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TITTLE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPELLING SKILL
IN ENGLISH IN CLASS 6th A FROM JOSE ANTONIO
ECHEVERRIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MAJOR PAPER

LICENCIATURA EN EDUCACIÓN: ESPECIALIDAD
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Abstract

This paper presents a proposal of a system of activities to develop the spelling skill in English in class 6th A from José A. Echeverría elementary school, which offers education to students with sports talents. The proposal has been conceived taking into account the theoretical and methodological bases put together by the author, the results of a learning diagnosis conducted in Class 6th A at this school, as well as the experiences of implementing a preliminary proposal of the activities.

This research has been conducted using a variety of theoretical, empirical and statistical methods, which were used in light of Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

1. Introduction

Cuba develops a variety of cooperation programs with third world countries in the field of medicine, sports, science, technology and education, which demand the mastery of foreign languages on the part of Cuban professionals. This is one of the reasons why among the foreign languages which are taught in Cuba English is a priority, because it is spoken in many countries around the world.

The social and educational programs of the Revolution have been increasing and internationalist cooperation has reached an unprecedented stage. English allows Cuban specialists to interact with people from English-speaking countries where internationalist cooperation is being carried out.

For this reason, in Cuba since elementary education, English is taught, taking advantage of the fact that children can learn foreign languages fairly easily, as experience proves in many other parts of the world, where children grow up speaking two or more languages. The English program in elementary school lays the foundation for the students to go on learning English in junior and senior high school.

The teaching of English in elementary education in Cuba aims at preparing students to communicate orally and in writing at an elementary level, and at the same time instruction should help as a means to strengthen values that may favor the establishment of cultural ties with the English-speaking countries, by studying some of their customs and traditions.

Since September 2014, the author of this research has been doing her practicum teaching English at “José Antonio Echeverría” elementary school in Santa Clara. This is a school with a population of students with outstanding sports talent, who attend this school in order to complete their general education and at the same time to specialize in a particular sports for competition purposes.

During the two years that the author of this research has taught at “José Antonio Echeverría” elementary school, she has noticed through observation and group discussions that on the whole, these students show little motivation toward

English and thus their learning of English is below the scope of the objectives set in the subject's program, both in the speaking and writing components.

Particularly in the case of writing, the author of this research has diagnosed through pedagogical tests that these students lack control of phoneme-grapheme correspondences, and thus tend to write what they hear in terms of their mother tongue's referent. This situation is serious, given the fact that these students need to have a command of the written language for them to be able to study out of class what they have learned orally.

However, through observations, interviews and a pedagogical text given to these students, the author found that writing is the skill less frequently dealt with. In addition, an analysis of the 6th grade workbook showed that this material does not provide enough activities to deal with spelling skill and the topics that are included are general; in other words, they do not address fully the sports topic, which may help to increase students' motivation.

The bibliography consulted in order to find a scientific solution to the problem shows a concern with the development of writing abilities in English in the context of Cuban education. For example, Artiles Echavarría L.(2007) proposes a system of exercises to develop writing abilities in 7th graders at "Ricardo Zenón" Secondary School, with an emphasis on guided and free writing, and Nodarse González N. (2010) proposes a didactic strategy to develop writing activities in the 1st Level students from the Language School from Villa Clara.

As may be seen, the previous authors carried out their research in contexts other than elementary school and at the same time, they focused their attention on helping their students to communicate in writing through the medium of English.

Particularly in the context of teaching English to elementary school, Farias Pérez A. (2013) proposes a system of exercises to develop spelling skill in 5th grade students at "13 de Marzo" Elementary School. Also, Correa Restrepo L (2013) describes a similar situation in the development of her students' phoneme-grapheme correspondence skills, this author proposed a system of spelling activities like games, competitions, and artistic creation, trying to involve all of the students' senses in the learning process, which she applied and validated

with 6th grade students at “Ramón Pando Ferrer” elementary school in Santa Clara.

All of the proposals listed above may contribute ideas that may be applicable in other elementary school classes with other students; however, what works well in one school, with a particular class, is not necessarily effective with other students from other schools, that is why, language methodologists have claimed that methodology should be adapted to match each particular learning and teaching contexts in which teachers are involved.

This problematic situation in the teaching of English at “José Antonio Echeverría” elementary school presents a contradiction between the goals established in the English program, which include writing, the fairly poor results that are being reached and the lack of suitable teaching materials that are needed to suit the particular needs of 6th grade students from this school, which specializes in sports.

The above problematic situation led to the following **scientific problem**:

How to contribute to the development of spelling skill in English in class 6thA from José A. Echeverría elementary school?

In order to solve this problem the **object** of this research is the teaching-learning process of instrumental writing in a foreign language with children. And more particularly, the research focuses on this **field of action**: The development of spelling skill in English as a foreign language in the context of elementary education in Cuba.

The research **objective** is to propose a system of activities to develop the spelling skill in English in class 6th A from José A. Echeverría elementary school.

The following **scientific questions** have guided this research:

1. What are the theoretical-methodological bases that support the teaching of spelling in English as a foreign language with children?
2. What is the current state of the development of the spelling skill in the sixth grade students chosen to participate in this research?

3. What works well and what does not work well during the application of a preliminary proposal of spelling activities?
4. What scientific results emerge from the application and evaluation of the preliminary proposal of activities?

In order to fulfill the research objective these **scientific tasks** were completed:

1. Establishment of the theoretical-methodological bases for the teaching of spelling skill within the teaching-learning process of instrumental writing with children.
2. Diagnosis of 6thA students' current state of the development of spelling skill.
3. Application of a preliminary proposal of spelling activities and evaluation of the transformations.
4. Presentation of a proposal of spelling activities based on the results of the intervention carried out in practice.

The research was carried out following a qualitative approach, supported by the following methods and techniques:

From the theoretical level

- **The historic - logical:** it was used to analyze different methods and approaches in the treatment of spelling and the teaching learning process.
- **The analytic - synthetic:** It was applied during the study of the problematic situation and the study of different bibliographical sources containing information about the development of spelling skill in English as a foreign language in elementary school students and in the analysis the information collected during the diagnosis stage.
- **The inductive - deductive:** It favored the study of the strengths and weaknesses of the preliminary proposal of a didactic unit for the development of the spelling skill in English in 6th grade subjects, as it was being applied in practice, and as a result, it helped to come up with a finished proposal that may suit the students from "José A. Echeverría" elementary school in Santa Clara.

- **The systemic approach:** it was used to model the didactic unit object that was being constructed along the process of its application in practice.

From the empirical level

In order to collect all the necessary empirical data to support the proposal of spelling activities, the following methods and techniques were applied: participant observation, interview, survey, pedagogical test, document analysis, and teacher's diary and teacher reflections; group discussion, triangulation and analysis of the students' learning outcomes.

From the statistic- mathematical level

- **Percentage analysis:** to process the empirical information obtained through the application of the instruments during the process of building up the proposal.

The subjects of the research:

This research was carried in "José Antonio Echeverría" Elementary School, specifically in class 6thA, with 20 students because the author was appointed to teach this class as part of her teaching practicum.

Practical Contribution

This paper proposes a system of activities for the treatment of spelling skill within the teaching- learning process of instrumental writing in class 6thA, which may provide teachers of English working with students who specialize in sports, with a guide to treat the students' needs and interests and to stimulate them to use writing as an important instrument in the teaching-learning process of English.

2. Rationale for the development of the spelling skill in English as a foreign language in the context of elementary education in Cuba.

Historically writing has been neglected compared with speaking, listening and reading. In ancient times, for instance Plato stated that "speaking is superior to writing because speaking allows one to grasp the truth" (Raimes198:141). In addition, he claimed that, writing, as a communicative action, only dictates, edits, and revises spoken words, but does not convey truth. He went on to affirm that, in writing, words are manipulated in the sense that it leaves the readers to have their own interpretations and supposes that writing, compared to speaking is a minor activity.

This belief has not totally disappeared even today. The primacy of speaking has influenced linguistic studies and has come to minimize the importance of writing. According to Raimes (1983), the audio-lingual method influenced a lot in second language learning. This method put an emphasis on developing listening and speaking skills by listening to utterances and repeating them as fast as native speakers uttered them. This approach claimed that people normally learn their languages in a spoken form rather than in a written form; therefore, quite naturally, listening and speaking were placed before reading and writing. It is reasonable to assume that the concept behind this approach is that speech was dominant, and writing was regarded as a secondary resource and not a main goal of language learning.

From the historical standpoint of writing, the 1960s have been considered a revolutionary age because writing began to be one of the researchers' objects, and teacher's attention. Writing was conceived as a means of recording students' speech and a support for the learning of speech because the technology for recording had not fully developed before the 1960s. During that time writing gained much more attention because writing was necessary to learn with the forms of the language.

The tendency to neglect writing has continued even after the communicative approach was developed. For instance, Littlewood (1981) identifies learners as speakers and describes communication commonly as oral activities such as discussions and role-playing activities, although he does not entirely ignore communication through writing.

Writing is a communicative process, which involves the writer, the reader and the text. Writing is a language skill that is productive and interactive. It is productive since the writer encodes a message using a graphic and orthographic system: the written word; and it is interactive because the message is written to be read by the reader(s) using a written text as the way or channel of interaction.

Writing is a very important skill in all context where a foreign language is being taught, even when the main goal is oral communication because it can be a means to study out of the class (Antich, 1975).

