lower intermediate proficiency level, that is, they reached a B1 language proficiency band. In this case, it is essential to recall that the study program proposed by MEP (2016) refers about the role of the teacher when providing feedback as in the form of assistance, bringing useful words and motivating phrases to student’s attention, and providing additional pedagogical resources to students who need more practice (p. 36). Undoubtedly, when language instructors understand the importance of giving meaningful feedback to students there are certainly major linguistic improvements including the expansion of vocabulary. Interestingly, in the diagnostic test, 9% of the sample (1 student) showed writing abilities proper of a low intermediate user (B1 proficiency band), this finding suggests that there is an overall gap that needs to be fulfilled and hence the current study is aimed at disclosing a possible action research proposal. However, by the time the research fieldwork stage had ended, two more students were able to achieve such level. In other words, a total of 27% of the students reached an upper intermediate writing proficiency mastery (i.e. a B2 band). Surely, the process in which the participants were involved was effective because they displayed a significant improvement when contrasting the results obtained by the participants in the diagnostic test with those from the last short story assignment. As it was

stated before in Brown (2002), there is a purpose for assessing students' knowledge, skills, performances, or general understanding on a subject which is to generate valuable information that leads to make changes in teaching practices (as cited in Neibling, 2014 p. 13). Accordingly, the feedback provided by the collaborating teacher helped students to enhance their writing mastery. As Brown (2002) suggested for assessment, in this case, students were able to assess and improve their writing proficiency level. Effectively, the feedback provided by the collaborating teacher played a vital role for guiding students to discover the mistakes, errors and strengths they had in their short stories. As a matter of fact, these participants were able to correct minor inaccuracies regarding their use of language, including punctuation, grammar use, content structure, vocabulary, and organization. That is why, their remarkable improvement is reflected on the final written language proficiency band assigned.

#### **IV.5 Interview to the collaborating teacher**

To identify the perspective of the collaborating teacher regarding the use of feedback instruments the researchers designed and applied a structured interview. This interview was administered during the last week of October, 2020 via Zoom meeting platform. Moreover, the researchers employed a structured guideline which consisted of one closed inquiry and ten open questions. The collaborating teacher claimed that feedback instruments were highly effective assessing resources that teachers can employ to improve ESL learners' writing skills. In addition, she argued that feedback instruments are useful as they guide students in the specific writing aspects that required improvement. Recall that Chowdhury (2018) stated that a well-designed assessing instrument not only evaluates students' work; but also, it contributes to improve learner's performance of a given subject.

After receiving feedback, the collaborating teacher claimed that she perceived that learners showed more confidence in their own performance when knowing about their

mistakes and being able to self-correct for future tasks. Additionally, the collaborating teacher pointed out the importance of applying feedback instruments for evaluating the performance of students in any linguistic task assigned. That is, teachers and students can determine what objectives or content they need to review. Therefore, this teacher suggested that it is important for instructors to consider the weaknesses and possible mistakes presented by students in the language acquisition process to ensure that learners attain better performance in future assignments.

Additionally, the collaborating teacher argued that the use of the feedback instrument elaborated by the researchers to evaluate their performance in the short story writing activities was quite effective. In fact, proof of this was the fact that the teacher claimed that all of the students could recognize their own mistakes and weaknesses based on the feedback given by the teacher. This perspective supported the argument by Pei Leng (2014) who argued that teachers should provide feedback to students to help them improve their writing skills.

In regards to the linguistic benefits students attained from the feedback comments provided by the teacher, is the fact that learners can reflect on their own language performance including their strengths and weaknesses when writing comic strips. In this way, they were able to correct their writing inaccuracies and improved their written language proficiency level. In fact, as it was mentioned by Pei Leng (2014), the main purpose of feedback instruments is to inform students about their own linguistic performance, including their strengths and weaknesses (p. 390). Moreover, the collaborating teacher pointed out that students are encouraged to improve their writing skills when they are conscious that feedback instruments are assessment tools, which are designed to create awareness of their writing progress. Furthermore, the collaborating teacher added that it is important to take into account the particular features of the learners when providing feedback.

The collaborating teacher also mentioned that it was the responsibility of the instructor (according to <sup>3</sup>REA) to explain to the students the linguistic objectives to be evaluated in the tasks assigned to them. Afterwards, the collaborating teacher argued that English teachers should pay attention to the following aspects when creating and applying feedback instruments:

1. Explain the criteria to be evaluated assertively to ensure students' understanding.
2. Provide individual feedback to each student.
3. Maintain a record of students' progress based on the feedback provided through a learning process.
4. Extend recognition of their performance and improvements.

Finally, the collaborating teacher was asked about the kind of feedback teachers normally use to assess students' writing. For instance, she stated that teachers usually provide effective feedback to encourage students in the learning process. Adding to this, instructors may include motivating expressions in the assessment instrument such as: *Good job! Keep it up!, Congratulations!, Improvement!*. Even though these phrases are complemented to the feedback comments provided by the teacher, they make students feel motivated with their language acquisition progress.

The collaborating teacher pointed out that when assessing students, most language instructors limit their teaching role to a simple summative assessment, though in her experience, she claims that most teachers do not specify what language aspects (i.e. verb tenses, punctuation marks, coherence, and others) language learners should improve neither offer pedagogical strategies for them to attain such goal. Indeed, the collaborating teacher mentioned that she usually provides oral feedback to her students by making comments or

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<sup>3</sup> Spanish acronym which stands for Reglamento de Evaluación de los Aprendizajes (Learning Evaluating Regulation)

suggestions for improvement in future assignments. Moreover, she claimed that due to virtual teaching she had to adapt her pedagogical strategies using technology, in this case, she sent each student a feedback audio via WhatsApp to her learners explaining what he/she had to correct and improve and also praising their efforts.

