

**UNIVERSIDAD DE MAGALLANES
FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES, CIENCIAS SOCIALES Y DE LA SALUD
DEPARTAMENTO DE EDUCACION Y HUMANIDADES**

**“Improving writing skills through controlled
production of formal letters”**

**Informe final para la obtención de Grado Académico de
Licenciatura en Educación y el Título de Profesor de Inglés
para Enseñanza Básica y Media.**

PUNTA ARENAS – 2006
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INTRODUCTION

Writing is an art. Some are lucky enough to be born with the talent to do so, while others have had to work hard to develop this ability. Which ever the case, being able to master this art involves a lot of onerous work, a lot of reading and long periods of time devoted to both, reflecting and seeking for the best ways to express one's thoughts. Just like the famous writer William Zinsser said "*Writing is thinking on paper*".

Writing in a second language is even more challenging. In order to reach a point at which you can really convey a meaningful message, entails a lot of practice. The younger you can begin the better, as children have an incredible ability to acquire new information at high speed, of course, only if the child is motivated and stimulated by the people surrounding him/her. Our role as future teachers is to help our students to develop the art of writing, therefore try to enlarger their range of communicative skills.

This project attempts at helping a number of students to improve their writing skill by learning to write formal letters. Why letters one can ask. Because it is a meaningful way of enhancing the skill, just as writing any other piece of text would do.

The project has been set out in August and finished in November of the current year. The purpose of the project is to improve the students' writing production through the use of Brookes and Grundy's approach to teaching writing and Krashen's Monitor hypothesis.

To put the project into motion, a whole process was involved. It began with the application of a diagnosis allowing the student-teacher to learn about the weakest points the students had in the knowledge of letter writing.

The development of the project was carried out in four stages. Each stage handled on

specific objective aiming at the improvement of the students writing production in English as a second language.

I. CONTEXTUALIZATION

1.1 CONTEXT IN THE BRITISH SCHOOL

The British School has an organizational educative structure under the headship of a Head-master, advised by a Senior Management Team, school body and administrative staff.

The school as an educational institution, collaborates with the mission of the State in educational matters (Decreto 129/1946) and has its own rules, regulations and programs, all of which have been approved by Corporaci n Municipal.

“The British School” is an Educational Institution certified as “Colegio de Especial Singularidad”. This status allows it to work with its own Plans and Programs, which facilitates an innovative educational labour and in sustained improvements. At the same time, Cross curricular Objectives proposed by the Educational Chilean Reform, are assumed by the school in its own way, in relation to traditional moral values; development and personal selfassurance; the environment; and thought-provoking development.

Institutional Educational Project (Proyecto Educativo Institucional)

According to the British Corporation of Punta Arenas, the objectives reflects the history and traditions of the school and has set the bases to work out an Institutional Educational Project. This project has formulated several objectives among which the most important are:

- 1 To give the student all-embracing training in order to accomplish all the student’s needs in educational matters, promoting personal development and the establishment of ethical values.

- 2 The English language teaching is of fundamental importance in the academic syllabus that must be mastered by each student.
- 3 To promote in the students a high sense of responsibility.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

This project takes place at The British School, Punta Arenas, which is located in Waldo Seguel # 454. The telephone number is 24 44 19. The school is divided in 3 main buildings:

- 1 “The Junior School” incorporates students from the Infant School (kindergarten) to 6th grade, and is located in Avenida España # 853.
- 2 “The Senior School” incorporates students from 7th grade to 4th high-school, and is located in Waldo Seguel # 454.
- 3 “The Language Institute” incorporates students of all ages being open to the community. It offers semester courses that are certificated by Cambridge University as well as offering International Examination of the English Language. It is located in Avenida España # 910.

The School also includes the following facilities:

- 1 A Computer Laboratory
- 2 A Science Laboratory
- 3 A Physics Laboratory
- 4 A Music building
- 5 An Art building
- 6 Two Libraries
- 7 A Cafeteria
- 8 A Gymnasium

In the school there are more than 800 students. 84 in the Infant School, 360 in The Junior School, 380 in the Senior School. There are 77 teachers among the whole establishment. There are 9 English teachers who belong to the English Department . The number of classrooms in the Senior School is 17, in the Junior 19.

The School is run by the following employees:

- 1 A Rector: John Harrison
- 2 Vice-Rector: Jose Ramón González
- 3 Head of Studies: Rodrigo Sirén
- 4 Guidance Coordinator: Juan Francisco Peón
- 5 Head of the English Department: Luis Cárdeno
- 6 Head of the Math Department: Jorge Sánchez
- 7 Head of the Science Department: Verónica Figueroa
- 8 Head of the Language Department: René Manquilepi
- 9 Head of the Art Department: Cristina Sussi
- 10 Administrative charges
- 11 16 janitors.

About the school:

The school was founded in 1896, by Reverend John Williams under the name of “The English School” of Punta Arenas, under the sponsorship of “South American Missionary Society” of Londres, United Kingdom.

From the beginning until today it has been linked to the Anglican Church. In 1989 the Anglican Society of Punta Arenas made the decision to arrange for the British Cooperation of Punta Arenas to deal with the management of “The British School”.

The British School is one of the founder members of the British Schools Association in Chile (ABSCH). It is also member of the Federation of Private Educational Institutions (FIDE Secundaria).

“The British School” is the only school in the country that has been established as the Official Centre of all Cambridge International Examination (CIE).

The mission of the school:

The British School has a specific mission which seeks to accomplish its philosophical ideal:

To participate and improve our society working in the development of people with values Judeo-Christian, academic excellency and fluency in the English language command, in a solid educational institution, with professionals of academic excellency, under the principle of the common well-being.

“The British Cooperation” together with The British School have as shared goal, under the wing of the Anglican Church, to educate people, helping them in their development under the concept of responsible freedom, so much in moral aspects as well as cognitive aspects, and give them in as part of the society and an agent of positive changes.

1.3 International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) is a recognized leader in the field of international education, encouraging students to be active learners, well-rounded individuals and engaged world citizens. Founded in 1968, we currently work with 1,848 schools in 124 countries to develop and offer three challenging programmes to more than 200,000 students aged 3 to 19 years.

Three programmes span the years from kindergarten to pre-university. The programmes can be offered individually or as a continuum.

- **The Primary Years Programme** for pupils aged 3 to 12 focuses on the development of the whole child in the classroom and in the world outside.
- **The Middle Years Programme** for pupils aged 11 to 16 provides a framework of academic challenge and life skills, achieved through embracing and transcending traditional school subjects.
- **The Diploma Programme** for students aged 16 to 19 is a demanding two-year curriculum leading to final examinations and a qualification that is welcomed by leading universities around the world.

Each programme includes a curriculum and pedagogy, student assessment

appropriate to the age range, professional development for teachers and a process of school authorization and evaluation.† The programmes are available through 1,848 IB World Schools in 124 countries.

- The IBO offers a **continuum of education**, consisting of three individual programmes. It spans the years from kindergarten to a pre-university diploma. While IBO are traditionally known for the Diploma Programme.
- **High-quality education** sustained for over 35 years. The curriculum represents the best from many different countries rather than the exported national system of any one. The challenging Diploma Programme assessment is recognized by the world's leading universities. Maintains high standards by actively training and supporting teachers, and by authorizing and evaluating IB World Schools.
- Encourages **international-mindedness** in IB students. To do this students must first develop an understanding of their own cultural and national identity. All IB students learn a second language and the skills to live and work with others internationally—essential for life in the 21st century.
- Encourages a **positive attitude to learning** by encouraging students to ask challenging questions, to critically reflect, to develop research skills, and to learn how to learn. Community service is also encouraged because there is more to learning than academic studies alone.
- Ensures that the programmes are **accessible** to students in a wide variety of schools—national, international, public and private—in 124 countries. These IB World Schools form a worldwide community in which there is no such thing as a “typical” school (more than 50% of IB students are in state-funded schools). IB World Schools cooperate in curriculum development, student assessment and the governance of the IBO, making this a unique international collaboration.