For this reason writing has been considered an important skill with this role of writing the teacher has a tool to provide the students with written practice of grammar and vocabulary either in class or out of class. In addition, teachers may ask the students to write what they can say orally before they are asked to speak. In this way writing functions as scaffolding for the students to gain control of the form of the language and their use at the text level.

Writing can be an end in itself in a foreign language context. This entails asking students to produce real life written texts either to present information or interact with an audience through writing. For instance the students may be asked to write a biodata which they have to present to the students organization during elections, or the students may be asked to write different types or genre in order to interact with other people, such as: messages, letters, e-mails, tweets and so on.

Being able to communicate in writing demands that the students have a command of a number of enabling skills, such as:

1. Produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.
2. Produce writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.
3. Produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns.
4. Use acceptable grammatical system (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralisation), patterns, and rules.
5. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.
6. Use cohesive device in writing discourse.
7. Use a rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse.

8. Appropriately accomplish the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose.
9. Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization and exemplification.
10. Distinguish between literal and implied meaning when writing.
11. Correctly convey culturally specific reference in the context of the written text.
12. Develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing the audience's interpretation, using pre-writing devices, writing with fluency in the first drafts, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing. (Brown H., 1994)

As may be seen, three very basic skills that students need to practice have to do with spelling in connection with pronunciation, and the production of vocabulary and the use of grammar in context.

These three goals can be turned into objectives for English as a foreign language in elementary school in Cuba. In this way writing may become an aid for the students to study and learn more in and out of class and this may impact positively the development of speaking skills as well.

According to Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, spelling is "the forming of words from letters according to accepted usage: ORTHOGRAPHY; also: the letters composing a word." (1987 p.840)

In the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, spelling is settled as orthography, [...] "term used for (1) general spelling (2) for correct or standard spelling. For some languages, the orthography is based on generally accepted usage and it is not prescribed by an official body." [...] Like the term "spelling" itself, the term orthography is more likely to be used of alphabetic writing than of syllabic writing, and is unlikely to be used for ideographic writing." (Richards J, 1985)

The graphic system of the language is formed by letters, numbers, and marks like the apostrophe in English. From the linguistic point of view, writing is more

than the representation of oral language: the letters represent the sounds and it is very important to know that this does not happen on the contrary; that is to say, that sounds do not represent letters.

No language is spoken the same way it is written which means that none is strictly phonetic in its written form but there are some in which pronunciation and graphemes coincide more than in others which is not the case of English.

There are always differences between the oral and the written code, which are shown in the following aspects:

- Phonetic-orthographic differences: That is, lack of correspondence between phonemes and graphemes.
- Differences between the prosodic elements and the punctuation marks.
- Differences between oral and written grammar.
- Differences between alphabets or other graphic signs.

The teaching of some essential issues of the written code is extremely important to the students in order to:

- learn how to write the letters and other components of the graphic system correctly.
- establish the correspondences with the sounds and other prosodic aspects.
- learn and apply orthographic rules.
- express what they know in a written way.
- learn how to write a brief letter, postcard, message, to fill a simple schedule, etc., according to the objectives and characteristic of the course.

Teaching the students how to establish phoneme- grapheme correspondence includes different forms of spelling knowledge have been identified:

- Phonological knowledge: how words sound
- Visual knowledge: how words look
- Morphemic knowledge: how words change form
- Etymological knowledge: where words come from.

These forms of knowledge will make the student understand and use the correct spelling of words. (Correa R, 2013)

In line with this ideas Jeremy Harmer, (2001:196) suggest that "... the fact that there is not complete one to one correspondence between letters and phonemes causes many problems for learners". This implies that teachers need to bring exercises that teach sound-spelling correspondence for particular spelling. In other words spelling has to be related with pronunciation teaching.

One important strategy in teaching spelling is to help the learners develop language awareness for example, "when students work on different phonemes we need to draw their attention to the common spelling of those phonemes. We would also get them to look at different ways of pronouncing the same letter (or combination of letter) or have them do exercises to discover spelling rules" (op.cit:256)

Phonemic awareness is when a child is able to recognize and distinguish the sounds in words and then have the ability to translate these sounds into print. When a student can do this they will have a much easier time learning to spell and read. The perfect activity that will help develop phonemic awareness is to teach rhyming. As you read, point out rhymes and periodically stop and have students try to guess what word is coming next in the rhyme. This will help students develop their phonemic awareness skills which will in turn help them learn to spell. (<http://www.k12reader.com/using-reading-to-build-spelling-skills/>)

Another important strategy is to have students practice spell words. The students may be asked to discover spelling patterns using a variety of exercises such as the following:

Play word sort: Discuss the spelling pattern of the week and have students cut out words and sort them.

Put up in a board: Each week create a board that reflects the spelling pattern for that week. The students' task is to create as many words as they can with the letters on the board.

Use a plastic egg: Take a plastic egg and, on the left half of the egg, write a few letters, and then on the other half of the egg, write the ending of the word. For example, the left half would be the letters, *t, s, p*, and then the right half would be the ending of the word *in*. So the students would be able to turn the egg and see the pattern *tin, sin, pin*, etc.

Create booklet: students create their own booklet each time they learn a new spelling pattern. Then they can use these books as a reference when reading or spelling unknown words.

Spelling stairs: Have students write their spelling word one letter at a time like the example below.

S

Si

Sig

Sigh

Sight

Roll the dice: Have students write their spelling word once in pencil. Then they must roll a die to determine how many times they must trace the word with a different colored crayon.

Create a story: Students must use all of their spelling words to create a story.

Spelling scramble: Students must correctly unscramble all of their spelling words.

Newspaper spelling: Each week as part of their spelling practice, students must search a newspaper and highlight each spelling word they find.

(<http://www.k12reader.com/using-reading-to-build-spelling-skills/>)

Students should have a considerable amount of practice, because it is the key to achieve spelling accuracy.

According to Antich (1975) there are two main activities to achieve the spelling objective: dictation and copying. Dictation places all students in a “dictation state” in which the words are managed by the professor previously, so the variable word can be controlled to will, according to the purposes and objectives whose execution he/she wants to verify; also in dictation important resources intervene: listening intelligence, analysis and memory.

Dictation is easy to carry out, to revise and evaluate. Copying is particularly useful as remedial work for weak spellers, provided that the teacher directs students’ attention to the type of errors they have been making, tells the students how to remedy them, and checks students’ copies afterwards. Otherwise, they may copy wrongly, because they keep “seeing” the spelling they imagine, E.g. *carpinter* instead of *carpenter*, *mecanic* instead of *mechanic*, *responsable* instead of *responsible*... This occurs because when students copy they do not really look at every letter, but rather retain the whole word and write it down from immediate memory.

In conducting the teaching learning process of writing the role of the teacher is to:

- Find interesting and relevant writing activities.
- Adequate the writing activity to the students’ level.
- Decide how best to present the activities.
- Prepare the students to accomplish the activities.
- Provide sufficient guidance and control during the activities.
- Provide correction and suggestions for improvement after completion of the activities.

A third strategy that a teacher may use in order to help their students develop their phoneme- grapheme correspondence skill is correcting the students writing and providing them with feedback. Correction may take a form of teacher correction, peer- correction or self- correction. It is important for the teacher to pass the responsibility of correcting the students spelling mistakes on to them gradually. In this way they will become autonomous learners. This is particularly crucial in overpopulation classes such as those you may find in Cuban context.

With respect to feedback, “[it]... encompasses not only correcting students, but also offering them an assessment of how well they have done...” (Harmer J., 2001:99)

3. Diagnosis of the 6th grade students' current state of the development of spelling skill

Since November 24th in this academic year the author of this research continued her practicum at “José A Echeverría” elementary school located in the center of the city, with a group of students with similar characteristics to the previous year.

The subjects participating in the research were 20 students from Class 6th A from this school who are students with outstanding sports talent. They show a common interest about sports. This fact is very good when the students work together in order to learn English. According to Lic.Pérez Martín L.M et al, (2004) children from 6 to 10-12 years old are motivated about school, present a good attitude to study and they are restless. The students from “José Antonio Echeverría” Elementary School present the same characteristics.

As a way of corroborating the problematic situation described in the introduction several empirical methods were applied to obtain as much information as possible about the students' weaknesses and strengths regarding their spelling skill.

The following methods used:

- Pedagogical test: to measure the level of spelling skill at the beginning of this research and along the process of application of the preliminary proposal.
- Survey to students: To obtain information about the 6th students' interests and opinions with respect to spelling/writing skills.
- Document analysis: to analyze the 6th grade program to know what is officially stated with respect to spelling within the teaching-learning process of instrumental writing. Also, the students' workbooks were analyzed in order to find out what is available in it terms spelling activities.
- Interview to teachers of English: to collect information about the strategies the teachers use in order to enhance their students' spelling skill in English.

The methodology followed to carry out the diagnosis included these actions:

- Designing two pedagogical tests on this basis, to be administered to Class A, 6th grade
- Designing a holistic rating scale to grade the results
- Applying and processing the results on the basis of the holistic rating scales.
- Applying a survey of interests and opinions to the students.
- Exploring the causes that may be acting on the results of the students learning of spelling in English by interviewing the teachers and analyzing the available teaching materials.
- Identifying the needs to be addressed with these students in terms of writing.

The tests that were applied had these characteristics: (Appendix 1 and 2)

- Test 1 consisted in dictating three times to the students a paragraph with personal information
- Test 2 consisted in the teacher writing a sentence on a board and reading it aloud to the students, and asking the students to repeat it. Then they had to write sentences like the example using their personal information, answering the question “what about you?”