Besides, the collaborating teacher mentioned that she employed written feedback in which she pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of student's academic performance and reinforced their progress by providing examples, and possible strategies to improve their language skills. For instance, the aforementioned claim by the teacher is supported by Pei Leng (2014) who suggests that teachers should provide constant feedback to language learners for them to be able to improve their writing skills. Interestingly, this finding correlates to the perceptions stated by the participating students as they mentioned that they were able to correct themselves when the teacher provided them with written feedback. In addition, she believed that spoken feedback is vital for the learners to generate more enduring understanding. In other words, the teacher considered that when feedback is written only, students tend to ignore the feedback section and focus only on the numerical grading. In short, the information provided by the teacher revealed that she used the written feedback and then provided oral feedback as a complementary support to reinforce the students understanding of the written feedback.

#### **IV.6 Questionnaire to the participating students**

This questionnaire was designed and applied by the researchers with the purpose of identifying the perspective of the participants in regards to the feedback instruments used for assessing their English writing skill. This questionnaire was administered to the students during the last week of October, this instrument consisted of two closed and eight opened questions.

As a matter of fact, all of the participating students stated that it was important that teachers explain in advance the feedback instrument and its criterion to learners to create awareness of their improvements and drawbacks regarding the writing skill. Moreover, eleven students (100% of the population) assured that they improved their writing skills by the use of feedback instruments. For example, the students commented that they were aware of their mistakes and self-corrected such inaccuracies. When students were asked to state their perception about the usefulness of feedback instruments in English classes, it was obtained as a unanimous affirmative response. Furthermore, the participants highlighted that they were more conscious about the specific language aspects they had to improve and identify in advance the evaluating features they were to be assessed on.

To continue, 82% of the participants (nine participants) considered that both spoken and written feedback formats are equally effective and useful. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight that teachers should assess students using different sorts of feedback instruments. On the other hand, 18% of the population (2 participants) pointed out that spoken feedback is the most effective way to receive suggestions and recommendations about their academic-language performance. Likewise, regarding the pedagogical benefits students obtain from the feedback instrument and teacher's spoken and written feedback, 100% of the participants (11 students) highlighted that they considered they improved their writing skills and their reading comprehension skills. Also, 100 % of students emphasized the remarkable contributions that getting specific feedback had on their writing language learning process through the short stories and teacher's guidance.

According to the data related to the disadvantages feedback instruments may have, 91% of the participants (ten individuals) stated that they did not find major drawbacks in the application of such tools. In contrast, 9% of the learners (one person) mentioned that she/he identified only one flaw, and it was that feedback instruments were not intended to judge

learner's performance subjectively, instead this student voiced that they should be employed as a pedagogical resource to help students recognize their strengths and surpass their weaknesses.

On the other hand, 100% of the population (eleven students) pointed out that the written and oral feedback provided by the teacher were important and necessary in their learning process. In turn, they acknowledged that those comments helped them gain a better understanding of the literary components of a short story and how to develop them properly while also applying grammar, punctuation, coherence and cohesion. Additionally, they argued that they were able to self-correct their mistakes and improve their English writing skills.

Regarding written and spoken feedback given by the teacher, all of the population agreed by stating that they created self-awareness when the teacher explained to them their language inaccuracies and taught them how to correct them. In addition, the participants reckoned that the teacher's guide was essential when requested to develop writing assignments.

Another important feature that was addressed in the questionnaire was to inquire the extent to which receiving constant feedback helped students improve their written language skill. In fact, 55% of the participants (six students) stated that the feedback provided by the collaborating teacher fostered their mastery of written aspects (i.e. grammar, content and organization, vocabulary, and spelling). Moreover, participants argued that they learned how to write a short story integrating its literary components: Exposition, Raising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution. Besides, 18% of the population (two people) affirmed that they identified self-improvement in only three of the four writing aspects including: *content and organization, vocabulary, and spelling*. Similarly, 9% (1 person) of the population stated that she just enhanced writing learning in three of the four aspects mentioned in the instrument: *grammar, content and organization, and spelling*. In addition, 9% (one

individual) of the students affirmed that she reached to improve only in grammar and *spelling*.

Finally, the last 9% (one student) of the participants mentioned that he only enhanced their knowledge in one single aspect: *spelling*. At the end of the instrument the participating students provided different suggestions and comments to their teacher. For example, they indicated that the language instructor helped them with their language difficulties in a more detailed, comprehending, and approaching way.

Once the data analysis was completed the researchers were then able to argue that using feedback instruments through the implementation of short stories indeed fosters the improvement of the writing skill. As a result, this pedagogical strategy can be recommended to be applied in other high school institutions.



## **CHAPTER V**

# **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **V.1.1 Conclusions**

After a thorough analysis of the data collected throughout the study, there are several findings, conclusions, and recommendations to be highlighted. First, it is clear that the MEP study program reinforces assessment activities that foster students to practice English as a foreign language by using the Action-Oriented Approach, and contextualizing the Educating for a New Citizenship educational framework. This study program is aimed at increasing English language proficiency through the development of communicative skills and linguistic competences contained in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR).

The study program includes a distinction of the concepts of evaluation and assessment. For instance, assessment is considerably an important academic aspect which is focused on identifying needs, strengths and weaknesses from learners. For this reason, the implementation of authentic tasks is necessary. Also, it can be concluded that the implementation of short stories is not fully developed in the study program as a language teaching and learning strategy; however, it is used as a mediation activity to be applied in speaking, reading, and writing tasks.

The application of the diagnostic test was a necessity to determine the participants' English proficiency level according to the CEFR proposed in this study. For instance, based on the results gathered in such examinations, it was possible to conclude that most of the participants had a writing proficiency level which ranged from beginner to low intermediate (i.e. A1 to B1). Furthermore, students showed deficiencies in terms of writing language use (i.e. grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, content and organization).