IB World Schools

The IBO does not own or manage any schools. Instead, it works with schools around the world (both state and privately funded) that share the commitment to international education. Schools that have been authorized by the organization to offer one or more of their programmes are known as "IB World Schools".

These schools:

- 1 share the mission and commitment of the IBO to quality international education,
- 2 play an active and supporting role in the worldwide community of IB schools,
- 3 share their knowledge and experience in the development of the IB programmes,
- 4 are committed to the professional development of teachers.

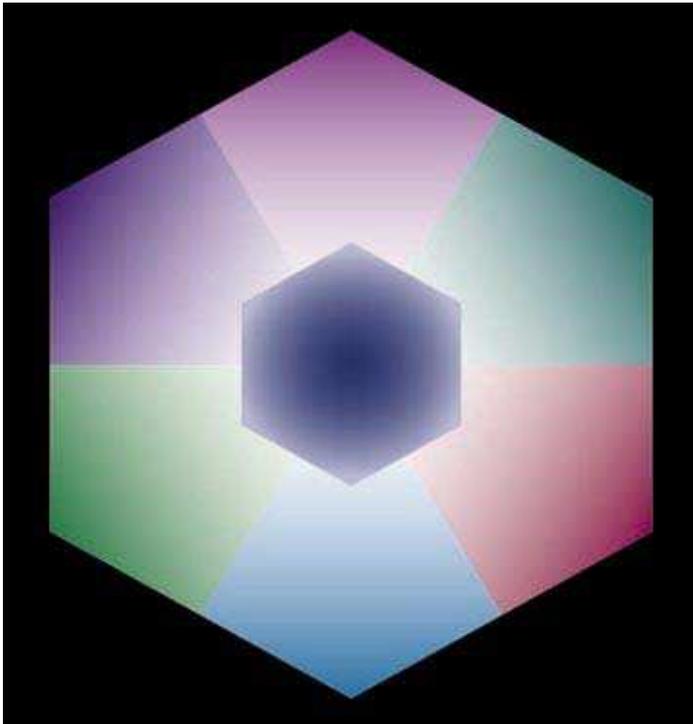
Authorization to become an IB World School is an intensive process that typically takes two or more years and includes site visits by an IBO team. A regular process of evaluation is undertaken by schools that have been authorized.

In Latin America, there are nearly 200 IB World Schools in 17 different countries offering one or more of the IB programmes. Spanish is the official language of most of these countries. Most schools offer the IB programmes in Spanish, in English or in both languages. Some include additional languages in their syllabuses. The Latin America regional office is located in Buenos Aires, Argentina and offers a wide range of services to IB World Schools and to prospective schools that are interested in our programmes. The regional office also develops educational initiatives with universities and governments in the region.

There are 16 IB World Schools in Chile offering one or more of the three IB programmes. 4 schools offer the Primary Years Programme, 3 schools offer the Middle Years Programme and 14 schools offer the Diploma Programme. The first school was authorized in 1981.

Mission

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) is more than its three educational programmes. It is motivated by a mission to create a better world through education. The organization values their hard-earned reputation for quality, for high standards and for pedagogical leadership. Achieving their goals by working with partners and by actively involving our stakeholders, particularly teachers. It promotes intercultural understanding and respect, not as an alternative to a sense of cultural and national identity, but as an essential part of life in the 21st century.



Syllabus

Profile of the IB community

The IB in the British School

At the beginning of this year (2006) the school began to arranged their entrance to the IBO. From March (2006) until the end of October (2006) the school was a candidate to be part of the Organization. Finally, in November (2006) The British School was officially Accepted in the programme.

The IB will give students the opportunity to have the best comprehensive development that they can get according to their skills and competences as the programme offers a wide variety of subjects.

The programme to obtain the degree starts in 3_ Senior-School and lasts two years. For the Theory of Knowledge (TdC) the IBO recommends at least 150 academic hours distributed in the two year programme.

Its main goals are creativity, Action and Service (CAS) which contribute to make students become responsible and supportive citizens. *Creativity* is to be developed in various ways and not only in artistic activities, but also in the development and performance of projects on social service. *Action* not only related to sport issues but also team work in expeditions in local and international projects. *Service* includes community service e.g. helping children with special needs, visits to hospital, homeless people, etc.

Subjects

Students can choose from 25 or more subjects and more than 50 language courses and literature. They will be given 40 hours of self-study and preparation of the task. The requirement is that the students take 6 subjects, one of each group (see diagram 1). 3 subjects can be Extended (nivel superior), but not more than 4. The remaining 2 or 3 have to be Core (nivel Medio). Extended courses are of 240 hours of class. On the other hand, Core courses are of about 150 hours.

Group1: Language A1

Encourages students to acquire the best talent in written and oral production accompanied by world literature. It also strengthens the bond of their own culture.

Grupo2: Second Language

It is a requirement for all the students. The IB helps them to achieve the correct use of the language in different situations and with a variety of purposes. It focuses in the written and oral production to contribute promoting the students bilingualism. Students can also study other languages, such as Latin or Greek.

Group3: People and Societies

It offers several subjects, such as Economy, history, technology in a global society, philosophy, psychology, Anthropology, among others.

Group4: Experimental Science

It deals to promote and develop Lab practices, team work through an interdisciplinary project, social responsibility, biology, chemistry, physics, design technology, etc.

Group5: Math and Computing

Math is compulsory to be taken, however there are four choices according to the level of the students and interests.

Group6: Arts

It incorporates visual arts, music, theatre, dance, etc.

Assessment

Students should be able to write a monograph of 4,000 words. The monograph

incorporates independent research and the kind of writing expected at university. The programme gives the students the chance to investigate of topic of their interest as a way to broaden their academic knowledge. More over, it gives them the chance to deepen in the study of selected subjects. The programme is demanding and not all of the students obtain the diploma.

Contribution of the Project

As it was mentioned in the previous section, the IB programme is divided into 6 groups of subjects. Group 2 incorporates second language acquisition, which is compulsory for the students to take. Regarding the English language the IB programme is ambitious and determined to help students achieve a high level of performance. It aims at developing the students' skills focusing mainly in writing and speaking leading them to become bilingual once they leave school.

The students will be required to take IGCSE (*International General Certificate of Secondary Education*). The IGCSE is a two-year programme leading to a certificate that is internationally recognised. The courses have been developed in line with the British National Curriculum but with an awareness of students' needs in the International community.†

The IGCSE is typically taken by 14 to 16-year-olds, and it prepares students for further academic work, including the IB Diploma Programme. Cambridge IGCSE provides a broad study programme and covers subjects from a variety of areas: Languages, Humanities, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Creative, Technical and Vocational. With a choice of Core and Extended papers in most subjects, IGCSE is suitable for students of different ability levels and in some subjects.

Due to the fact that students from the The British School will have to cope with IGCSE's demands in order to obtain the diploma, they will have to prepare themselves for the challenge ahead. To be able to accomplish good results, teachers must work hard to help the students enhance their level of English. Teachers' work should be focused on

developing the students' skills. Writing skills maybe the most challenging for the school.

The writing part of the examination requires that the students manage a considerable knowledge to produce a variety of texts, such as compositions, essays, stories, articles, summaries, and letters. This project aims at helping a group of students become proficient in letter writing.