Development of spelling skill in English in 6th grade students from “José A. Echeverría” elementary school:

In order to evaluate the students’ spelling skill a pedagogical test was applied (See Appendix 1 and 2 Pedagogical Tests)

The results were processed and quantified and then they were interpreted (Appendix 1 and 2). They showed that only 5 students out of 20 had a good command of the phoneme-grapheme correspondences in English, with respect to contents that they had dealt with orally, up to the moment when the tests were administered. This meant that the majority of them (15 students) had a very limited command of this basic goal of writing, or they had no command of it at all.

This does not mean that these students were not capable of making progress in this area of EFL, but rather that they needed more practice and pedagogical attention in general.

Analyzing these results the authoress came to the conclusion that students needed practice in establishing phoneme-grapheme correspondences correctly. More precisely, they needed to be helped to find patterns of phoneme-grapheme correspondences, with an emphasis on the vowels; they also needed to be given practice in listening to a model speaker and in reading aloud, as well as taking dictation and doing written practice on grammar and vocabulary.

Survey to students

A 100% to students like English lessons and they refer that it is fun because they can play games in class and listen songs.

Concerning the topics, most of them (16 out of 20) referred sports, music and games; with respect to the types of lesson activities 16 of them chose play games and acting roles.

Concerning their opinions with respect to writing lessons most of them (16 out of 20) consider that the writing lessons are motivated and that the activities that the teacher brings are varied.

Finally, they suggested that the teacher bring more games, that they work on class discipline and that the English lessons should not be interrupted by other teachers.

Results of document analysis

These results reflect the flaws that are present in the workbook. This can be said because the authoress of this research made an analysis that provided her with the following regularities:

- Writing is dealt with indirectly, as the students are asked to do grammar and vocabulary activities in writing.

- In the workbook writing is not dealt with explicitly so as to develop in the students an awareness of the phoneme-grapheme correspondence.
- Activities such as dictation and reading aloud are not found in the workbook.
- In the workbook it is not specified which type of text students are going to write.

The analysis of the subject program revealed that:

- The objectives do not conceive clearly the writing ability. The concern is more directed to the speaking skill, and giving less importance to the other communicative abilities.

The interview with the teachers yielded the following results: (Appendix 7)

- Teachers just use spelling only as the last resource to complement the teaching-learning process. It is only used if any content needs it and rarely as a means to consolidate the students' vocabulary.
- Teachers normally use a limited repertoire of activities.
- Teachers normally do not tend to adapt the activities provided in the workbook.
- Teachers only use the regular materials despite the fact that they can use different sources.

In conclusion, the teaching of the spelling skill not conceived systemically in the teaching of English to sixth graders at the school where this research was carried out, which is a serious handicap in the learning of English for elementary school children in the Cuban context, for a variety of reasons:

- Students receive classes once a week with an oral approach which does not enable them to study at home
- Since they are not taught how to write what they can say orally, the students tend to create their own patterns of phoneme-grapheme correspondence through their mother tongue referent, which fossilizes and is difficult to get rid of with the passage of time
- This takes away the opportunity for writing to help reinforce speaking and create the basis for reading comprehension

4. Results of the application of the preliminary proposal of activities in practice

Along the research process the authoress of this paper started to apply some of the activities that she designed or collected preliminarily, and using an observation sheet, she kept a record of what worked well and what didn't work so well. On this basis the following reflections were gathered, which allowed the authoress to arrive at a final proposal of activities.

In this phase of the research the following empirical methods and techniques were used:

- Participant observation: To follow up on the development of students' spelling skill during the class and to keep track of the students' participation and behavior in class.
- Teacher diary and teacher reflections: To collect information concerning what worked well and what needed a change, as the preliminary proposal was being applied with the subjects chosen for this research.
- Document analysis: to analyze retrospectively the preliminary proposal of spelling activities that was applied at school.
- Analysis of the students' learning outcomes: Along the process the researcher analyzed, the marks given to her students' written assignments as learning reports, every four weeks, and compared these marks with the results of the initial diagnosis.

The methodology used for this phase included these steps:

- Analysing the data recorded in the teacher diary and reflections.
- Identifying themes that came up in the diary data.
- Categorizing all the information obtained through the different tools according to the themes.
- Interpreting the data using triangulation.
- Producing a narrative report with quotes as evidence of the regularities that were found during the process of implementation of the preliminary proposal of activities.

Categorization of the information into themes

1. Motivation: Class topics and techniques used; success in learning by scaffolding the less able students, and using evaluation as a means to motivate participation.

From the very beginning of this experience, a key concern for me as a teacher and researcher was to increase the students' motivation.

For this reason, I put together a group of activities dealing with topics such as sports and personal information, which do respond to the needs and interests of the target students; namely, students who are in elementary school and are athletes.

The critical analysis of the preliminary proposal of activities also showed that with respect to the types of activities planned, it is evident that there is a great variety of techniques used (twelve in all). The fact that the activities initially provide practice in vocabulary and grammar is considered a significant strength of the preliminary proposal, because it helps to reinforce the students' background knowledge, both linguistic and world knowledge.

Critical reflection upon the data gathered in the diary (Appendix 12) allowed me to conclude that selecting topics and techniques suitable for these students was a teaching strategy that I used in order to increase motivation in my students. The following quotes from the diary are evidence that this is crucial:

"The students showed a lot of motivation toward English lessons, maybe because I changed them and now they could have a new teacher with another view point, also because I use a new element of motivation and mix it with other communicative functions..."

"The students accomplished the exercises very well but at times they lost motivation because ... they are so active and being writing all the time is boring ..."

"This day ... I created some activities which the students were comfortable with. I realized that they were more motivated about the lesson today."

"They were so happy singing the song every time I played it they worked very well and they did all the activities. Finally they stood up to sing the song and the part of the song that says Come on! One, two, three, four and We're going to win they shouted it, I think because it was the easiest part. "

Another motivational teaching strategy that I used was promoting success in learning in all the students by scaffolding (Applebee, 1986) the less able students in and out of class. For this reason I began to appoint mentors to this kind of students and created additional material such as photocopies handouts, pictures and cards. This idea can be traced in my diary:

“I could see that in the class there are 3 students that have some difficulties to learn ... I used another strategy, I moved the class in order to create new couples and I appoint some mentors to the students; I put them with students who learn quickly and have a disposition to help them.”

“As in the previous lesson, the students showed a good participation most of them wanted to be evaluated and the ones who did it wrong received help from the rest of the class...”

Here is a critical incident that occurred in one of my lessons which chose my concern with promoting success in learning and scaffolding the less able students:

“... one of the students that had some problems did not work like the other ones, he was in silence most of the time, he did the activity but I could see that he was somehow afraid to say something wrong, I went to his chair and I checked if he is doing well...”

At time went by, I observed that the self-esteem began to increase as it is reflected in the following quote from my diary:

“This time they helped each other in order to win and they felt strong, they felt motivated because they could choose the words and this is a good point because they had to be ready to choose the difficult words.”

Reflecting of these decisions I realized that they were very helpful in dealing with the challenge of keeping this class busy and under control. On the one hand, appointing the more able students as mentors help to make them feel important in class; and on the other hand, scaffolding the less able ones to be successful in learning prevented them from disturbing my lessons.

A third motivational teaching strategy that I used was resorting to evaluation as a tool to promote extrinsic motivation (Harmer J., 2005 p.p. 51-54) in class. This strategy had positive and negative effect in my classes. A positive effect was that the students participate more because they wanted to be evaluated. This can be found in the following quote from my diary:

“The students liked this activity, they showed motivation, all of them wanted to participate and be evaluated...”

However, a negative effect of resorting to evaluation as a motivational tool was the fact that at times, the able students would stop helping the less able ones, as is seen in this quote from my diary:

“This activity went well over all. However, only one of the students that had difficulties could do the activity alone, the other two of them needed their mentors but something strange happened today. So I had to ask their mentors did not want to help them too much because they wanted to be winners and I asked them to help these students about two or three times. ”

This situation may be solved by promoting cooperative learning in which small groups are made responsible for the learning of all the members in the teams and are evaluated accordingly.

Despite the fact that most of the activities worked well in class the retrospective of the preliminary proposal showed that not all the activities lead the students to practice the language in writing, saying orally what they have written and looking for spelling patterns systematically. I realized that this was happening in my classes as I went deeper into the bibliographical revision, while building the theoretical framework for my research. This is recorded in my diary toward the end of the intervention in the class that I was teaching.

“Also I wanted the students to find regularities about the sounds but it was difficult for them, maybe because spaces in white do not propitiate regularities.”

2. Discipline: Group organization and the nature of activities.

Keeping control of discipline in class 6th A was a huge challenge for me as a beginning teaching. Along the process of working with this particular class I realized that many activities work well or not so well depending how the class is

conducted by the teacher and more particularly how the teacher manages class organization.

Initially, some of the activities that I had planned were conceived to be developed in two large groups in plenary, but I realized that practice was not intensive for everybody. For this reason I decided to organize the class most of the times in small groups of three or four students assigning different roles to the members of the teams such as team leader and monitor. This decision resorted in more opportunities for scaffolding the less able students and more intensity of practice.

The issue outlined before can be found in my diary. Here are some examples:

“I think that in order to control discipline it is necessary not to divide the class into two large teams but maybe into four smaller teams. I try doing this in the next class and it worked well.”