The feedback instruments applied in this study played an essential role to help students improve their writing proficiency level. Indeed, 55% of the students assured that receiving regular and specific feedback helped them enhance their construction of short stories in aspects that involved the use of grammar, content development, written organization, use of vocabulary, and spelling. Moreover, the collaborating teacher employed the rubric elaborated by the researchers to assess the writing skill of the participants using short stories with the objective of creating students' awareness of their mistakes and certainties. One remarkable aspect of the feedback instrument used in this research was that 100% of the students considered they not only improved on writing, but also, they enhanced their reading skills.

Based on the collaborating teachers' point of view, it can be interpreted that through the use of feedback instruments EFL students and language teachers can determine the specific studying objectives and contents they need to review. In this respect, the insights provided by the collaborating teacher and the participating students suggested that it is the role of teachers to grant written and oral feedback to students. Essentially, both participants stated that through these types of feedback students obtain a better understanding of the subject matter.

Another conclusion is that to improve learners' writing proficiency level at CINDEA Judas enrolled in different grades, teachers at this institution have to make students practice a specific topic constantly until learners reach the desired writing skill. To achieve such goal teachers must provide either written or spoken feedback frequently. By doing this, learners can improve their linguistic competences as it is stated in the English study program which follows the principles of the Action Oriented Approach. In fact, the tenth graders argued that they learned how to write short stories and distinguish its components (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution). Besides, the CINDEA Judas high school should

implement literature workshops to EFL students to explain to them writing components such as coherence, spelling, vocabulary, content, organization, grammar, punctuation, and linking words. To sum up, the written and oral comments given by the collaborating teacher, students showed mastery on the subject matter and upgraded their writing English level. Therefore, it is essential to highlight that the participants assured that it is fundamental that English teachers have to provide written feedback, and also spoken feedback as a complement to students. Of course, as stated above, it is necessary to include several training sessions to English teachers beforehand regarding the use of this correlated strategy proposed by the researchers to improve learners' writing skills.

Based on the results obtained by the participants in the diagnostic test and final short story test, it has been proved that they attained true improvement of their writing skills when comparing the grades obtained by these individuals. To exemplify, the results evidenced that after the performance of the final short story, all of the participants who were previously categorized as low beginners excelled their language proficiency mastery to upper beginner level. Moreover, in the diagnostic test, 1 student evidenced a low intermediate writing level and after the application of the final story, two more students also reached such proficiency. In other words, a total of 27% of the students reached an upper intermediate writing proficiency level, namely B2. Based on these examples, there is a clear increase in the mean average of the group. Those results lead us to conclude that the feedback instruments employed through the assessment of short stories enabled the participating students to acquire writing mastery more effectively.

Given that the integration of using feedback instruments has been implemented positively abroad, as well as in Costa Rica, in this research project and in the study conducted by Jiménez (2015), it can be strongly argued that it is vital to analyze how teachers are elaborating and applying feedback instruments. Regardless, Jiménez (2015) clarified how

teachers should improve the way they provide feedback as to use it as an evaluation strategy to help students in the learning process. It is so because the implementation of these resources provides learners with meaningful input, specific language use, and accurate written communicative means.

As a result of this project, and based on the valuable living experience collected from the collaborating teacher and the participating students, we present a list of recommendations for MEP authorities as well as for English teachers at CINDEAS schools in an attempt to contribute to the field of English foreign language teaching.

### **V.1.2 Limitations and delimitations.**

Given the pandemic situation provoked by Covid-19 virus, the researchers faced various obstacles to conduct this study. The fact that the Ministry of Education was forced to suspend the school period to train teachers and administrators from public institutions regarding the use of *Microsoft Teams* such interruption affected the data collection process. In addition, the population of students who had internet access was significantly reduced. This particular issue affected the consistency of the results as it is clear that having a broader sample of participants would have yielded to more valid generalizations. For future research, it is necessary to take into consideration the features highlighted herein this paper. Therefore, the results contained from this research are clustered to a virtual modality in a rural area in the Central Pacific Region of Costa Rica in which the opportunities for online connectivity were limited.

### **V.1.3 Recommendations to MEP authorities from Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas regarding the implementation of feedback instruments in short stories for the improvement of writing in EFL courses at CINDEA Judas.**

In the light of the results depicted in this study, the application of feedback instruments and short stories strategy can be implemented in several EFL courses taught at CINDEA Judas; moreover, this strategy can be applied when working on the different macro-skills. Besides, the MEP authorities should truly advocate for implementing short story content in terms of written features, literary examples, and composition procedures as this study program does not focus on the production of narrative texts. For this reason, these institutions should include short stories that students find to be appealing as reference. This fact was also concluded by Zahra and Farrah (2015) in their article proposed that curricular designers should implement the use of short stories considering that these types of writings possess the potential of enriching students' language skills, enhancing their motivation, and increasing their cultural sensitivity and awareness (p. 12).

In addition, we recommend that teachers from CINDEA Judas have to provide students a general review of writing aspects to be assessed before. For example, students from tenth grade at CINDEAS should know about basic writing features in English, such as content, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and organization. Besides, to improve the teaching of the writing skill at the CINDEA Judas institution, firstly, the Evaluation Department from the CINDEA JUDAS should implement workshops to the teachers regarding the use of short stories for developing multiple activities as to see a scaffolding effect throughout the study program. Consequently, in the future, the Ministry of Public Education should also provide workshops or training sessions to the teachers on assessments and evaluation using innovative strategies as the one proposed through short

stories. Hence, through these workshops, teachers would be more skilful and knowledgeable when providing feedback using short stories to improve the writing skills of ESL learners.

Nonetheless, as pointed out earlier, the study program proposed by MEP for the teaching of writing does not state the incorporation of feedback instruments for assessing written short stories. In fact, it is inaccurate to argue that the study program presents short stories as an educational resource to be employed in language teaching. As it was depicted in this research in the comparison chart (appendix. A), short stories are used as a means for having students describing them through speaking, reading, listening and writing activities. Conversely, the study program does not propose the implementation of short stories' components to improve the writing skills of learners. As illustrated by the participating students, they learned about these features until the research process began.