1.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE CLASS

The Project will be carried out in students of 2nd high-school. 2nd graders are divided in three different classes: A, B and C, however according to the level of English, the students are divided in 4 groups: 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B. The group in which the project will be applied is 2A. It is made up of 13 students in which 5 are girls and 8 are boys. The average age is 15 years old. Their former English teacher is Mr. Luis C rcamo. The class has 8 periods of English per week divided into 4 days: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 11:10 to 12:30am and on Friday from 8:00 to 9:20am.

Group 2A has a PET (Preliminary English test) level of English. PET is the second level Cambridge ESOL exam, which represents an intermediate level or level B1 of the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

At this stage (B1) students should be capable of coping with everyday written and spoken communication e.g. read simple textbooks and articles, write simple routine request, express opinions, etc.

Their former English teacher works with the students on making them develop two main projects per semester, regarding a extensive reading, writing a biography and a story, oral presentation, etc. However the teacher's main goal is to improve the students writing skills.

The book used by the students is "PET Masterclass" Intermediate (Annette Capel, Rosemary Nixon) from the Oxford University Press.

II DIAGNOSIS

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE DIAGNOSTIC TEST

The purpose of the diagnostic test is to assess how much the students know in relation to writing letters. The range is from identifying types of letters, differences in style, the parts of a letter, and to see if they are able to write both a Formal and Informal letter.

Since the group manages a PET level of English, the instructions for the test were done in English. (See Appendix 1). The test was taken in two different days due to the length. The completing part (items 1,2,3) was done first and the written part (item 4 and 5) the next day.

Each item in the diagnostic test represents a different objective:

Objective 1: To identify the type of letter. The students have to read 7 different kinds of letters then match 7 names of types of letters with the 7 written letters. The kinds of letters involved were:

- 1 Informal letter
- 2 Transactional letter
- 3 Complaint letter
- 4 Cover letter
- 5 Acceptance letter

- 6 Request letter
- 7 Thank you letter

Objective 2: to identify formal and informal style of writing. This item has 3 parts:

- 1 **Part 1:** presents 20 sentences where the students have to identify the sentences that are written in an informal style by putting a tick next to it.

- 2 **Part 2:** contains 10 sentences where students have to decide whether the sentences are written in a formal or informal style. Five sentences were written in a formal style and the other five were written in an informal style. Then students identify the sentence in to the 5 categories regardless the level of formality. The categories are:
 - 3 Complaining
 - 4 Asking for information
 - 5 Giving information

- 6 **Part 3:** There are key words or expressions underlined in each sentence. Students identify the ones written in a formal way and then relate them to a word or expression from other sentence in informal style.

Objective 3: To order the parts of a letter. Presents a jumbled letter with 10 sentences which students have to re-arrange in the correct order. Then they have to arrange the sentences into paragraphs according to a paragraph plan. The paragraph plan is the following:

- 1 Reason for writing
- 2 Personal details and qualities
- 3 Experience

Objective 4: to write an informal letter. Students read a letter sent by a friend who had accepted the invitation to stay with him/her after Christmas. Then they have to write a letter in reply to his/her friend, answering some doubts and telling about the plans he/she has for when his/her friend comes to visit. The letter has to be written in 100-140 words.

Objective 5: To write a formal letter. Students write a Transactional Letter to a friend who sent him/her an advertisement to ski in Scotland. The advertisement is presented in the test together with the notes he/she (supposedly) made asking for more information to his/her friend. The letter has to be written in 120-180 words.

**PRESENTATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL SCORES IN THE DIAGNOSIS TEST
2ND HIGH-SCHOOL, GROUP 2A, “THE BRITISH SCHOOL”**

| Names of the Students | Item 1 (Score: 7) | Item 2 (Score: 28) | Item 3 (Score: 20) | Item 4 (Score: 24) | Item 5 (Score: 26) | Total (Score: 95) |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Araneda, Felipe | 4 | 15 | 9 | 18 | 8 | 54 |
| Araneda, Ignacio | 4 | 28 | 16 | 21 | 17 | 86 |
| Camelio, Francesca | 3 | 27 | 8 | 17 | 8 | 63 |
| Cardenas, Valentina | 2 | 15 | 0 | 15 | 11 | 43 |
| Covacich, Vesna | 4 | 16 | 2 | 16 | 11 | 49 |
| Leiva, Felipe | 4 | 15 | 1 | 12 | 6 | 38 |
| N Òez, Luis | 4 | 23 | 11 | 2 | 2 | 42 |
| Oyarz n, Tom s | 5 | 22 | 14 | 20 | 14 | 75 |
| Rivera, Carlos | 4 | 28 | 11 | 16 | 18 | 77 |
| Ruiz, AndrÈs | 4 | 21 | 6 | 17 | 14 | 62 |
| Ulloa, Esterban | 3 | 18 | 9 | 14 | 6 | 50 |
| Y Òez, Carolina | 4 | 23 | 4 | Not Observed | Not Observed | 31 |
| Zer n, Francisca | 2 | 19 | 5 | 13 | 14 | 53 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Ss. who achieved | 9 | 9 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 5 |
| % Achieved | 69.2% | 69.2% | 15.4% | 75% | 16,7% | 38.5% |
| Ss. who did not achieve | 4 | 4 | 11 | 3 | 10 | 8 |
| % Not achieved | 30.8% | 30.8% | 84.6% | 25% | 83.3% | 61.5% |

Item 1: To identify the type of letter

Item 2: To recognize Formal and Informal Style

Item 3: To identify the parts of a letter

Item 4: To write an Informal Letter

Item 5: To write a Formal Letter

**PRESENTATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN THE
DIAGNOSIS TEST
2ND HIGH-SCHOOL, GROUP 2A, “THE BRITISH SCHOOL”**

| Names of the Students | Item 1 (Score: 7) | Item 2 (Score: 28) | Item 3 (Score: 20) | Item 4 (Score: 24) | Item 5 (Score: 26) | Total (Score: 95) |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Araneda, Felipe | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 2 |
| Araneda, Ignacio | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 5 |
| Camelio, Francesca | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 2 |
| Cardenas, Valentina | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 1 |
| Covacich, Vesna | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 2 |
| Leiva, Felipe | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 1 |
| N Òez, Luis | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 2 |
| Oyarz n, Tom s | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 4 |
| Rivera, Carlos | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 4 |
| Ruiz, AndrÈs | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 3 |
| Ulloa, Esteban | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 2 |
| Y Òez, | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Not | Not | 2 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Carolina | | | | Observed | Observed | |
| Zer n, Francisca | ☺ | ☺ | ☺ | ☺ | ☺ | 1 |
| | | | | | | |
| Ss. who achieved | 9 | 9 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 5 |
| % Achieved | 69.2% | 69.2% | 15.4% | 75% | 16,7% | 38.5% |
| | | | | | | |
| Ss. who did not achieve | 4 | 4 | 11 | 3 | 10 | 8 |
| % Not achieved | 30.8% | 30.8% | 84.6% | 25% | 83.3% | 61.5% |

Score for Achievement Item 1: 4 or more
Score for Achievement Item 2: 17 or more
Score for Achievement Item 3: 12 or more
Score for Achievement Item 4: 14 or more
Score for Achievement Item 5: 16 or more
Score for Achievement Total: 57 or more

2.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESULTS OF THE DIAGNOSTIC TEST

The diagnostic test included 5 different aims regarding the writing of a letter. The test was developed to search for the areas in which students had major problems concerning the writing of a letter.

(For a detailed description of the results of the students, see Appendix 2, for the level of achievement, see Appendix 3)

After applying the diagnostic test and analysing the results obtained, the following conclusions were observed:

1. To identify the type of letter. The goal of Item 1 was to see if the students were able to identify 7 different kinds of letters (the most common ones).

This objective was achieved by 9 students, which represents 69.2% of the whole class, however, 4 students did not achieved, which represents 30.8% of the whole class.