“Most of the students paid attention to the dictation because they had to remember and associate sounds... this activity went well with respect to discipline because the students had to focus on what they wrote.”

“I think I will organize the class in two teams just at the beginning but I will appoint some students as leaders of each team this decision may imply that I will have to ask them to change seats.”

“Working in large groups is very difficult with this kind of students because they are very active and they lose control easily and most of the times I lose the group control...”

“...group work did not go as well as I wanted because they behave themselves when checking the mistakes they hardly worked.”

Another factor that has an effect on students' behaviors according to the experience that I achieved through this research is the nature of the activities that are brought to class by the teacher. One such case is games in which there is only one winner. Indiscipline occurs because the students get so enthusiastic and so willing to win and the class gets out of hand. This is particularly true about class 6th A at “José A Echeverría” elementary school because they are athletes and as much they have a “micro-culture” of wining. Faced with this

reality, I decided to adapt games so that they could be winning teams and not just one student winner. Here is evidence of this issue from my diary:

“Lack of discipline was a factor against this activity, because they wanted to talk, see and say what their partners had in the carts given. This happened because it was a competition and all of them wanted to win and they did not feel good when the winner was proclaimed because they did not know how to lose.”

“In this opportunity I decided to do another kind of game in order to put an end to some behaviors that my students had... This time I chose for a game in which they share in groups and where not only one person would win, instead they should work together and the best team would win...”

3. Students' learning results with respect to the spelling skill:

In order to keep track of development of students spelling skill I used as methods participant observation and analysis of the students' learning outcomes. The results of the information gathered allowed me to give qualitative marks to the students periodically, based on holistic rating scales (Appendix #1) At the beginning most of the students had many mistakes in phoneme-grapheme correspondence. I wanted to create some activities that responded to their needs, making them communicative, and I thought that this purpose was achieved because I could see in every lesson that my students interacted with one another.

As I said previously, I had some students with difficulties not only in English but also in some other subjects. These students sat together but I changed their seats and I appointed a mentor for each of them. Coincidentally, the other teachers realized that the changes that I had made were right and now these students were in a better position to develop not only their abilities in English but also in the rest of the subjects.

I consider that the whole class made considerable progress and this may be seen in the way they actively participated in class and in the results of the spelling test that they were given along the process. The charts in Appendix # 10 show that 16 students out of 17 made progress in the development of the

spelling skill. It is significant to consider that the three less able students from the group made progress as well.

To sum up this phase, the following regularities were found:

- The selection of the topics and the types of activities included in the preliminary proposal in general worked well with a class 6th A
- The fact that the same activities started providing practice in Grammar and Vocabulary is strength of the preliminary activities because this helps to activate the students' background knowledge and thus the students can focus on spelling with better bases.
- Along the process the author realized that all the activities conceived initially needed revisions in order to make sure that the students are encouraged to find phoneme- grapheme regularities.
- Whether the activities function well or not is not granted only by the quality that they show as a plan but also, by the way they are managed in the classroom.
- The students learning of the spelling skill improved considerably along the process of intervention.

4. A system of activities to develop the spelling skill in English in class 6th

A from José A. Echeverría elementary school

The rationale for the proposal

Considering the difficulties identified through the application of a pedagogical test regarding spelling within the teaching-learning process of instrumental writing, a system of activities was created, which responds to the objectives of the educational level and the current changes that have been happening since some years ago: a teaching-learning process centered on the students' needs.

The proposal is based on the dialectic-materialistic conception of language that explains its social origin and its role as an important element of knowledge and communication. It includes the precepts of the Communicative approach, in which the students are an active beings and able to self-control and self-monitoring the process in which they learn through motivation and interaction.

- Philosophical foundations

The philosophical foundations of the proposal deal with the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. In general, dialectical materialism studies the nature of human beings and its laws to turn them into a method to increase knowledge and transform reality. The study of the antecedents of strategies followed to improve the spelling skills in elementary schools has proved that the techniques used have not been effective, so this proposal covers the way for the creation of a constructive learning environment that will help 6th grade students to improve the spelling skills in the foreign language.

- Pedagogical foundations

The proposal suggests contextualized activities which contribute to a positive atmosphere during the process as it is developed through pair and group work and therefore cooperative learning. It not only instructs but also educate since all the activities are meaningful for the students and thus values-rich.

- Methodological foundations

The proposal is based on the Communicative approach for the teaching of foreign languages; more particularly, it is based on Naiman's principles of Communicative Language Teaching:

- Student-centered class
- Meaningful practice beyond the sentence level
- Development of strategies to learn beyond the classroom,
- Peer correction in group work.
- Task orientation of classroom activities.

Characterization of the system of exercises

1. They take into account the students' age and interests, when selecting topics, material aids and activities.
2. They draw on students' previous knowledge of vocabulary and grammar in context.
3. They combine practice of phonetic units with graphemic units; that is, students practice pronunciation along with the practice of spelling.
4. They move from letter recognition, to word recognition and pronunciation and writing, to sentence copying and writing, to listening a text and reading (singing) it aloud.
5. They move from the easy to the more complex activities.
6. They encourage self-correction and self-monitoring.
7. They all respond to a general aim, which is previously specified.

Aims

Overall aim: To provide the students with practice in the spelling skill in English.

Previous contents that the students have practiced orally and which will be used to practice the basic skills of writing

Communicative functions

Ask about the sports someone practices

Say what sports someone practices

Ask about likes with relation to sports

Talk about likes and dislikes with relation to sports

Ask about preference with relation to sports

Talk about preference with sports

Ask and talk about clothes

Ask and talk about personal information

Describe people physically.

Grammar

The verb to be

The present tense

3rd person singular

Vocabulary areas

Sports, clothes, sports tools, colors, places

Activity1: Brainstorming

Vocabulary: Clothes

1. In pairs think of cloth items that you wear on different occasions:

For example:

When I'm at home I wear short pants and sandals.

When I want to go to school, I wear ...

When I go to ...

2. Then write three sentences that you produced orally in the previous item.

(Adapted from Laura Correa Major Paper)

Activity 2: SILENT PATTERNS

Vocabulary: sports clothes

Procedure: Then the teacher gives each student a photocopy of the material "sport clothes" and asks them to listen carefully to the dictation of the words, and to find the missing letters. After finishing the dictation, the students should exchange their photocopies, and make peer correction. The teacher should make sure the students rewrite well the words that they had first written wrong.



1) sh__s

2) sk_t_s



3)_n_f_rm 4) t-s__rt 5)s_cks 6)p_nts7)c_p



8)s_immings__t

9) gl_v_ s

10)sh_rts

- a) Listen carefully and try to complete the missing letters in the words.
- b) Group all the words that have the sound /ʃ/, as in *Sheila*
- c) Think of other words that have the sound /ei/ as in *skates*
- d) Practice saying the words to one another.
- e) Write sentences using the words you have used here.
- f) Change your papers with your partner and correct the mistakes.
Evaluate your partner using the marks below: B, R, M.

Activity 3: Sports people

1. Match the player with the sports.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| a. Javier Sotomayor | ___track and field |
| b. Diego Armando Maradona | ___volleyball |
| c. TeófiloEstevenson | ___immersion |
| d. Usain Bolt | ___combat |
| e. Debora Andoyo | ___football |
| f. Ariel Pestano | ___boxing |
| g. MijailLópez | ___baseball |
| h. Regla Bell | ___athletics |

2. Write sentences following this example:

Maradona is a football player.

3. Read your sentences aloud to your partner.
4. Exchange copies of your sentences and correct each other.

Activity 4: Sports definitions

1. Match the type of sport with its definition

A

a. Karate

b. Judo

c. Sumo

d. Kendo

B

___ Throw your partner out of the ring.

___ Art of the sword. Fight with bamboo stick.

___ The gentle art. Throw your partner onto the floor.

___ Empty hand. Fight with hands and feet.

2. In the definitions, find two words with the sound /θ/ as in *Thank you*. Then think of more with the same sound.
3. Write sentences with three of the words that you included in the list. Then read them aloud to your partner.

Activity 5: Guess the sports

Vocabulary: adjectives to describe sports and people, sports names

Procedure: students should guess the sport described then they read aloud the sports after the teacher. Also they should group the sports word taking into account the phoneme- grapheme correspondence and describe one of the most important players physically and morally in order to review what they learned in previous lessons.

1. Guess the sports referred to in the definitions, write them on your notebook and read them aloud to your partner.
 - a. For this sport you need a cap, some gloves, a bat and a uniform.

- b. To play this game you need a ball, a racket and special shoes.
- c. For this activity you need a swimming suit and a large board.
- d. For this sport you need a swimming suit and some goggles.
- e. For this game you need a uniform, a special bat and some skates.
- f. All you need for this activity is special clothes and a mountain to climb.

(A list of sports is given in order to help the less able students)

List of sports: athletics, badminton, bobsled, bowls, boxing, capoeira, cross-country, cycling, football, gymnastics, Ping-Pong, climbing, horse racing, hockey, ice hockey, ice skating, judo, kayak, rugby, skiing, ski jumping, squash, surf, tennis, swimming, weightlifting, wrestling, baseball, volleyball, curling, soccer, track and field, chess, basketball, golf, polo, kaya, rowing

2. Identify and write four words with the sound /i/ as in pink, one with a sound /ei/ OK and one with a sound /ai/ as in white.
3. Practice saying the words to one another.
4. Write sentences using the words you have founded.
5. According to the sports found, select one and describe one of the most important players (physical and moral) of this sport.