As seen before, the study program should include short stories considering the multiple linguistic advantages found in this research. Afterwards, MEP authorities from Dirección Regional de Puntarenas should provide to English teachers at CINDEA Judas specific training conducted by specialists to help them create and apply feedback instruments effectively. Thus, feedback must be perceived as a designed academic tool to be implemented with students during the teaching and learning process. Finally, the CINDEA Judas principal should guarantee that, if a given English teacher is trained in assessment and evaluation, such teachers should be part of the evaluation committee. In other words, as has been demonstrated in this study, there is a clear need to have specialists who not only master the written target language, but who know specific features on assessment, feedback, and evaluation.

#### **V.1.4 Final Suggestions**

In short, before including the proposed strategy of providing feedback through short stories for the improvement of the writing skill, MEP authorities from Dirección Regional de Puntarenas and English teachers from CINDEA Judas should take into account the following recommendations:

1. Teachers at CINDEA Judas should be previously trained on assessment and evaluation to provide effective and valid tasks for assessing the writing skill of their students.
2. Teachers at CINDEA Judas should be provided with authentic materials such as short stories (audio-visual or written) to bring learners with meaningful didactic resources.
3. Learners from CINDEA Judas must be exposed to comprehensible and meaningful input helping them to enhance writing language tasks. As observed by the researchers, students tend to complete such assignments more easily if they are given first the assessment input, they need to conduct the task assigned.
4. Language teachers from CINDEA Judas shall keep in mind learners' background knowledge on EFL matters. The collaborating teacher argued that she had to find pedagogical strategies to try to level those students since several learners lacked certain specific language knowledge.
5. Teachers at CINDEA Judas should use short stories as a pedagogical strategy as they are useful for assessing students' writing skills. Moreover, by writing short stories, students become more interested in writing fictional content created by themselves.
6. English instructors at CINDEA Judas should consider providing the written feedback as well as the oral feedback as a reinforcement to the students' writing performance. There is better students' understanding of the feedback instruments when the teachers provide an oral explanation of the mistakes and errors students need to correct.



7. When writing short stories, it is recommended that teachers at CINDEA Judas use pictures as visual support to foster the narrative skill of learners which also works as a guide on the organization of ideas and sequence of the events presented in the story.

Finally, the researchers believed that, if these recommendations are followed, a notable improvement of writing skills are guaranteed.

#### **V.1.5 Limitations of the study and questions for further research on this topic**

1. Given the Covid-19 outbreak situation, the researchers had to look for a different educational institution to continue with the research process as a majority of high schools declined to participate. For this reason, the application of the instruments started during the first week of September. Likewise, it is important to remark that according to the principal and institutional dispositions English classes were carried out every two weeks.
2. Due to time constraints and administrative restrictions, only 11 students participated in this study. Moreover, because of the internet connection failures students faced several difficulties on the synchronous lessons and complications with the delivery of the writing tasks on time.
3. The obtained samples from the participating students were affected by the willingness of the students to participate in the project. For this reason, the collaborating teacher kept constant communication through the *WhatsApp* group with the participants which affected the application of the research instruments.
4. The low beginning language level from some participants made it difficult for them to follow the workshops given by the collaborating teacher. Indeed, the researchers created an explanatory video to reinforce the teachers' explanations of the short stories components to reach and incorporate students who presented a starting command of the target language and could not connect to the synchronous lessons.

### **V.1.6 Implications of the Study**

In addition to the fact that the positive results from this study support the use of Feedback instruments as the best alternative to teaching writing in CINDEA high schools, the study had implications which go beyond the data collection and analysis. Such claims are derived from the interview conducted to the collaborating teacher who pointed out that the kind of feedback that students received before the implementation of this project was limited to provide error corrections without authentic input that allowed learners to be aware of their own weaknesses and how to improve their language performance. As it was stated above, the CINDEA's principal invited the researchers of this study to participate in a seminar on feedback, formative assessment, and use of short stories for improving the writing skills and communicative competences of students that are part of this educational institution.

Moreover, the participating students were motivated to improve their English language skills after collaborating in this research; this can also be reflected that a significant percent of students achieved an A2 band based on the CEFR parameters and standards. It is important to recall that for students at CINDEA being proficient in this language is a fundamental requirement when looking for a job. In this way, the study allowed participants to get more familiarized and prepared when it comes to creating content in a foreign language that helps them in real life situations.

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# **APPENDIXES**

## Appendixes

### Appendix. A

#### Comparison Chart.



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**Specific Objective:** To identify the extent to which the current study program proposed by Ministerio de Educación Pública for the teaching of English in tenth grade includes a reference of the writing language proficiency level expected from the students by means of a comparison chart and a diagnostic evaluation to the target population.

**Research Topic:** The Effectiveness of Using Feedback Instruments for Assessing Writing Short Stories in a Tenth Grade Group from CINDEA Judas, in the third school district at Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas, during the second school term 2020.

**Description:** The following instrument has as a purpose to compare and contrast each research variable and category of analysis stated in this study. To do so, the researchers analyzed the English study program proposed by MEP and the literature review consulted in this study to understand the assessment of the writing skill depicted in the study program, with the prior international and national studies.

Object of the analysis	Study Program Proposed by MEP	Scholars and experts reference	Researchers' comparative analysis
Feedback Instruments			
Writing Process			
Short Stories			
Assessing Writing			

**Diagnostic Test.**



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**Specific Objective:** To recognize the effects of using feedback instruments employed by teachers when assessing students' writing skill through the production of short stories in a Tenth Grade group at CINDEA Judas in the third school district from Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas.

**Tema de Investigación:** La Efectividad en el Uso de Instrumentos de Retroalimentación para la Evaluación de la Escritura de Cuentos Cortos en un Grupo de Décimo Año del CINDEA de Judas del Circuito 04 de Puntarenas, durante el segundo periodo del 2020.