An aim is achieved when 60% or more of the whole number of students, have got the score required. On this bases, objective 1 was achieved.

2. To recognize Formal and Informal Style. The goal of item2 was to see if the students were able to identify the contrast between formal and informal style of writing. As well as Item 1, 9 students achieved the objective (69.2%), and 4 failed to do so (30.8%), therefore Objective 2 was also achieved.

3. To identify the parts of a letter. The aim of Item 3 was to see if students were capable of identifying the parts of a letter by rearranging a jumbled letter. They were also expected to recognize a sentence (from the letter) by ordering it according to a paragraph plan. This objective was achieved only by 2 students (15.4%) of the whole class, thus 11 students did not achieved (84.6%). This Item shows the lowest range of achievement.

4. To write an Informal Letter. In Item 4 the students were asked to write an informal letter including certain points.

Items 4 and 5 were done by the students in a different day from the first 3 items. The attendance for the first part was of 100%, however for the second part one was absent for medical reasons, so when she returned it was too late for her to take the test. According to this only 12 students were considered for the analysis.

This Item was achieved by 9 students (75%) out of the 12, Only 3 out of the 12 students (25%) did not achieved. This item shows the best result with the highest range of achievement.

5. To write a Formal Letter. Students were asked to write a Transactional letter. The level of achievement in this item was of 2 students (16.7%) out of 12, The number of students who did not achieved was 10 students (83,3%) out of 12.

The following graph shows the results of the test considering the percentage of achievement for each of the objectives.

| | Obj. 1 | Obj. 2 | Obj. 3 | Obj. 4 | Obj. 5 |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Achieved | 69.2% | 69.2% | 15.4% | 75% | 16,7% |
| Not achieved | 30.8% | 30.8% | 84.6% | 25% | 83.3% |

Conclusions:

- 1 Students have no problem in recognizing a certain type of letter, as shown in item 1. The level of achievement is due to their level of English which enabled them to recognize key words in each letters, leading them to a identify the right answer.
- 2 Items 3 and 5 show the lowest achievement. Both items were some how related to the structure of a letter.
- 3 Due to the results in item 5 students are not familiarized with the appropriate format of a formal letter.
- 4 Although students can clearly identify the difference between formal and informal

style of writing (as shown in the results of item 2), students were not able to use the appropriate style when writing a formal letter.

III. STATING THE PROBLEM

According to the results in the diagnostic test, it is possible to state that students are not familiarized with the register and format of a formal letter, nor to use the appropriate language style that a formal letter requires.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Description of the methodology

This project is founded under the Participatory Action-research bases.

“Participatory Action research is a systematic form of inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical, and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry”¹
(McCutcheon, G. & Jung, B. (1990). Put simply, action research is “learning by doing”,

the researcher identifies a problem, do something to solve it, see how successful their efforts were, and if not satisfied, try again.†

Gerald Susman (1983)² distinguishes five phases to be conducted within each research cycle.

†

- 1 A problem is identified and data is collected for a more detailed diagnosis.
- 2 Postulation of several possible solutions, from which a single plan of action emerges and is implemented.†
- 3 Data on the results of the intervention are collected and analyzed, and the findings are interpreted in light of how successful the action has been.†
- 4 At this point, the problem is re-assessed and the process begins another cycle.†
- 5 This process continues until the problem is resolved.

¹ McCutcheon G & Jung B (1990) Alternative perspectives on action research. *Theory into practice* XXIX: 144-151.

² SUSMAN, Gerald I. "Action Research: A Sociotechnical Systems Perspective." Ed. G. Morgan. London: Sage Publications, 1983. 95-113.

Developing the ability to write

Writing is the productive skill in the written way. It can be more complicated than it seems at first, and often seems to be the hardest of the skills, even for native speakers of a language, since it involves not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thoughts in a structured way.

Helping students to write means primarily helping them to make carefully guided symbols on paper. We guide the learners through several progressively more complex stages over a period of time, depending on their needs, age, capacities, aspirations, to a point where they will be able to write about a topic in a logical sequence.

The process of writing involves a sequence of steps to follow to help students develop and shape their ideas to the point that they can write about them clearly and in a structure that will help show their ideas well and put them together in a whole written piece.

Writing is a process that involves at least four distinct steps: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. It is known as a recursive process. While you are revising, you might have to return to the prewriting step to develop and expand your ideas. In the process of writing letters at least three of these steps will be considered:

- 1 **Prewriting:** Understanding the rubric or instructions given that learners must follow to write a any piece of text.
- 2 **Drafting:** Writing the Layout of the letter, i.e. how the learner will plan the way in which the letter will be structured.
- 3 **Revising:** The learner writes the letter according to the paragraph plan and hands it in for suggestions or correction done by the trainer.
- 4 **Editing:** The learner writes the final version of the letter including the suggestions and corrections presented by the trainer.

BROOKES AND GRUNDY'S APPROACH TO TEACHING WRITING

Teaching Writing Communicatively

Brookes and Grundy (*“Writing for study purposes”*) believe that an approach to teaching writing should combine communicative practice, an integrated approach and

humanistic principles. Diagrammatically it looks the following way:

Communicative practice

Brookes and Grundy exemplify 6 features of good communicative practice in relation to teaching spoken language. They focus on teaching spoken language first as being most familiar to the readers.

Having something meaningful to say: In classroom practices such as role play, model dialogues or any communicative experience, learners exchange meanings and express opinions that are their own and not just imitative work which is often styled as communicative. Learners should use meaningful talk to represent the way they think and feel and to relate their knowledge and experience of the world to others.

Reaching an audience: Besides having something to say, learners also need to be able to get their message across to someone else.

Working in small groups: Particularly important as it enables learners the opportunity to speak more often than when the class works as a whole.

Working collaboratively: In order to communicate there must be collaborative interaction.

Developing register awareness: Not only literal meaning we convey when we talk. It would all depend on where and to whom are you talking to. How close or distant you are in

a relationship is the language you would have to use to communicate to the interlocutor.

Talking naturally: Learners should organize their thoughts as they talk. In the development of any skill it is important to carry out previous activities which give the basis for the main objective. In letter writing is no different, as previously to writing any piece of text is necessary to develop different pre-writing activities. By allowing learners to communicate their ideas and thoughts, they are becoming aware and acquainted of the topic they will be writing about.

Many of these central communicative practices not only apply in spoken language, but also to teaching writing. You cannot write without having something meaningful to say, without reaching an audience and being aware of the appropriate register. Collaborative group work will provide the opportunity for rewriting or enriching the writing according to a partner's opinions. And finally working on achieving a final product involves organizing one's thoughts as one writes.

An integrated approach

The authors recognize that in the real world we are rarely exercising only one skill at a time. If, for example, we take a telephone message, we are listening, speaking, writing the message down and reading it back in an integrated display of multi-skill competence.

The purpose of this approach is to enable learners to move naturally between one skill to another. Teaching each skill separately often result in unbalanced second performance.

A multi-skill approach is necessary for a successful writing teaching. It maybe needed to have a sequence of skills, as in obtaining information from a letter in order to write a reply whether for asking for more information or giving information. Similarly,

there could be a whole class discussion to be essential for writing purposes. For example, class discussion about “animal rights” leading to writing a letter to a newspaper or magazine in relation to an article published on the matter.

Attempting to write in isolation assumes that students know what to do, and can write effectively and accurately already. In that sense, writing demands an integrated approach just as much as the other skills do.

Humanistic principle

This principle sees the person (learner) as the centre of things. The learners’ freedom to express themselves is central. Understanding the vital need to create a context in which the learner’s self-expression is encouraged and respected. This principle considers the learner as an individual with intelligence, feelings, experiences, knowledge and information.