Activity 6: I like to play sports

Vocabulary: sports names

Procedure:

1. Scramble the words according to the pictures given below. If you need it, you may check the list of sports that you are given after the pictures below. Then read them to your partner.

Btlaeslbak, Smgnimiw, fogl, ngcadni, Toalblfo, iglcibm, nnnnirgu
Bebslala, Rbanigedastko, nshtycimas



(A list of sports was given in order to help the less able students)

List of sports: athletics, badminton, running, bobsled, bowls, boxing, capoeira, cross-country, cycling, football, gymnastics, Ping-Pong, climbing, horse racing, hockey, ice hockey, skateboarding, ice skating, dancing, judo, kayak, rugby, skiing, ski jumping, squash, surf, tennis, swimming, weightlifting, wrestling, baseball, volleyball, curling, soccer, track and field, chess, basketball, golf, polo, kaya, rowing

- a) Find words that have the sound /æ/, as in *bath*
 - b) Think of other words that have the same sound
 - c) Write sentences using the words you have used here.
2. Write a mini dialogue with your partner following the questions given below:
- Do you practice sports?
 - What sports do you practice?
 - Do you like ?
 - Which sports do you prefer?

Activity 7: Word search

Vocabulary:sports names

Procedure:the students should find the sports names and spell them. Then they should write sentences in order to review what they studied in previous lessons the communicative function “likes and dislikes” also they should be ready to report back what their partner wrote.

- a) Find the 12 sports activities and write them:

D	G	Y	M	N	A	S	T	I	C	S
M	F	E	S	W	I	M	M	I	N	G
T	C	Y	C	L	I	N	G	K	Q	Z

B	E	G	D	A	N	C	I	N	G	N
A	V	O	L	L	E	Y	B	A	L	L
S	F	O	O	T	B	A	L	L	X	M
E	F	D	C	L	I	M	B	I	N	G
B	G	O	L	F	R	U	G	B	Y	P
A	B	A	S	K	E	T	B	A	L	L
L	T	U	K	B	N	H	A	E	J	J
L	H	X	R	U	N	N	I	N	G	M

(A list of sports was given in order to help the less able students)

List of sports: athletics, badminton, bobsled, bowls, boxing, capoeira, cross-country, cycling, football, gymnastics, Ping-Pong, climbing, horse racing, hockey, ice hockey, ice skating, judo, kayak, rugby, skiing, ski jumping, squash, surf, tennis, swimming, weightlifting, wrestling, football, baseball, volleyball, curling, soccer, track and field, chess, basketball, golf, polo, kaya, rowing, running.

- Group the words that have the sounds /i/ as in *imitation*, /ei/ as in *basic*, /ai/ as in *white* and / æ / , as in *bath*
- Practice saying the words to one another.
- According the sports you found in the word search write a sentence saying which of them you like to practice and why? Then be ready to report back what your partner wrote.

Activity 8:

Procedure:

Using some cards the students should complete the word with sports name, and then say what they do when they practice these sports.

1. Complete the words according to the pictures.

1



b _ _ _ _ _

2



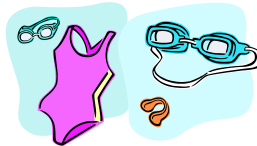
t _ _ _ _

3



f _ _ _ _ _ s _ _ _ _ _

4



s _ _ _ _ _

5



6



s _ _ _ _ _

2. Group the words that have the sound /i/ as in *imitation* and /ei/ as in *basic*
3. Think of other words that have the same sound
4. Write sentences using the words you have used here

(Taken from Laura Correa Major Paper)

Activity 9: SPELLING BINGO

Vocabulary: sports clothes and sports names.

Procedure:

This game helped the students to enhance the practice of the phoneme-grapheme association.

- Students were given a list of 20 words and a chart divided into 10 squares.
- From the list they had to select 10 words, and it was optional to leave one in blank.
- Then, the teacher (with the 20 words in a bag) started asking a student to go and take a word randomly; this student has to spell the word chosen.
- The teacher asked the students to repeat the words aloud.
- They had to color the word in their charts in the case they had it, and the one who first completed coloring his/her chart shouted BINGO and was proclaimed winner.

(Taken from Alberto Farias Major Paper)

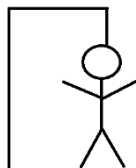
Activity 10: HANGMAN

Vocabulary: sports clothes, sports names and adjectives to describe sports and players

Procedure: The group is divided in two teams

The rules are explained to the whole group:

- A member of the first team chooses a word and writes blank spaces on the board according to the amount of letters the word has.
- The other teams will take turns to say letters. If the letter is right, the team scores a point; but if it is wrong, the team loses a point.
- While the wrong letters are said, the team who chose the word has to draw a hangman. If it is finally completed, the other group loses a point and the team who chose the word scores 5 points.



Activity 11: Dictation

Vocabulary: name, age, family members, sport names

Procedure: First the teacher writes the text on the board and read it aloud. Then, the teacher erases the board and divides the class in tow teams: team A will dictate team B and vice versa. Both will have different parts of the same text and one of the students is chose in each team to dictate to the other team so that each one completes the missing part, at the end they will achieve the entire text and, finally, they will correct them, each one revises the other one.

Dear pen friend,

My name is Isabel, I am eleven years old and I live with my mother, my father and my brother in a comfortable house. I study in a Jose Antonio Echeverría elementary school, I have many friends and we practice sports every day. I like gymnastics and I dislike swimming. My brother loves sports too, he practices polo but his favorite sports is baseball. Do you like sports? What kind of sports do you prefer?

Best wishes;

Isabel.

Activity 12: Song

Procedure

Ask some questions in order to predict what the song is going to talk about, then listen the song once and clear up unknown words. Then listen again and ask students to do this activity:

- What is the meaning of score and win in the song?
- What kind of clothes do these players wear?

___pants ___ uniform ___ dress ___suit

- *Song dictation:*

It consists on listening to a song on any support. The students try to copy the words missing. The second time will be to go filling the empty spaces and to confirm the pointed words. Then, in pairs, or in small groups, the revision will be made, and each one will complete what is missing. Then the teacher gives them the written song in order to check the mistakes.

- Sing the song following the video
- Finally listen the song again and sing it.

Song: We're going to win!

One, two, three, four

How about another score?

Two, four, six, eight

We're going to win!

Hey, here they come again

One in goal and then another ten

Shoot for goal and get it in

Score the goals and we can win – Come On!

One, two, three, four

How about another score?

We'll support our team forever

We don't care about the weather

There's no rival we can fear

Hear us shout and hear us cheer

Hey defenders get that ball

Now the striker's passed them all

At the front and tries to score

Yes! A goal and that's one more – Come on!

One, two, three, four

How about another score?

Two, four, six, eight

We're going to win.

Activity 13: Project work

Procedure

Create a cube in order to form sports names, for examples on the left part, write a few letters, and on the other part, write the ending of the word. You may do the activity following the example bellow:

The left half would be the letters, *t*, *s*, *p*, and then the right half would be the ending of the word *in*. So you would be able to the turn the cube and form the words *tin*, *sin*, *pin*, etc.

- a. Think of five sports words that you have formed and say which of them you prefer and why. You may follow the hints

- I like to play... but I prefer... because...

You can search some verbs in the dictionary in order to explain why you love the sport chosen.

- b. Find some pictures that represent the sports chosen.

Conclusion

- In this research a communicative view of writing has been embraced, which does not neglect the need to teach the mechanics of writing and the system of the language in general. Learning the spelling skill in English needs attention at a very elementary level course like the elementary English course in Cuba, since this is part of communicative competence in writing, and thus it paves the way to actually communicate in writing with real people in English.
- The diagnosis conducted in class 6th A revealed that, the teaching-learning of the spelling skill is not conceived systemically, which is a serious handicap in the learning of English for elementary school children in the Cuban context, for a variety of reasons, such as the need to study at home based on written texts and the need to use writing as a means to reinforce speaking.
- The application and evaluation of the preliminary proposal proved that when teaching the spelling skill in English it is crucial for teachers to make a careful selection of the topics and the types of activities taking into account the students characteristics and needs. In addition, is important for teachers to integrate the teaching of grammar and vocabulary to the teaching of the spelling skill, and to encourage the students to find phoneme- grapheme regularities. Furthermore, whether the activities function well or not is not granted only by the quality that they show as a plan, but also by the way they are managed in the classroom by the teacher. Finally, the students learning of the spelling skill improved considerably along the process of intervention.
- The system of spelling activities is characterized by being coherent and well related to contents of the program; it responds to the students' educational needs, potentialities and interests; and it offers teachers and students a very useful tool to improve the spelling skill in English in sixth graders.

Suggestions

It is recommended that the whole proposal be applied in other 6th grade classes from “José Antonio Echeverría” elementary school and that it be evaluated in terms of its effectiveness in improving the students’ spelling skill.

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Appendixes

Appendix # 1

Pedagogical test 1

Aim: to assess students' ability to establish phoneme grapheme correspondence when taking down dictation of a text about personal information, which they have practiced orally.

Activity

Listen to your teacher and take down dictation of this paragraph. Your teacher will repeat three times.