**Grupo:** \_\_\_\_\_.

**Descripción:** El presente diagnóstico tiene la finalidad de identificar el nivel actual de escritura que tienen los estudiantes participantes del presente estudio según los parámetros lingüísticos establecidos en el Marco Común Europeo, para esto se realizará una correlación entre el nivel presentado por los estudiantes y una banda de dominio lingüístico. Este instrumento forma parte de un estudio académico el cual corresponde a un grupo de estudiantes de la Licenciatura de Enseñanza del Inglés de la Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede del Pacífico. La información obtenida será de carácter confidencial y anónima (no se preguntará la identidad de los estudiantes). Los datos no serán presentados de manera individual, ni serán utilizados para otros propósitos más que para fines de la presente investigación. Agradecemos su ayuda con la colaboración de este instrumento.

**Instrucciones.** Lea cuidadosamente los enunciados y realice lo solicitado.

- I. Escriba un cuento corto en inglés, en el cual se presenten al menos tres personajes diferentes.  
El cuento debe tener una longitud de al menos una página.



II. El tema a desarrollar es libre. Utilice las siguientes imágenes como apoyo para la redacción del cuento corto, tanto la historia como el desenlace queda a criterio del estudiante.

III. El cuento corto debe ser redactado utilizando el tiempo verbal acorde a la secuencia de los actos.

IV. El uso del diccionario y traductor en línea no está permitido para el presente diagnóstico.



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**Writing Rubric.**



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**Specific Objective:** To recognize the effects of using feedback instruments employed by teachers when assessing students' writing skills through the production of short stories in a Tenth-Grade group at CINDEA Judas in the third school district from Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas.

**Research Topic:** The Effectiveness of Using Feedback Instruments for Assessing Writing Short Stories in a Tenth Grade Group from CINDEA Judas, in the third school district at Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas, during the second school term 2020.

**Description:**

The following instrument is useful for identifying the writing level that students presented in the diagnostic activity and in their short story writing. This instrument is part of an investigation which corresponds to a group of students of Bachelor of English Teaching at the University of Costa Rica, Pacific campus which it allows to analyze student progress in their writing skill which is formed by five features (grammar, organization, punctuation, content and vocabulary). The Likert scale and the categories of this rubric are the following: 5: Excellent, 4: Very Good, 3: Good, 2: Fair, 1: Poor, and 0: Needs Total Improvement.

The researchers apply this instrument to all the students in the tenth-grade group (100% of the population studied) from a public high school in the Circuit 04 of Puntarenas. The data gathered through this instrument allows investigators to analyze the information acquired by using the mixed method approach.

The following scale allows students to determine the written proficiency language level they have based on the CEFR. Therefore, the researchers will be able to categorize the students' language performance. Likewise, learners can recognize the linguistic aspects they need to improve in order to be able to reach a higher language proficiency band.

Scale #1

Estudiante:						
Base	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Puntos						
0-44						
45-60						
61-74						
75-89						
90-95						
96-100						

A1: Deficient use of language: (grammar and vocabulary), needs total improvement on ideas transitions and many errors in the use of punctuation  
A2: Weak use of language: (grammar and vocabulary), needs improvement on ideas transitions and many errors in the use of punctuation  
B1: Some mistakes on language use (grammar and vocabulary), good ideas transitions and some errors in the use of punctuation  
B2: Few mistakes on language use (grammar and vocabulary), good ideas transitions and few errors in the use of punctuation  
C1: Excellent use of language: (grammar and vocabulary), correct ideas transitions and almost no errors in the use of punctuation  
C2: Excellent use of language: (grammar and vocabulary), excellent ideas transitions and no mistakes in punctuation marks.

**Evaluating written assessment rubric.**

**Total Points: 25 points. Points Obtained: \_\_\_\_\_.** **Grade: \_\_\_\_\_.**

<b>Aspects to observe</b>	<b>Excellent 5 points</b>	<b>Very Good 4 points</b>	<b>Good 3 points</b>	<b>Fair 2 points</b>	<b>Poor 1 point</b>	<b>Needs Total Improvement 0 points</b>
<b>Content</b>	<p>Students' use of content is correct. The following aspects are appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of 3 different Characters</li> <li>- Sentence structure varied.</li> <li>- Precise use of words.</li> </ul>	<p>Use of content is clear: Some mistakes are present but little interfere with the understanding of the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of 3 characters.</li> <li>- Complete sentences, but little variety.</li> <li>- Correct, but unoriginal use of words.</li> </ul>	<p>Use of content is still basic: Some mistakes are present which interfere with the understanding of the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses 1 or 2 characters.</li> <li>- Simple sentence structure presenting run-ons and fragments.</li> <li>- No precision in the use of vocabulary.</li> </ul>	<p>There are certain content mistakes that are confusing for the understanding of the text.</p>	<p>There are many content mistakes that highly affect the meaning of the text.</p>	<p>Students ignore the use of correct content. So meaning is not possible to convey.</p>
<b>Grammar</b>	<p>Student's use of grammar is correct. The following aspects are appropriate</p>	<p>Use of grammar is clear: Some mistakes are present but little interfere with the understand</p>	<p>Use of grammar is still basic: Some mistakes are present which interfere</p>	<p>There are certain grammar mistakes that are confusing for the understanding of the text.</p>	<p>There are many grammatical mistakes that highly affect the meaning</p>	<p>Students ignore rules of grammar. So meaning is not possible to convey.</p>