The following Diagram shows the three aspects considered in this approach to teaching writing:

The Learner is Central

Learners will have the chance to write about their feelings toward the school, their teachers, the subjects they enjoy. They will also write about their previous experiences working or interacting with children or people out of the school through social work. Learners will also put in paper their points of view in relation to different topics, such as, animal rights, environmental issues and travelling.

KRASHEN'S MONITOR HYPOTHESIS

Also known as the “Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis”, and in recent years it has been called the “Input Hypothesis”.

How people acquire second language is based on a distinction between *acquisition*, the subconscious process of “picking up” a language, and *learning*, a conscious process of studying rules. Those who master a second language have acquired it by being exposed to “comprehensible input”, input that is just a little ahead of the present level of knowledge of the learner. In this sense, conscious learning of grammatical rules plays a minor role. Other important aspects of teaching writing according to Krashen, are the following:

1. Voluntary pleasure reading contributes to the development of writing ability.
2. Practice in writing is related to improvement in writing.
3. Feedback is useful when it is provided during the writing process; it is not useful when it is given after the paper has been completed.
4. Grammar instruction is not effective in helping students write; reading is more valuable.
5. Good writers plan before writing by first writing an out line, a draft, revising meaning, etc.

Reading is not enough to ensure the acquisition of writing ability, it certainly improves a writer’s competence by giving all the bases of a successful style, but it may not lead to an improvement in performance¹. In order to improve practising writing is essential: only through a high amount of practice one can improve the quality of writing.

Poor writers may lack competence because they have not read enough to acquire the code of written language or maybe because they have not written enough to develop an efficient composing process. The conclusion is then obvious, learners need to read and write more, and therefore teachers should bear this in mind.

1) The ability to put this knowledge to use in an actual piece of writing (Krashen “*Writing: Research, Theory,*

and Application”, p20)

V. HYPOTHESIS

If students are monitored in the process of writing formal letters by using Brookes and Grundy’s Approach to teaching writing, and The Monitor Hypothesis they will be able to improve their writing skill.

VI. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

General Objective:

- 1 To improve the student's writing skills through controlled production of formal letters.

Specific Objective:

- 1 To understand the importance of writing letters.
- 2 To become familiarized with the Format of formal letter.
- 3 To become familiarized with the Structure of formal letter.
- 4 To improve the level of vocabulary and expressions related to formal style of writing.
- 5 To write a formal letter.

VII. STRATEGIES

1. Activities based on the use of Technology: Technology has always impacted education. Nowadays education is being transformed by new technologies and is a must that teachers face that reality. The enormous amount of information available can really bring good results when trying to achieve a goal. In this particular project the computer and the internet will be a great device to assist students in their learning process. “However one must remember that the educational focus is on learning and instructional goals instead of the technology itself, because technology are merely tools or vehicles for delivering instruction”¹ (Campoy, 1992).

Using the computer to promote motivation, is a good way to enhancing their process of second language acquisition. Computer and internet resources can really promote meaningful learning, furthermore we should keep in mind that after all, the e-mail is becoming the most used resource to write letters nowadays. Consequently it is relevant to use it as a tool in this project.

Once the students have developed a piece of writing (in hand), they will have to rewrite the letter considering the feedback made by the student teacher. Finally, students will be requested to send the rewritten version of the letter to the student teacher’s e-mail address including the corrections and suggestions.

¹ Campoy, Renee. (1992, August). The role of technology in the school reform movement. *Educational Technology*, 32, 17-22.

2. Games and activities. Games help and encourage learners to support their interest in learning. “As ESL teachers it is our responsibility to create not only safe and conducive learning environments for our students, but it is placed on our shoulders the burden of also creating meaningful and student oriented lesson plans.”² Wright (1984).

After all language teaching is a hard work with a lot of effort demanded and at times can become frustrating when trying to motivate the class. Well-chosen games are extremely useful as they give students a break and at the same time allow students to practice language skills.

3. Vocabulary testing techniques. When dealing with new vocabulary, or vocabulary that needs to be rechecked a lot techniques are available. The most common ones are: multiple choice, matching, odd one out, gap filling, using the words in meaningful sentences, sentence completion, etc. indeed all of the techniques are beneficial for the students and help them promote the acquisition of new lexis.

4. Communicative practise through oral production. According to Brookes and Grundy’s Approach to teaching writing, the communicative practice is an important aspect to be considered. Different activities will give the learners the chance to express opinions, thoughts and ideas. These activities will be done through topic discussion and will set the basis for the following task which will be to write about what has been discussed.

²Wright, A., Betteridge, D., & Buckby, M. (2002) *Games for Language Learning*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom

5. Reading for writing. The integrated approach states that a multi-skill approach is necessary for a successful writing teaching. If teachers really want to improve the students' English abilities, they should begin by helping them improve their reading comprehension. By improving reading comprehension, they will also improve their writing and speaking abilities. It is a proven fact that people who read a lot write better, have a more developed vocabulary and speak with greater fluency than people who do not read much. One of the questions most often asked by students learning English as a second language is, *What's the best way to learn English?* The answer to that question is simple. Read, read, read. Of course, the material you read must be written in English.

Types of text to be read will be in the forms of letters, articles and advertisements to which the students will have to write replies giving certain information according to the input. First and foremost Transactional Letters are letters which respond to written information, as well as visual prompts.

6. Planning before writing. Krashen states that an important aspect to teaching writing is to develop a previous plan that would help the writer organize his/her ideas. A layout not only helps the writer articulate what is planning to say, but also how he/she is going to move from one paragraph to another paragraph and how he/she will convey his/her thoughts in such a way that they are understandable and attractive to the reader. Good writers plan and revise, rearrange and cross out, re-reading and producing multiple drafts before they produce their finished document. This is what a process writing approach is about.

7. The importance of feedback. It takes a lot of time and effort to write, and so it is only fair that student writing is responded suitably. Positive comments can help build student confidence and create good feeling for the next writing class. It also helps if the reader is more than just the teacher. The feedback will be done orally and written. The oral feedback will be carried out individually. The student teacher will have the chance to comment on the student's mistakes but at the same time, allude to their strengths. The written feedback will include corrections and suggestions made in the same written letter. Following the feedback students will have to rewrite the letter including the corrections and suggestions made by the student teacher.

8. Field Experience. Students really enjoy when they have the chance to leave the classroom. A visit to a museum or an art gallery will give the students some background on something to write about. In a letter, they will have to give information on what they saw and learnt. "To enhance student learning, institutions must make classroom experiences more productive and also encourage students to devote more of their time outside the classroom to educationally purposeful activities"³ (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt and Associates, 1991).

³Kuh, G., J. Schuh, E. Whitt and Associates. (1991). *Involving Colleges: Successful Approaches to Fostering Student Learning and Development Outside the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

VIII. STAGES

The project will be categorized into four stages, being each one related to the five specific objectives previously mentioned.

Stage 1:

Objective: To get students acquainted with the project.

To understand the importance of writing letters.

This stage is considered as an introduction to the project itself. It will begin by describing to the students the project in roughly. How they will be benefited throughout the project development. Why writing letters may help to improve the students' writing skills. Why it is important to know how to write a formal letter. This stage will take the first class.

Stage 2:

Objective: To become familiarized with the format of formal letters.

Get the students acquainted with the different types of letters. Sample letters are to be analysed according to the specific formats that letters should follow, whether they are personal correspondence or business related. This stage includes understanding rubric i.e. the instructions to be followed, such as, who is to read the letter, identify the situation and specific points to consider when writing. In addition, the parts of a letter will be analyzed,

i.e. appropriate greeting and ending, introduction, main body and conclusion. At this stage students begin to write simple letters. Throughout the project, the letters to be developed will be of the type of Transactional letter. In this particular stage students will write a

- 1 Letter giving information.