My name is Susan I am eleven years old, I am tall with black hair and blue eyes. I am very friendly and nice person. I live in Santa Clara city near the central park. I live with my mother, my father and my sister. My house is very comfortable with a living room, a kitchen, a bathroom and a back yard with four bedrooms. I study in José Antonio Echeverría elementary school. In my classroom there is a coat of arms, a TV, a board and a desk, also there are twenty tables with forty chairs.

Results

Number of students evaluated	Excellent	%	Good	%	Fair	%	Poor	%
17	-		1	5	3	17	13	76

Appendix # 2

Pedagogical test 2

Aim: to assess students' ability to establish phoneme grapheme correspondence when taking down dictation of a sentence about personal information.

Activity:

The teacher writes a sentence on a board and reads it aloud, and then the students should repeat it. After practicing orally the teacher erases the sentence and dictates it. Then they should write sentences like the example using their personal information answering the question (what about you)

Sentence: My name is Claudia, I am eleven years old. I love practice sports and my favorite sport is tennis

Results

Number of students evaluated	Excellent	%	Good	%	Fair	%	Poor	%
18	1	5	6	33	6	33	5	27

Holistic rating scales:

Excellent: Shows control of phoneme- grapheme correspondence, although there may be words with spelling mistakes.

Good: Shows some control of phoneme- grapheme correspondence, although meaning is lost at times because some words are undecipherable.

Fair: Shows no control of phoneme- grapheme correspondence. However, she/he manages to write some words correctly, which helps to preserve at least some meaning in what she/he is writing

Poor: Shows no control of phoneme- grapheme correspondence. Unable to convey meaning is through writing

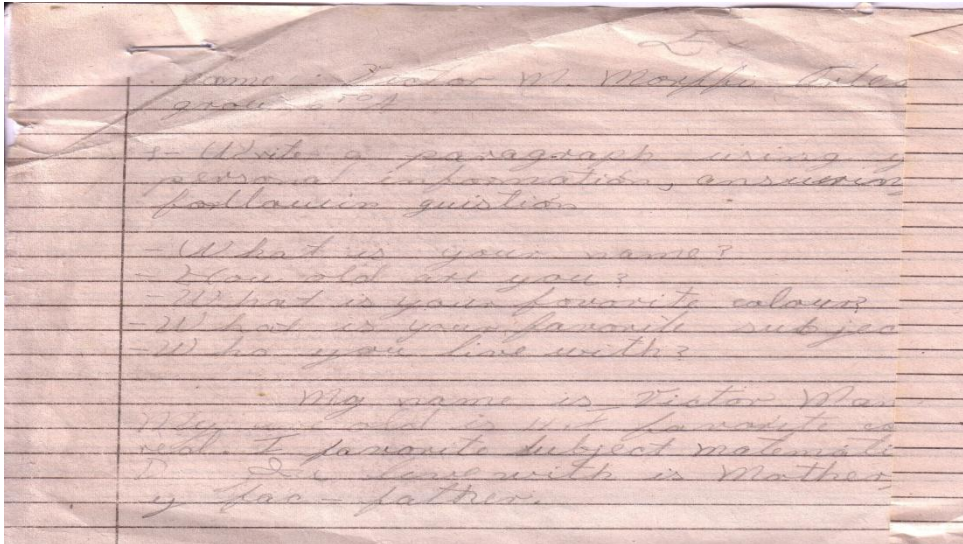
Summary of the results of comparing the two pedagogical tests

# students tested	Excellent	%	Good	%	Fair	%	Poor	%
20	1	5	4	20	8	40	7	35

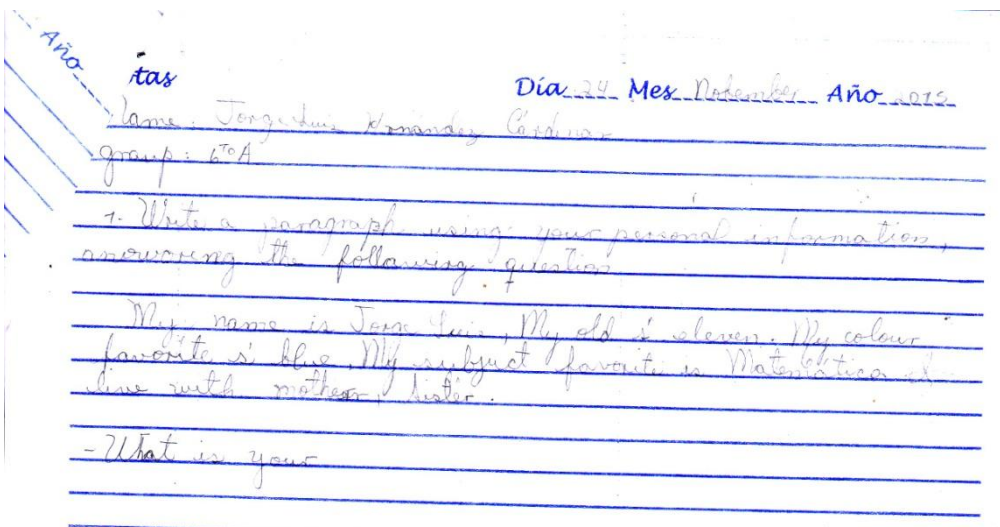
The results were processed and quantified and then they were interpreted. They showed that only 5 students out of 20 had a good command of the phoneme-grapheme correspondences in English, with respect to contents that they had dealt with orally, up to the moment when the tests were administered. This meant that the majority of them (15 students) had a very limited command of this basic goal of writing, or they had no command of it at all.

Appendix # 3

Excellent



Good



Fair

Year 1st

Topic: Review.

Name: Maria Karla Barcelo Perez

group: 6¹⁰ 9

Write a paragraph using your personal information answering the following questions:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What is your favorite colour?
- What is your favorite subject?
- What do you like to do?

My name is Maria Karla. My age is 11. My colour favorite is Blue. My subject favorite is English.

Poor

Year 1st

Topic: Review.

Name: Maria Karla Barcelo Perez

group: 6¹⁰ 9

Write a paragraph using your personal information answering the following questions:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What is your favorite colour?
- What is your favorite subject?
- What do you like to do?

My name is Maria Karla. My age is 11. My colour favorite is Blue. My subject favorite is English.

Appendix # 4

Survey to students during initial diagnosis

Aim: To obtain information about the 6th students' interests and opinions with respect to spelling/writing skills.

Estimados estudiantes:

En el Departamento de Lenguas Extranjeras de la UCP Félix Varela se está realizando una investigación para determinar el nivel de motivación que Uds. como estudiantes sienten hacia las clases de Inglés. Se les pide su cooperación para contribuir con dicha investigación, su nombre no es necesario solo la información que puedan aportar y se les anticipa el agradecimiento.

1. ¿Te gustan las clases de inglés?, si ___ no___ a veces___ ¿por qué?
2. ¿De qué temas te gustaría que se trataran?
3. Me gustaría que las clases de Inglés se realizaran actividades como:

Juegos en equipos___ Juego de roles___ Proyectos___ Trabajo individual___

4. ¿Cuál de los siguientes tipos de clases recibes con mayor frecuencia?

___ de lectura

___ de escritura

___ de comprensión auditiva

___ de expresión oral

5. ¿Cuál de ellas te gusta más? 1(más)-4(menos) ¿por qué?

___ Lectura

___ Expresión oral

___ Escritura

___ Comprensión auditiva

6. Refiriéndote a las actividades de escritura responde:

- Son motivadas y activas.

Si___ no___ a veces___ no siempre___

- Son aburridas y solo copiamos.

Si___ no___ a veces___ no siempre___

- Se realizan actividades de dictado, organización de palabras y oraciones, puzles, sopas de letras, etc.

Si___ no___ a veces___ no siempre___

7. ¿Qué te gustaría cambiar de las clases de Inglés?, ¿por qué

Procesamiento de datos

Pregunta #1: Si les gustan las clases de inglés a los alumnos.

Si	%	No	%	A veces	%
20	100	-	-	-	-

Razones:

- Porque les gusta que la profesora les enseñe cosas nuevas. (7 alumnos, 35%)
- Porque el inglés los prepara para el futuro. (8 alumnos, 40%)
- Porque se divierten en las clases de inglés, mediante juegos y canciones. (5 alumnos, 25%)

Pregunta #2: Temas que prefieren los alumnos.

Temas	# de estudiantes	%
Actividades diarias	4	20
Deportes	7	35
Música	3	15
Juegos	6	30

Pregunta #3: Sobre tipo de actividades que prefieren realizar en las clases de inglés

Actividades	# de estudiantes	%
Juegos en equipos	14	70
Juego de roles	2	10
Proyectos	3	15
Trabajos individuales	1	5

Pregunta #4: Clases que reciben con mayor frecuencia

Tipos de clases	# de estudiantes	%
Lectura	2	10
Escritura	2	10
Compresión auditiva	-	
Expresión oral	16	80

Pregunta #5: Sobre sus preferencias con respecto a los componentes de la asignatura inglés

componentes del inglés	# de estudiantes	%
Lectura	-	-
Escritura	-	-
Compresión auditiva	-	-
Expresión oral	20	100

Pregunta #6: Sus opiniones con respecto a las clases de escritura

Actividades	Si	%	No	%	A veces	%	No siempre	%
Motivadas	16	80	-		4	20	-	
Aburrida	-		17	85	1	5	-	
Variedad de actividades	10	50	-		7	35	3	15

Pregunta #7: Sobre necesidad de cambios en la clase de inglés

- Que hicieran más juegos (5 alumnos, 25%)
- Que los niños se portaran mejor (9 alumnos, 45%)
- Que no interrumpan la clase cuando hay deporte (6 alumnos, 30%)

A 100% to students like English lessons and they refer that it is fun because they can play games in class and listen songs.