	Implemented/ Avoided: Word order Verb conjugation	ing of the text	with the understanding of the text.		of the text.	
<b>Punctuation</b>	Student's use of punctuation is correct. The following aspects are appropriate. - Use of periods, question marks, colons, semicolons, and commas.	Use of punctuation is clear: Some mistakes are present but little interfere with the understanding of the text. Little variety in the use of periods, question marks, colons, semicolons, and commas.	Use of punctuation is still basic: Some mistakes are present which interfere with the understanding of the text. Difficulties in the use of periods, question marks, colons, semicolons, and commas.	There are certain punctuation mistakes that are confusing for the understanding of the text.	There are many punctuation mistakes that highly affect the meaning of the text.	Students ignore the use of correct punctuation. So meaning is not possible to understand.
<b>Organization</b>	The organization of students' writing is correct. - Uses transitions - Uses linking words - It is coherent and cohesive	The students' writing is clearly organized: Some mistakes are present but little interfere with the use of transitions, linking words, coherence and	The students' writing is still basic: Some mistakes are present which interfere with the use of transitions, linking words, coherence and	There are certain organization mistakes that are confusing with the use of transitions, linking words, coherence and cohesive.	There are many organization mistakes that highly affect the use of transitions, linking words, coherence and cohesive.	Students ignore the use of correct organization. Students do not use transitions, linking words, coherence and cohesiveness. So meaning is not possible to understand.

		cohesiveness.	cohesiveness.			
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<p>Student's use of vocabulary is correct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses synonyms and antonyms.</li> <li>- Correct use of vocabulary.</li> <li>- Correct use of adjectives to make descriptions.</li> </ul>	<p>Use of vocabulary is clear. Some mistakes are present but little interfere with the understanding of the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Correct but little use of synonyms and antonyms.</li> <li>- Vocabulary is not used correctly in some sentences.</li> <li>- Little use of adjectives to make descriptions.</li> </ul>	<p>Use of vocabulary is still basic: Some mistakes are present which interfere with the understanding of the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incorrect use of synonyms and antonyms.</li> <li>- Vocabulary is not used correctly in most sentences.</li> <li>- The use of adjectives to make descriptions is not presented correctly.</li> </ul>	<p>There are certain vocabulary mistakes that are confusing for the understanding of the text.</p>	<p>There are many vocabulary mistakes that highly affect the meaning of the text.</p>	<p>Students ignore the use of correct vocabulary. So meaning is not possible to understand.</p>



**Teachers' Interview**

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**Specific Objective:** To determine the teachers' perspectives when using feedback instruments in the assessment of writing skill by means of an interview to the collaborating teacher from CINDEA Judas in the third school district from Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas.

**Research Topic:** The Effectiveness of Using Feedback Instruments for Assessing Writing Short Stories in a Tenth Grade Group from CINDEA Judas, in the third school district at Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas, during the second school term 2020.

**Interview's number:** \_\_\_\_\_.

**Description:** The purpose of this interview is to examine the knowledge that the collaborating teacher has regarding the use of feedback instruments as an assessment technique to be employed on writing short stories. This instrument is part of a research study which corresponds to a group of students from the major of English Teaching at the University of Costa Rica, Pacific campus. The results obtained will be used for academic purposes only. The information and answers provided by the participants will be managed confidentially and will be handled in total anonymity. Thanks for your collaboration!

**Instructions.** Read carefully the following questions and please, answer each of them.

Replies are really valuable for this academic purpose.



## I. Specific Questions

1. In your opinion, how effective are feedback instruments in improving the writing skill? (Mark with a (X) just one option).

Totally Effective 5 points	Very effective 4 points	Somehow effective 3 points	Partially effective 2 points	Not effective 1 point
(            )	(            )	(            )	(            )	(            )

2. In your opinion, how useful are feedback instruments in English classes? (Mark with a (X) just one option).

Totally useful 5 points	Very useful 4 points	Somehow useful 3 points	Partially useful 2 points	Not useful 1 point
(            )	(            )	(            )	(            )	(            )

Why?

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3. To what extent is it important to use feedback instruments after performing a task?

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4. In your opinion, how effective is the use of feedback to evaluate writing activities?

(Mark with a (X) just one option).

Totally Effective 5 points	Very effective 4 points	Somehow effective 3 points	Partially effective 2 points	Not effective 1 point
(            )	(            )	(            )	(            )	(            )

Why?

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5. In your opinion, can students benefit from the feedback's comments?

Yes

No

Why?

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6. How can students feel encouraged to continue writing a piece of work when teachers use feedback instruments and explain their mistakes based on the feedback instrument utilized?

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7. In which way is it better to write the feedback instruments for tenth grade students, English or Spanish?

English

Spanish

Why?

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8. In your opinion, do teachers have to explain to the students the feedback instruments and its indicators before they are going to use them?

Yes

No

Why?

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9. What could be some recommendations for English teachers when using feedback instruments?

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10. What is the kind of feedback teachers normally use to assess writing to students?

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11. What is the kind of feedback you usually use to assess writing to students?

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**Students' questionnaire**



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**Specific Objective:** To compare the effects of using feedback instruments by means of a questionnaire to the tenth grade group for identifying the advantages and disadvantages among the writing process and the use of feedback in this group from CINDEA Judas in the third school district from Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas.

**Tema de Investigación:** La Efectividad en el Uso de Instrumentos de Retroalimentación para la Evaluación de la Escritura de Cuentos Cortos en un Grupo de Décimo Año del CINDEA Judas del Circuito 03 de Puntarenas, durante el segundo periodo del 2020.

**Grupo:** \_\_\_\_\_.

**Descripción:**

El presente cuestionario tiene como propósito conocer la perspectiva de los estudiantes acerca los instrumentos de retroalimentación usados en la evaluación de la habilidad de la escritura de cuentos cortos. Este instrumento forma parte de una investigación la cual corresponde a un grupo de estudiantes de la Licenciatura de Enseñanza del Inglés de la Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede del Pacífico. La información obtenida será de carácter confidencial y anónima (no se preguntará la identidad de los estudiantes). Los datos no serán presentados de manera individual, ni serán utilizados para otros propósitos más que para fines de la presente investigación. Agradecemos su ayuda con la colaboración de este instrumento.

**Instrucciones:** Lea atentamente las siguientes preguntas y responda a cada una de ellas según su propia opinión.

1. ¿Considera usted importante que el o la docente explique el instrumento de retroalimentación y sus indicadores antes de utilizarlos?