Stage 3:

Objective: To become familiarized with the structure of formal letter.

Students will be asked to follow rules to develop a layout that will allow them to organize the points that they should include in letter writing as specified by the rubric. In this stage students will extend their understanding on the organization of a letter by writing layouts and working on analysing pieces of letters which will display examples of introductions, endings, the correct way to address somebody, etc.

Activities aimed to help students to deal successfully with the rules of punctuation and correct paragraph structure. Teach the students to be brief and concise (KISS = Keep It Short and Simple). This stage pursues the production of the following Transactional letter:

- 1 Letter of application

Stage 4:

Objective: To improve the level of vocabulary and expressions related to formal style of writing.

To incorporate connectors and vocabulary accurate to the type of letter requested. A variety of vocabulary activities that will help students to acquired in a greater extent the new lexis, such as linking words and phrases, vocabulary relevant to the purpose of the letter, etc. At this stage students will be asked to write following Transactional letter:

- 2 Letter of complaint

Stage 5:

Objective: To write a formal letter.

This objective puts together the previous objectives as it measures the final outcome of a letter. When assessing writing a letter it is not only enough to assess the format of formal letters (objective 2) or the paragraph structure (objective 3) in isolation. It is also important to assess other aspects in letter writing, therefore objective 5 incorporates the previous objectives (2,3 and 4) as well as including all the information requested in the rubric and if the letter is informing the reader satisfactorily. At this final stage students will be asked to write following Transactional letter:

- 3 Letter requesting information

VIII. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

To begin with it is important to state that the project was design to be applied one class of each week. The day devoted to the project was Friday morning from 8 to 9:20.

Stage 1

The first stage was design as a way to introduce the project to the class. The student teacher tried to elicit some information from the students through a number of questions, such as the following:

- 1 Do you like writing in your native language?
- 2 Do you like writing in English?
- 3 Why do you think it is important to work on writing?
- 4 What kinds of compositions do you know?
- 5 Have you written any one recently?

Some of the students' answers were furthestmost of what I expected, as they were not, at all interested in learning how to write letters. Moreover I was surprised to learn that none of them enjoy writing, neither in their native language nor in a foreign one. However,

they were aware that through writing they can improve their level of English and also the other skills as well. As for the fourth question, they managed to list several types of compositions. They mentioned an essay, an article, a story, a biography, leaving out letter and summary. Students wrote essays in the past year and the first semester of this year they wrote a biography and a story. What really caught my attention was the fact that they had no experience what so ever in letter writing.

Another significant reason I gave the students to understand the importance of writing letters was the fact that in the IGCSE examination they were going to be required to write a letter which could be of various kinds.

Stage 2

This stage began with the importance of understanding the rubric i.e. the instructions that the student has to cope with before writing any piece of text. Understanding the rubric involves four major points:

- 1 The imaginary situation the student will write about.
- 2 The imaginary reader
- 3 Type of writing
- 4 Specific topics that should be included

I also gave the students a general idea of the organization of a letter, analysing it in detail was to be done in the following stage. The four major points to be considered:

- 1 Appropriate greeting and ending
- 2 Introduction: opening remarks
- 3 Main body consisting in two to three paragraphs approximately
- 4 Conclusion: closing remarks

Several practice exercises were applied such as understanding rubrics by filling the

four major aspects to be considered. Matching beginnings with endings of pieces of letters, labelling the paragraphs with headings, etc.

A field experience took place during the development of the project. I previously arranged a visit to the Braun-Menendez Museum, together with the school's authorization. A tourist guide was expecting us and told us about the history of the mansion (as she described it), information about the family, the styles used for decorations, etc. Unfortunately, there was no guide who spoke English so the route had to be told in Spanish.

The following class the students were expected to write a letter about what they saw and learnt, but before doing so, we commented on the experience and discussed some of the aspects they were supposed to write afterwards. Following the discussion they were asked to read a letter from an uncle who was coming to visit Punta Arenas. In the letter the uncle requested some information about the Braun-Menedez Museum. Finally, the students were asked to write a reply giving the information requested by the uncle.

Stage 3

Both approaches presented in the Theoretical Framework state the relevance of drafting and revising before writing the original piece of text. In this stage a deep analysis of the layout of a letter was carried out. Students had to develop a number of layouts after analysing rubrics. This activity aimed at creating awareness of the importance of writing a draft before writing the final version. It has also been a good way of helping the learners to organize their ideas through a paragraph structure.

According to Brookes and Grundy's Approach to teaching writing, I have been able to put into practice the communicative skill together with the Humanistic Principle through different activities which have given the learners the chance to express opinions, thoughts and ideas. These activities have been done through topic discussion and have set the basis for the following activities.

One experience was in relation to how they felt towards their school. After discussing what they like/dislike about it (school, time-table, subjects), what they thought of their teachers and what they would change, they proceeded to write a letter telling all about it to a cousin that was coming to live to their town and was thinking to go to their school.

Another activity carried out was under the basis of their abilities and experiences. Learners had to share their involvement in social work, such as working with children, interacting with students of other school, especially public school, helping people in need, etc. According to their abilities (art, music, sports, etc.) they were asked to write a letter applying for summer job which involved working with children. To do so they had to read an advertisement offering the job. This time the advertisement was part of the rubric, so we

worked on analysing this kind of input. Students had to state, in the layout, the exact information they had to elicit when writing the letter to apply for the job.

Stage 4

According to Krashen's Hypothesis, learners must be exposed to "comprehensible input", which is just a little ahead of the present level of knowledge. Learners have had to write letters which, at the beginning attempted to just a few requirements. As they have become more proficient, more requirements have been included.

Moreover, he states that grammatical rules play a minor role. In this sense grammatical mistakes had not been considered as relevant or part of the evaluation, nevertheless they were corrected when needed but only as means of making their ideas understood.

This stage focused on broadening students' lexis. An important device to consider when writing formal texts is the use of linking words and phrases which make the writing more interesting and easier to understand by the reader. Practice in the use of linking words

was done through gap filling, writing meaningful sentences, multiple choice, etc.

Formal style of writing was checked according to the type of letter. Each type of letter incorporates a number of key sentences, for example in a letter of complaint:

I am writing to complain about the.....

I hope you deal with this matter quickly....

Stage 5

This stage was to put together the previous objectives focusing mainly in the inclusion of all the information suggested in the rubric and if whether the information that the writer gives is enough for the reader to be informed. In this particular stage, the students were asked to write a letter requesting information using formal language. At this point students were encouraged to use their own words as much as possible. Practice on the way of writing question both indirectly (formal) and directly (informal). Practice on transforming informal sentences into formal ones, always in the context of letter writing.

PRESENTATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN THE FINAL TEST 2ND HIGH-SCHOOL, GROUP 2A, “THE BRITISH SCHOOL”

| Names of the Students | Item1 (Score: 6) | Item 2 (Score: 6) | Item 3 (Score: 2) | Item 4 (Score: 8) | Item 5 (Score: 2) | Total (Score: 24) | % |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----|
| Araneda, Felipe | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 21 | 88 |
| Araneda, Ignacio | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 22 | 92 |
| Camelio, Francesca | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 21.5 | 90 |
| Cardenas, Valentina | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 18.5 | 77 |
| Covacich, Vesna | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 22 | 92 |
| Leiva, Felipe | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 17.5 | 73 |
| N Òez, Luis | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 16.5 | 69 |
| Oyarz n, Tom s | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 18 | 75 |
| Rivera, Carlos | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 23 | 96 |
| Ruiz, AndrÈs | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 22 | 92 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Ruiz, Andrés | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 22 | 92 |
| Ulloa, Esteban | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 16.5 | 69 |
| Y Óez, Carolina | Not Observed | Not Observed | Not Observed | Not Observed | Not Observed | Not observed | NO |
| Zer n, Francisca | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | 18.5 | 77 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Ss. who achieved | 11 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 12 |
| % Achieved | 92 | 100 | 100 | 92 | 83 | 100 | 100 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Ss. who did not achieve | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| % Not achieved | 8 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 17 | 0 | 0 |

Score for Achievement Item 1: 3.5 or more
Score for Achievement Item 2: 3.5 or more
Score for Achievement Item 3: 1.5 or more
Score for Achievement Item 4: 4.5 or more
Score for Achievement Item 5: 3 or more
Score for Achievement Total: 14.5 or more

NOTE: The student that was absent in the Final Test is the same as the one absent in the Diagnostic Test.