Concerning the topics, most of them (16 out of 20) referred sports, music and games; with respect to the types of lesson activities 16 of them chose play games and acting roles.

Concerning their opinions with respect to writing lessons most of them (16 out of 20) consider that the writing lessons are motivated and that the activities that the teacher brings are varied.

Finally, they suggested that the teacher bring more games, that they work on class discipline and that the English lessons should not be interrupted by other teachers

Appendix # 5

Lesson observation written feedback

Aim: To know the development of students' spelling skills during the class.

Teacher	Date:	Time:
Topic:	School:	Class Grade:
LessonAims:	<div>MainStages/ LessonShape</div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	
Overall:		

GoodPoints	PointstoConsider

Appendix # 6

Document Analysis Guide

Aim: To obtain information about the treatment that the directive materials give to the spelling activities within the teaching-learning process of instrumental writing in the English lessons for 6th grade students.

Materials

- 6th grade English program
- Workbooks

Appendix # 7

Interview to Teachers

Aim: To obtain information about the treatment teachers give to spelling within the teaching-learning process of instrumental writing in the English lessons and sources of information they usually use.

Guide of Teachers' Interview

1. Do you think that the treatment you give to the spelling activities within the teaching-learning process of instrumental writing is adequate? Why?
2. How often do you work with this ability at this level
3. What are the objectives of writing at this level?
4. What kind of writing/spelling activities do you usually assign?
5. What kind of activities do you usually do?
6. What are the most common mistakes do the students have regarding spelling?
7. What kind of material aids do you use to develop these activities?
8. How often do you usually use sources from the Liberty Program to plan the activities?
9. Which approach do you usually use in the instrumental writing activities? Why?

Summary of the notes made during the interview

- Teachers do not think that the treatment of spelling is so adequate because they feel forced to work only with the workbook (no as a complement material), because it was not given notebooks to copy the lessons, and this material does not provide enough activities to work with spelling. So teachers try to work with this ability once in each communicative function.
 - Objective of writing: write a message at a very elementary level.
 - Writing activities: dictations of text\ isolated words
 - Students mistakes: Final sound (e) s in plural ay(ei) ey (i), ph(f) th(d) h(j)...
 - Material aid: workbook
 - They use a communicative approach because the students have to practice the language communicatively, they should create dialogues based on the real live (in different situation)in order to express their thought.
-

Appendix # 8



Appendix # 9

The activity that work well

Activity 12:song

Procedures

Ask some questions in order to predict what the song is going to talk about, then listen the song once and clear up unknown words. Then listen again and ask students to do this activity:

- What is the meaning of score and win in the song?
- What kind of clothes do these players wear?

___pants ___ uniform ___ dress ___suit

- *Song dictation:*

It consists on listening to a song on any support. The students try to copy the words missing. The second time will be to go filling the empty spaces and to confirm the pointed words. Then, in pairs, or in small groups, the revision will be made, and each one will complete what is missing. Then the teacher gives them the written song in order to check the mistakes.

- Sing the song following the video
- Finally listen the song again and sing it.

Song: We're going to win!

One, two, three, four

How about another score?

Two, four, six, eight

We're going to win!

Hey, here they come again

One in goal and then another ten

Shoot for goal and get it in

Score the goals and we can win – Come On!

One, two, three, four

How about another score?

We'll support our team forever

We don't care about the weather

There's no rival we can fear

Hear us shout and hear us cheer

Hey defenders get that ball

Now the striker's passed them all

At the front and tries to score

Yes! A goal and that's one more – Come on!

One, two, three, four

How about another score?

Two, four, six, eight

We're going to win.

The activity that did not work well

Activity 10: HANGMAN

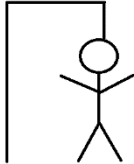
Vocabulary: sport clothes, sport names and adjectives to describe sports and players

Procedures: The group is divided in two teams

The rules are explained to the whole group:

- A member of the first team chooses a word and writes blank spaces on the board according to the amount of letters the word has.

- The other teams will take turns to say letters. If the letter is right, the team scores a point; but if it is wrong, the team loses a point.
- While the wrong letters are said, the team who chose the word has to draw a hangman. If it is finally completed, the other group lose a point and the team who chose the word scores 5 points.



Appendix # 10

Critical analysis of the preliminary proposal of activities

Aim: To evaluate this proposal critically in terms of the need to develop the spelling skill in the subjects participating in this research.

Topics included in the preliminary proposal

Sports

Personal information

Types of exercises included in the preliminary proposal

Match words with pictures

Producing sentences on the basis of linguistic and pictorial cues

Letter soup

Fill-in-the blanks (words)

Match sports words with proper definition

Match players with sports

Guess sports on the basis of descriptions

Quiz about baseball

Dictation of a song or other types of texts

Grouping sports words according to categories

Questionnaires

Project work

Critical remarks

In terms of the topics the activities do respond to the needs and interests of the target students; namely, students who are in elementary school and are athletes.

With respect to the types of activities planned, it is evident that there is a great variety of techniques used (twelve in all). The fact that the activities initially provide practice in vocabulary and grammar is considered a significant strength of the preliminary proposal, because it helps to reinforce the students' background knowledge, both linguistic and world knowledge.

A flaw of the preliminary proposal lies in the fact that not all the activities lead the students to practice the language in writing, saying orally what they have written and looking for spelling patterns systematically.

Appendix # 11

Summary of the marks given to students from class 6thA, showing their evolution from initial diagnosis to Report # 1 and Report # 2

Aim: To evaluate the results obtained in class 6th A in terms of their spelling skill.

a)

Students	Initial diagnosis	Report #1	Report # 2
1	Poor	Fair	Good
2	Fair	Good	Excellent
3	Poor	Fair	Good
4	Poor	Fair	Good
5	Poor	Good	Good
6	Poor	Fair	Good
7	Good	Excellent	Excellent
8	Poor	Good	Excellent
9	Poor	Fair	Good
10	Poor	Fair	Good
11	Poor	Good	Good
12	Poor	Fair	Good
13	Poor	Fair	Fair
14	Poor	Fair	Good
15	Fair	Good	Good
16	Poor	Good	Good
17	Fair	Good	Excellent

b)

	Excellent	%	Good	%	Fair	%	Poor	%
Initial diagnosis	-		1	5	3	17	13	76
Report #1	1	5	7	41	9	52		
Report # 2	4	23	12	70	1	5		

Summary of the development of the less able students

Students	Initial diagnosis	Report#1	Report # 2
A	Poor	Good	Good
B	Poor	Good	Good
C	Poor	Fair	Good

Appendix # 12

Summary of the teacher diary and reflections

Aim: To collect information concerning what worked well and what needed a change, as the preliminary proposal was being applied with the subjects chosen for this research.

STRUCTURE OF THE LEARNING RESEARCH JOURNAL

I. General information:

Student's name:

Majoring in:

Year:

Name of the School (practicum):

Grade you teach:

II. Context

1. Physical context

1.1. Community

1.2. School

2. Psychological context

2.1. Psychological characteristics of the students according to their age

2.2. Psychological characteristics present in the students subjects of research

2.3. Psychological characteristics that favor the teaching learning process of the English language

2.4. Psychological characteristics that hinder the teaching learning process of the English language

3. Social context:

3.1. Problematic situation identified in the subjects of research.

3.2. Scientific problem

3.3. Needs assessment (analysis of documents, participant observation, pedagogical test, analysis of students' outcomes, interview, triangulation)

3.4. Regularities derived from the needs assessment

4. Textual or linguistic context

Some Linguistic elements necessary to carry out the process of building up the scientific outcome.

4.1. Features of the narrative text

III. Building up of the process of the scientific outcome.

Communicative function to deal with in the lesson

Ability to deal with in the lesson (in the case of speaking ability, add the stage)

Objective of the lesson

Number of activities/ exercises/tasks/ techniques in the lesson

Activity (-ies) / exercise(s)/task/(s)/ technique(s) designed to practice the ability/language component identified with difficulties.

Reflections (participant observations and interviews to students included in the teacher's diary)

What went well

6.1.1. Proof (quality of students' answers, complexity of activity (-ies) / exercise(s)/task/(s)/ technique(s), number of students that participate in the lesson, motivation, time allotted, etc.).

. Reasons (potentialities of activity (-ies) / exercise(s)/task/(s)/ technique(s) used, from the psychological, pedagogical and didactic points of view).

What did not go well

. Proof (quality of students' answers, complexity of the activity (-ies) / exercise(s) /task/(s)/ technique(s), number of students that participate in the lesson, motivation, students' discipline, students' satisfaction, etc.).

6.2.2. Reasons (weaknesses of the activity (-ies) / exercise(s)/task/(s)/ technique(s) used from the psychological, pedagogical and didactic points of view)

6.2.3. Action (s): what must be changed/ improved for next time.

Pedagogical reflection (identify strengths and weaknesses using the following questions as a guide:

Was the objective of the lesson fulfilled?

Could all the planned activity (-ies) / exercise(s) /task/(s)/ technique(s), done? Why/ not?

What did the students like most?

How would you evaluate students' personal reactions (individual and group performances) when doing the activity (-ies) / exercise(s) /task/(s)/ technique(s) that you implemented during the lesson (verbal and non-verbal reactions)

What could you infer from the students' reactions?