Sí

No

¿Por qué?

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2. ¿Considera usted que los instrumentos de retroalimentación mejoraron su habilidad de la escritura en el desarrollo de cuentos cortos?

Sí

No

¿Por qué?

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3. ¿Considera que los instrumentos de retroalimentación son útiles en las clases de inglés?

Sí

No

¿Por qué?

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4. ¿Cuál manera considera más efectiva para recibir retroalimentación?

Escrita

Verbal

Ambas

5. Mencione al menos dos beneficios que obtuvo de la retroalimentación dada por el o la docente.

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6. ¿Considera usted que el uso de instrumentos de retroalimentación posee desventajas?

Sí

No

Si su respuesta es Sí: ¿Cuál o cuáles desventajas?

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7. ¿Considera usted importante la retroalimentación dada por su docente?

Sí

No

¿Por qué?

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8. ¿Considera que la retroalimentación verbal y escrita dada por el profesor se complementan y ayudan al estudiante a mejorar sus habilidades de escritura?

Sí

No

¿Por qué?

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9. ¿Cuáles áreas considera usted que ha mejorado a través de la retroalimentación dada por el (la) docente? (Puede elegir más de una opción).

- Gramática
- Vocabulario
- Contenido e ideas (Saber qué escribir)
- Correcta escritura de las palabras

10. Mencione dos recomendaciones para su profesor (a) con el fin de que mejore la forma de proveer retroalimentación a los estudiantes.

1-

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2-

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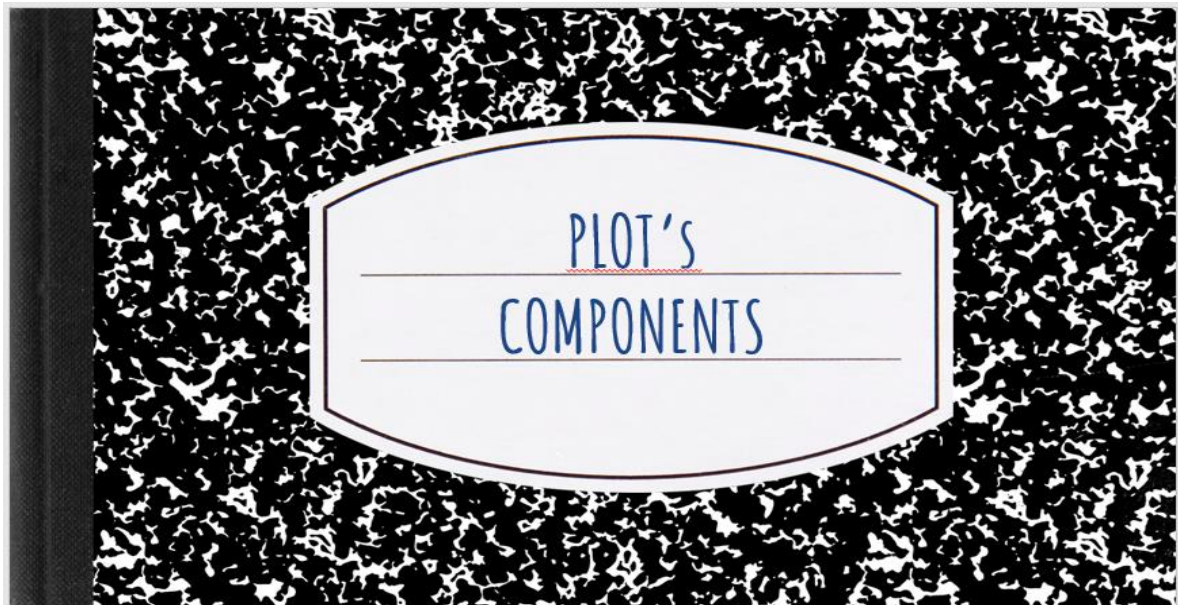


PowerPoint Presentation



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**Research Topic:** The Effectiveness of Using Feedback Instruments for Assessing Writing Short Stories in a Tenth Grade Group from CINDEA Judas, in the third school district at Dirección Regional de Educación of Puntarenas, during the second school term 2020.





# Exposition

- Beginning of the story
- Characters and settings are revealed
- Partial information of the conflict is shown.

## SETTING



# EXPOSITION



## Little Red Riding Hood

This is Little Red Riding Hood. There's a basket in her hands. There are cakes in the basket. They're for Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother.



This is Grandma's house. It's in the forest. Grandma's ill. Poor Grandma! She isn't happy!



# RISING ACTION

The main conflict of the short story is presented, and the characters involved in it.



# RISING ACTION



## Little Red Riding Hood

Now, Little Red Riding Hood is in the forest. There are pretty flowers in the forest. But there's a big bad wolf behind the tree!



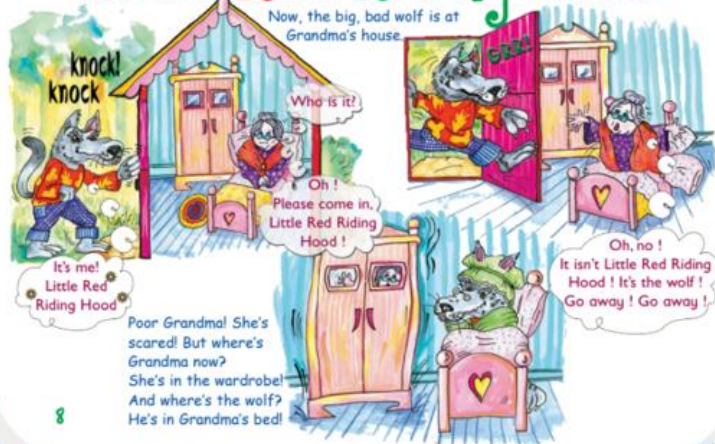
# CLIMAX

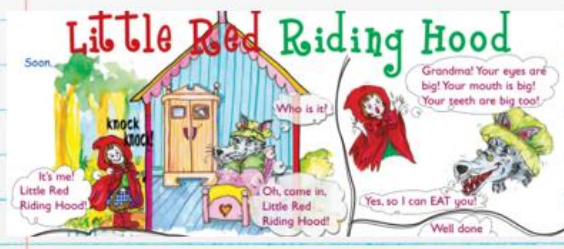


- It's the crucial part in the story
- The protagonist deals with the last events presented in the story
- The story can go from a tragedy to a happy moment or vice versa