X. FINAL EVALUATION RESULTS

The final evaluation consisted in writing a Transactional Letter (See Appendix 3), specifically a letter requesting information. In the diagnostic test only 2 students received a satisfactory result. Satisfactory meaning more than 60%. Objective 3 and 5 were not achieved in the diagnosis drawing the conclusion that students are not familiar with the appropriate register and format of formal letters, nor the use of formal style of writing.

In the final assessment, objective 3 and 5 of the diagnosis, were assessed in one same task. Objective 3 dealt with identifying the parts of a letter, as objective 5 dealt with writing a formal letter. Objective 3 of the diagnosis has been detached into two objectives for the final evaluation (objs. 2 & 3). If students are capable of writing an appropriate formal letter they will, therefore, know how to organize the parts of a letter, which is related to paragraph organization, and they will use the right format. For this reason the

final test did not include a question specifically to assess this objective, nevertheless in the writing part this aspect was assessed independently through objectives 2 and 3, in order to see if the students reached a satisfactory result.

Objective 1

To understand the importance of writing letters in the context of communication as a means to interact with other people

Objective 1 was not assess as it only dealt with introducing the project to the students, the importance of it, apprising about the kind of work they would expected, as well as, how it was going to be developed throughout the semester. A number of questions were asked in order to elicit some information about their previous experiences in the production of written pieces of text.

Objective 2

To become familiarized with the format of formal letter

This objective assessed how every part of the letter was arranged which had to be displayed in the paragraph structure of the letter. In order to assess this objective, the item of the rubric that was considered was **Item 3**. The results were the ideal as the total number of students who took the test, achieved this objective.

| | Number of Students | % |
|---------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Achieved | 12 | 100 |
| Not Achieved | 0 | 0 |

Objective 3

To become familiarized with the Structure of formal letter

This objective assessed the organization of the letter, as well as, the delivery of the information which had to be in a coherent order. In order to assess this objective, the item of the rubric that was considered was **Item 2**, which dealt with the Organization and Cohesion of the letter. According to Item 2, three aspects were expected:

- 1 Early reference to why you are writing
- 2 Clear organization of points
- 3 Suitable opening and closing phrase

Each point counted 2 marks.

The results, once again, were the ideal as the total number of students who took the test, achieved this objective.

| | Number of Students | % |
|---------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Achieved | 12 | 100 |
| Not Achieved | 0 | 0 |

Objective 4

To improve the level of vocabulary and expressions related to formal style of writing

This objective dealt with the kind of vocabulary that the students displayed in their writings. As they had to write a letter requesting information they had develop questions that were adequate in formal writing, as well as using linking words and phrases. As in the previous objectives a satisfactory number of students achieved this objective. 11 (92%) of them achieved and only 1 (8%) did not.

| | Number of Students | % |
|---------------------|--------------------|----|
| Achieved | 11 | 92 |
| Not Achieved | 1 | 8 |

Objective 5

To write a formal letter

This objective was to assess the final outcome of the letter, by considering it as a whole. It incorporated the previous objectives as well as other important aspects to be considered when writing a letter, such as including all the information requested in the rubric, and whether the target reader was well informed with the content of the letter. This assessment is similar to the one students will encounter in the IGCSE examination or the FC (First Certificate) Examination. Once again, students were able to write a satisfactory formal letter as all them (100%) achieved this objective.

| | Number of Students | % |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----|
| Achieved | 12 | 100 |
| Not Achieved | 0 | 0 |

XI. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Objective Results

Diagnosis

| | OBJ 1 | | OBJ 2 | | OBJ 3 | | OBJ 4 | | OBJ 5 | |
|---------------------|-------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|----|
| | S | % | S | % | S | % | S | % | S | % |
| Achieved | 9 | 69 | 9 | 69 | 2 | 15 | 9 | 75 | 2 | 17 |
| Not Achieved | 4 | 31 | 4 | 31 | 11 | 85 | 3 | 25 | 10 | 83 |

Objectives:

- To identify the type of letter.
- To recognise formal and informal style.
- To identify the parts of a letter.
- To write an informal letter.
- To write a formal letter.

Note: The results for Objectives 4 and 5, were taken out of 12 students.

Final Assessment

| | OBJ 2 | | OBJ 3 | | OBJ 4 | | OBJ 5 | |
|---------------------|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| | S | % | S | % | S | % | S | % |
| Achieved | 12 | 100 | 12 | 100 | 11 | 92 | 12 | 100 |
| Not Achieved | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 |

Objectives:

- To become familiarized with the format of formal letter.
- To become familiarized with the structure of formal letter.
- To improve the level of vocabulary and expressions related to formal style of writing.
- To write a formal letter.

Note: The results for the final evaluation were taken out of 12 students.

The results in the diagnosis, compared to the out come in the final assessment, indicates that students improved their written production in the way of a letter. Each of the four objectives were highly achieved by all the students, except for one who was absent on the day of the test, and happened to be absent in the diagnosis as well. Only one student (8%) did not achieve objective 4 which was related with formal style of writing, however achieved a satisfactory result in objective 5 which considered the final outcome of the letter.

XII. CONCLUSION

The hypothesis of this project proposed that if students were monitored in the process of writing formal letters by using Brookes and Grundy's Approach to teaching writing, and The Monitor Hypothesis they will be able to improve their writing skill.

Students underwent the process of each stage together with the sufficient amount of

practice, as Krashen suggested, allowing them to succeed at the end of the project. Another aspect that was relevant for the great results, was giving the student enough feedback on their writings as it helped them to really learn from their mistakes, so as for the next time, they would not make the same ones.

Brookes and Grundy's integrated approach, demonstrated that is quite suitable for the students as having to work in developing other skills, made it an efficient way to reach the objective. Giving the students enough communicative practice, contributed to the process as they enjoy to talk, specially about themselves.

From my personal experience, I can add that the conditions that I had to encounter at The British School, contributed in a great deal to the optimum results the students obtained. I think that having the chance to work with a reduced number of students, together with the students' high level of motivation towards learning, truly made it much more easier to fulfil all my expectations. The reduced class made me carry out a personalized work, giving me the chance to keep good track of each student's progresses, as well as having a clear picture of each student's weaknesses and strengths.

XIII. PROJECTIONS

During the four months working with the class I realized that students will feel tiresome and demotivated to write unless the teacher can offer them different kinds of foregoing activities. Brookes and Grundy's integrated approach really suited the students and gave them the opportunity to get involved with the writing task. Some students do not

like writing for the simple reason that thinking what to express can be tiresome for them. A previous discussion or reading a text on a certain topic gave them the bases for having something to write about.

A teaching strategy that took place during the project was to assign students to work on a task in pairs or small groups. They also enjoyed collaborative group work because it provided the opportunity for writing, rewriting or enriching their writings according to a partner's opinions. Research on group/pair has shown that such classroom organization promotes speaking practice and negotiations of meaning.