Evaluation of the transformations in the subjects of research (participant observation, pedagogical test, analysis of the students' outcomes, interview, triangulation)

Final scientific outcome

Meaningful experience (personal and professional achievements)

Keller and Warner

Day # 3: 2 de Febrero del 2016

I started the lesson applying the exercises previously conceived but I realize that most of the exercises were not so communicative and I decided to make some changes.

What worked well?

The students showed a lot of motivation toward English lessons, maybe because I changed them and now they could have a new teacher with another view point, also because I use a new element of motivation and mix it with other communicative functions not only likes and dislikes but also talking about clothes, describing people, talking about personal information and some activities in order to review what they had learned, including a project work.

What did not work well?

The students accomplished the exercises very well but at times they lost motivation because as I said before they are so active and being writing all the time is boring (this is what some of my students said that day).

Actions

I did not feel comfortable with the first lesson so I decided to make some changes in the proposal. Almost at the end of the lesson I divided the class into two teams and we played a game reviewing some contents studied in previous levels and for the next lesson I will present the new things.

Day #4: 9 de Febrero del 2016

This day the lesson was different because I created some activities which the students felt comfortable with. I realized that they were more motivated about the lesson today. The lesson was about the Communicative Function: talking about clothes and the activity related with the spelling skill was taken and adapted from Laura Correa major paper.

What worked well?

I think the activity was easy but the students could interact one another and could see their partners' mistakes also in order to make some regularity in sounds. They have fun and show respect and solidarity with the students that could not accomplish the activity so well.

What did not work well?

I could see that in the class there are 3 students that have some difficulties to learn (I mean that they learn slowly). For this time I could not prepare an activity in order to help them but I used another strategy, I moved the class in order to create new couples and I appoint some mentors to the students; I put them with students who learn quickly and have a disposition to help them.

Actions

Before starting with this activity it was necessary to activate the students' background knowledge, it was necessary to make a brainstorming about the word cloth.

Also I wanted the students to find regularities about the sounds but it was difficult for them, maybe because spaces in white do not propitiate regularities.

Day #5: 16 de Febrero del 2016

In this lesson the students had started with a new Communicative Function: Describing people, for this lesson I used an activity from the previous proposal (it was adapted) and I integrated activities that were there too and created one in order to follow what the students had learned (these activities were used as items).

What worked well?

The students liked this activity, they showed motivation, all of them wanted to participate and be evaluated, most of them said things such as: yo me lo se, ya se lo quetengoquehacer; adivinar el deporte y me dan lo que se utiliza en esedeporte, ñoesunaadivinanzaeso a mi me gusta. The student did the activity correctly including the students who had low level of ability because I created a list of sports to give them and inside that list they had to find the sports described.

What did not work well?

Almost finishing the activity in the last item most of the students started to lose control and I asked them if they had any difficulty to finish the activity and the answer was that they could not remember how to describe someone, so I went back again and we together started to remember the adjectives to describe someone. Finally they finish the activity and 2 of them read their description aloud.

Actions

For the last part of the activity it is necessary to activate students' background knowledge.

Today the lesson was very good, students showed that they liked it so much, I could see that they remembered what they had learned in previous lessons (see the sts' comments) and they reviewed some contents.

Day # 6: 23 de Febrero del 2016

This lesson is about the Communicative Function: talk about likes and dislikes, for this lesson the students studied in previous lessons the structure of these sentences in order to talk about likes and dislikes, we recapped the structures and used some examples in order to better comprehension. Then, an activity to identify some words and they had to create a mini dialogue following some questions.

What worked well?

As in the previous lesson the students showed a good participation; most of them wanted to be evaluated and the ones who did it wrong received help from the rest of the class. The 3 students with some difficulties worked well too and I put them to work with their mentors; two of them were evaluated today. Now they don't feel shy because they realized that they are learning and indeed they show more knowledge (these students are motivated and they are studying not only English but also other subjects, the lead teacher continues working with them, supported on mentors as I suggested).

What did not work well?

Well, today one of the students that had some problems did not work like the other ones, he was in silence most of the time, he did the activity, but I could see that he was somehow afraid to say something wrong. I went to his chair and I checked if he is doing well. He took the mini dialogue and read it with his partner, but not in front of the class. I went to his chair, in fact, he had some mistakes but he analyzed them again and his mentor helped him.

In item b) the students should work in pairs and the activity did not work as fast as it was planned; so most of the students wanted to read their dialogues, so instead of 20 minutes it lasted about 25 min. I think that I will not change the whole activity, I should plan it for 25 minutes

Day # 7: 1 de marzo del 2016

Today we continued studying the same Communicative Function: talk about likes and dislikes. One of the most important aims in this activity is to use the 3rd person singular studied previously while they find some words in a letter soup.

What worked well?

Students loved this activity; most of them said that was amusing, all of the students wanted to participate including the 3 students that had some problems because I used a list of words in order to search the ones who are in the letter soup. All of the students found at least 3 or 4 words and that is one of the reasons why all of them wanted to participate. Another reason could be that they were studying the pronunciation words and how to spell them and they wanted to show to the rest of the class what they had learned.

What did not work well?

I wanted all of the students to participate in this activity, but it wasn't be possible; for this reason some of them felt disappointed. Also in the second part of the activity in which they have to use the 3rd person singular some of them showed some mistakes in pronouncing the finals, despite the fact that all of them knew the rule. Sometimes discipline was lost

Actions

I think this activity does not need any change because it worked well in practice; I just need to pay more attention to the pronunciation of the sentences especially the 3rd person singular.

Day # 8: 8 de marzo del 2016

In this lesson I wanted to review the content given previously and I decided to play a game, this activity was taken and adapted from Laura Correa major paper. In this activity the students can interact in groups and share their knowledge.

What worked well?

This activity went very well, all the students were engaged and they felt motivated because we could choose a winner and any of them could be, so for this reason most of them concentrated on the word

being spelled. Most of the students spelled the words correctly and this is a good point because the rest of the students could complete their cards.

What did not work well?

This activity went well over all. However, only one of the students that had difficulties could do the activity alone, the other two of them needed their mentors, but something strange happened today. Their mentors did not want to help them too much because they wanted to be winners, so I had to ask them to help these students about two or three times.

Lack of discipline was a factor against this activity, because they wanted to talk, see and say what their partners had in the cards given. This happened because it was a competition and all of them wanted to win and they did not feel good when the winner was proclaimed because they did not know how to lose.

Day # 9: 15 de marzo del 2016

In this opportunity I decided to do another kind of game in order to put an end to some behaviors that my students had. Hangman is a game taken and adapted from Albarto Farias major paper in order to review contents studied in previous lessons. This time I chose for a game in which they could share in groups and were not only one person would win, they should work together and the best team would win. A hangman game would reinforce the students' solidarity and respect for one another.

What worked well?

This time they helped each other in order to win and they felt strong, they felt motivated because they could choose the words and this is a good point because they had to be ready to choose difficult words.

What did not work well?

Working in groups is very difficult with this kind of students because they are very active and they lose control easily and most of the times I lose the group control. Sometimes when the students spelled the words they tended to say the letters in Spanish; for that reason, I asked them sometimes to say things in English.

Actions

I think that in order to control discipline it is necessary not to divide the class into two large teams but maybe into four smaller teams. I tried doing this in the next class and it worked well.

Day # 10: 22 de marzo del 2016

In this opportunity we are dealing with a new Communicative Function: talk about personal information. In this activity the students should integrate all the Communicative Function studied previously in order to understand and complete the exercise.

What worked well?

Most of the students paid attention to the dictation because they had to remember and associate sounds... this activity went well with respect to discipline because the students had to focus on what they wrote.

What did not work well?

Although the students were concentrated and focused on the dictation they made many mistakes in phoneme- grapheme correspondence. Also group work did not go as well as I wanted because they

behaved themselves but when checking the mistakes they hardly worked. In the teams two or three students would do the exercise correctly, and mostly the students appointed as mentors.

Actions

I think I will organize the class in two teams just at the beginning but I will appoint some students as leaders of each team, this decision may imply that I will have to ask them to change seats.

Day # 11: 29 de marzo del 2016

With this activity I wanted to make a review. Before this activity the students activated their background knowledge about sports and all the contents studied in previous lessons.

What worked well?

They were so happy singing the song every time I played it. They worked very well and they did all the activities. Finally they stood up to sing the song, and the part of the song that says **Come on! One, two, three, four** and **We're going to win** they shouted it, I think because it was the easiest part. Finally I knew that there were some students that were unable to complete all the blank spaces I facilitated them the lyrics and what surprised me was that when I checked the 3 students with problems they had completed almost 50% of the words in the blankspaces.

What did not work well and actions?

Time was not enough maybe because the students enjoyed the activity and we wasted time but everything happened without forcing the activities.

Final reflection:

At the beginning most of the students had many mistakes in phoneme- grapheme correspondence, I wanted to create some activities that responded to their needs, making it communicative, and I think that this purpose was achieved I could see in every lesson that my students interacted with one another.

As I said previously I had some students with difficulties not only in English but also in some other subjects, these students sat together but I changed their seats and I appointed a mentor for each of them. Well the other teachers realized that the changes that I had made were right and now these students developed not only their abilities in English but also in the other subjects.

I consider that the whole class have made considerable progress and this may be seen in the way they actively participated in class and in the results of the spelling test that they were given along the process.