# CLIMAX

## Little Red Riding Hood





# FALLING ACTION

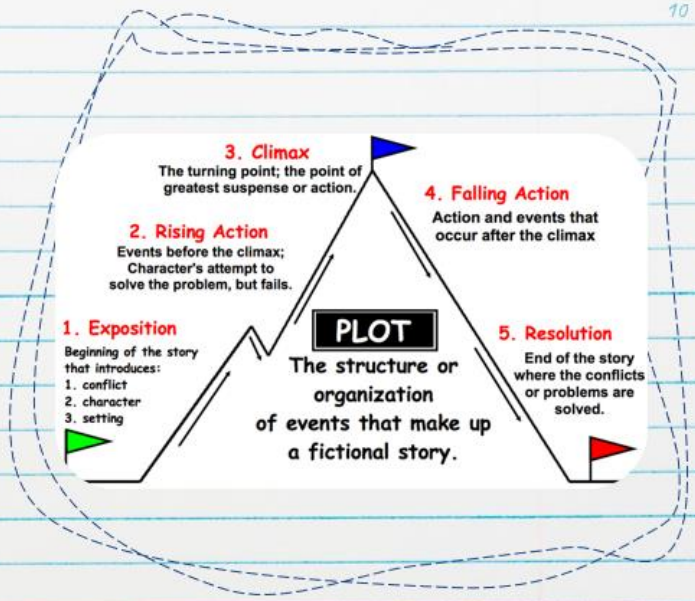
Reveals the consequences that the characters have to assimilate after the main events occurred



# RESOLUTION

It's the end of the story  
 It's reveal what happened to the characters after the conflict is solved

# SUM UP



# Rubric

Evaluating written assessment rubric.

Total Points: 25 points. Points Obtained: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Aspects to observe	Excellent 5 points	Very Good 4 points	Good 3 points	Fair 2 points	Poor 1 point	Needs Total Improvement 0 points
<b>Content</b>	Students' use of content is correct. The following aspects are appropriate - Use of 3 different Characters. - Sentence structure varied. - Precise use of words.	Use of content is clear: Some mistakes are present but little interfere with the understanding of the text - Use of 3 characters. - Complete sentences, but little variety. - Correct, but unoriginal use of words.	Use of content is still basic: Some mistakes are present which interfere with the understanding of the text. - Uses 1 or 2 characters. - Simple sentence structure presenting run-ons and fragments. - No precision in the use of vocabulary.	There are certain content mistakes that are confusing for the understanding of the text.	There are many content mistakes that highly affect the meaning of the text.	Students ignore the use of correct content. So meaning is not possible to understand.
<b>Grammar</b>	Student's use of grammar is correct. The following aspects are appropriate Implemented/ Avoided:	Use of grammar is clear: Some mistakes are present but little interfere with the understanding of the text	Use of grammar is still basic: Some mistakes are present which interfere with the understanding of the text.	There are certain grammar mistakes that are confusing for the understanding of the text.	There are many grammatical mistakes that highly affect the meaning of the text.	Students ignore rules of grammar. So meaning is not possible to convey.
	Word order Verb conjugation					

<b>Punctuation</b>	Student's use of punctuation is correct. The following aspects are appropriate. - Use of periods, question marks, colons, semicolons, and commas.	Use of punctuation is clear: Some mistakes are present but little interfere with the understanding of the text. Little variety in the use of periods, question marks, colons, semicolons, and commas.	Use of punctuation is still basic: Some mistakes are present which interfere with the understanding of the text. Difficulties in the use of periods, question marks, colons, semicolons, and commas.	There are certain punctuation mistakes that are confusing for the understanding of the text.	There are many punctuation mistakes that highly affect the meaning of the text.	Students ignore the use of correct punctuation. So meaning is not possible to understand.
<b>Organization</b>	The organization of students' writing is correct. - Uses transitions - Uses linking words - It is coherent and cohesive	The students' writing is clearly organized: Some mistakes are present but little interfere with the use of transitions, linking words, coherence and cohesiveness.	The students' writing is still basic: Some mistakes are present which interfere with the use of transitions, linking words, coherence and cohesiveness.	There are certain organization mistakes that are confusing with the use of transitions, linking words, coherence and cohesive.	There are many organization mistakes that highly affect the use of transitions, linking words, coherence and cohesive.	Students ignore the use of correct organization. Students do not use transitions, linking words, coherence and cohesiveness. So meaning is not possible to understand.

# RUBRIC

# RUBRIC

<b>Vocabulary</b>	Student's use of vocabulary is correct.	Use of vocabulary is clear. Some mistakes are	Use of vocabulary is still basic: Some	There are certain vocabulary mistakes that are	There are many vocabulary	Students ignore the use of correct vocabulary. So
	- Uses synonyms and antonyms. - Correct use of vocabulary. - Correct use of adjectives to make descriptions.	present but little interfere with the understanding of the text. - Correct but little use of synonyms and antonyms. - Vocabulary is not used correctly in some sentences. - Little use of adjectives to make descriptions.	mistakes are present which interfere with the understanding of the text. - Incorrect use of synonyms and antonyms. - Vocabulary is not used correctly in most sentences. - The use of adjectives to make descriptions is not presented correctly.	confusing for the understanding of the text.	mistakes that highly affect the meaning of the text.	meaning is not possible to understand.

# QUESTIONS?