After analyzing the results, which clearly shows an improvement, I concur with Krashen, who states that practice in writing is related to improvement in writing. During the project I tried to get as much as written work as possible from the students, and every time they had the chance to practice they got better, some with better improvements others with a little less, but improvement after all.

Furthermore, I can add that feedback is essential in writing tasks. It is not enough to correct the students' writing and hand them in. It is essential that teachers give themselves time to talk to each student, to let them know about their weaknesses as well as their strengths. If teachers lack the time to apprise each student into their mistakes, they must allow learners some time to work on corrections, perhaps by asking them to rewrite their compositions.

All in all, I dare to say that the students benefited with the project will be capable of achieving satisfactory results, whether in the IGCSE writing part or the FCE (First Certificate in Education) writing part. Not only when having to write a letter but also when writing any kind of text, such as an essay, an article, a report, etc. as they have acquired basic mechanisms that can be applied to any piece of text. They have gained an understanding on:

- 1 how to plan a written task before writing the final version,

- 2 paragraph structure,
- 3 formal style of writing,
- 4 a variety of new lexis that is required in formal writing.

As a conclusion of this project I would like to give a message to future teacher concerning the role of the educator in the 21st century. We must not forget that not only it is important to teach content to our students, but also to teach them how to be good and productive human beings, transmitting values and principle that would help them grow as well-formed individuals, so that the end they can contribute to our society.

“The aim of education is the knowledge not of fact, but of values”

Dean William R. Inge

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DIAGNOSTIC TEST

Name: _____

Group: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

LETTERS

I) Identify the type of letter. Write the type of letter given in the box below with each text.

II) Formal and informal style

In **1-10** below, decide which of the two sentences, **a** or **b**, is written in a more informal style and put a tick (☑) next to it.

- 1** **a** Firstly, as I'm not an experienced skier, I'd like to know how many green runs there are.
b Firstly, owing to the fact that I am not an experienced skier, I am particularly interested to know how many green runs there are.
- 2** **a** And can you remember if the skis cost a lot to hire?
b In addition to this, could you give me some information on the cost of equipment hire?
- 3** **a** I am writing in response to the advertisement you sent me about skiing in Nevis Range.
b Thanks for sending me the advert about skiing in Nevis Range.
- 4** **a** Finally, I only intend to spend three days skiing. I would therefore like to know whether I would benefit from having classes.
b Finally, I'm only planning to go skiing for three days, so I'd like to know if you think it's worth having classes.
- 5** **a** Thank you in anticipation for your help. I look forward to hearing from you soon.
b Thanks for all your help. Write back soon.
- 6** **a** I wanted to ask you some question about cost, as well.
b In addition, I would like to have further details about costs.
- 7** **a** However, before I book, I would be grateful if you could answer some queries which I have.
b But before I book, there are a few things I'd like to ask you.
- 8** **a** Does the resort employ fully qualified instructors?
b I suppose it depends on the instructors – were they good?
- 9** **a** It sounds just the sort of place I'm looking for.
b I feel it would be particularly suited to my needs.
- 10** **a** Do you think I'd save much by getting the bus from London instead of the train?
b In your opinion, would the cost of the bus travel from London be a great deal cheaper than a train journey?

THE RUBRIC FOR THE DIAGNOSTIC TEST

ITEM 1: Identifying the type of letter. Students have to match the types of letters with the appropriate letters. One mark for each correct answer.

TOTAL: 7 marks

ITEM 2 Identifying formal and informal style of writing. This item has three parts:

- 1 **Part 1:** contains 20 sentences divided in two sentences each. Among each two sentences, students have to identify the one that is written in an informal style. One point for each correct answer. Total number of marks 10.
- 2 **Part 2:** contains 10 sentences written in formal and informal style. Among the 10 sentences there are 2 stating the same thing, however one is written in formal style and the other in informal style. Students have to match 5 pairs of sentences. Then they have to identify the best category for each pair. This part has a total of 10 marks.
- 3 **Part 3:** Finally, there are key words or expressions underlined in each sentence. Students identify the ones written in a formal way and then relate them to a word or expression in informal style. This part has 8 marks.

TOTAL: 28 marks

ITEM 3: To identify the parts of a letter. This item has two parts:

- 1 **Part 1:** contains 10 sentences. Students have to rearranged the sentences so that the letter is written in a coherent way. It has a total of 10 marks, one point for each correct answer.

- 2 **Part 2:** contains a paragraph plan with 5 categories. Students have to match the previous sentences into the correct categories. It has a total of 10 marks, one point for each correct answer.

TOTAL: 20 marks

ITEM 4: writing an informal letter. The aspects that were considered are as followed:

1) **Content** (points students should have include in the letter)

- 1 The kind of tings you normally do on Christmas
- 2 What's the weather like in that time of the year
- 3 Cloths your friend should bring
- 4 The plans you have for when your friend comes to visit

2) **Organization and cohesion**

- 4 Early reference to why you are writing
- 5 Clear organization of points
- 6 Suitable opening and closing phrase

3) **Appropriacy of Register and Format**

- 1 Informal Letter

4) **Accuracy and range**

- 2 Language appropriate for giving information
- 3 Vocabulary relevant to the information given and asked for
- 4 Correct use of sentences

5) **Target Reader**

(If the reader was well informed)

(If the reader enjoyed reading the letter)

TOTAL: 24 marks

ITEM 5: writing a formal letter (transactional letter). The aspects that were considered are as followed:

1) Content (points students should have include in the letter)

- 5 Cheaper by bus
- 6 How many easy runs?
- 7 Are daily classes useful?
- 8 Are the instructors good?
- 9 Cost of the ski hire

2) Organization and cohesion

- 7 Early reference to why you are writing
- 8 Clear organization of points
- 9 Suitable opening and closing phrase

3) Appropriacy of Register and Format

- 5 Formal Letter

4) Accuracy and range

- 6 Language appropriate for asking for information
- 7 Vocabulary relevant to the information given and asked for
- 8 Correct use of sentences

5) Target Reader

(Positive or negative effect in the target reader)

TOTAL: 26 marks

In item 4 and 5, according to the level of achievement in each aspect considered, the evaluation was carried out the following way:

- 1 Fully achieved = 2 marks
- 2 Reasonably achieved = 1 mark
- 3 Inadequate attempt = 0 marks

NAME: _____

Transactional Letter

You are organizing an adventure weekend holiday for a group of friends. You have seen the advertisement below, but you need to know more. Using the notes you have made, write to Adventure Weekend, giving relevant details and asking for further information.

Write a **letter** between **120** and **180** words in an appropriate style. Do not write any addresses. Write your letter in a separate answer sheet.

APPENDIX 4: RUBRIC FOR FINAL TEST

Writing a formal letter (transactional letter). The aspects that were considered are as followed:

| 1) Content (points students should have include in the letter) | MARKS |
|---|--------------|
| 10 Cheaper by bus | (1) |
| 11 How many easy runs? | (1) |
| 12 Are daily classes useful? | (1) |
| 13 Are the instructors good? | (1) |
| 14 Cost of the ski hire | (2) |
| 2) Organization and cohesion | |
| 10 Early reference to why you are writing | (2) |
| 11 Clear organization of points | (2) |
| 12 Suitable opening and closing phrase | (2) |
| 3) Appropriacy of Register and Format | |
| 9 Formal Letter | (2) |
| 4) Accuracy and range | |
| 10 Language appropriate for asking for information | (4) |
| 11 Vocabulary relevant to the information given and asked for | (2) |
| 12 Correct use of sentences | (2) |

5) Target Reader

(Positive or negative effect in the target reader)

(2)

TOTAL: 24 marks

According to the level of achievement in each aspect considered, the evaluation was carried out the following way:

4 Fully achieved = 2 marks