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A System of Activities to Develop the Writing Skill through Intercultural Communication in Third Year Medical Students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara

Tesis Presentada en Opción al Título Académico de Máster en Lengua Inglesa para la Comunicación Intercultural

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Thought

"Being cultured is the only way to be free."

José Martí

Dedication

To all of those who in some way offered their disinterested help in order that this thesis reached a happy ending.

To all the professors that taught with total dedication their subjects during the curricular stage.

To all of them, for their help and dedication,

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ABSTRACT.

Cuba has become a paradigm of humanism all over the world, as professionals of different spheres have accomplished important missions in a great number of countries of the world.

One of the most important missions that professionals from Cuba have accomplished is in the sphere of Medicine. The necessity of preparing professionals of this specialty in the Cuban context to continue to help different peoples of the world, demands from them not only the knowledge of the foreign language, but also to know how to behave when living and sharing their lives with any culture different from theirs, having no contradictions, achieving in such a way a good coexistence which will bring better results in their work.

This research has as a research question; how to develop the writing skill in English through intercultural communication of third year Medical students. The aim is that they become better professionals and better people in their future. To achieve this purpose, a system of activities was elaborated to develop students´ writing skill.

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 sets the theoretical considerations that sustain this thesis. It also includes some concepts which are important to understand the idea of this research work. Chapter 2 deals with the needs that support the design of the system. It characterizes the sample, also the different methods and instruments used and the analysis of the results obtained from the diagnosis. Chapter 3 shows the system of written activities proposed. Finally, conclusions, recommendations, bibliography and annexes are included.

Key words: English writing skills, intercultural communication, 3rd year medical studies, system of activities, teaching writing.

Introduction

In order to talk about the history of intercultural communication, it would be necessary to go back to the times in which the meeting between two different cultures took place with the arrival of Christopher Columbus and his sailors in the continent later known by the name of America, and probably earlier, and this has continued to be until the present.

However, these newcomers did not respect at that time the identity of the cultures they met.

Respect for the others does not mean to lose identity at all. Ava Nieves Silva points out that: “It is very important for the human being to learn how to behave in a different culture and to communicate with other people that surround him, when in his own country or abroad, but never losing his identity and his universal values.” (Silva Rivera, A. N. 2010: 1)

She also added in her research that: “It has been demonstrated in the second half of the 20th century that the most productive development is that which values the differences; this speaks aloud in favor of communication intern and with the rest of the world, and contributes to correct inequalities.” (Silva Rivera, A. N. 2010: 3)

After World War II, the English language continued to spread worldwide due to the development the United States and Great Britain reached at that time.

David Crystal states that: “The present – day world status of English is primarily the result of two factors: the expansion of British colonial power, which peaked towards the end of the 19th century, and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the 20th century. It is the latter factor which continues to explain the position of the English language today.” (Crystal, D.1995: 106)

As time went by, this phenomenon continued to exist up to these days, and now English is used in almost all spheres of life as a *lingua franca*; it constitutes the official language of air and sea communications, commerce, diplomacy, science, and on the Internet. It is also the most used language in the translation of literary

and scientific works, and the official language for international conferences and events. (Crystal, D.1995:106; Nodarse, N. 2010: 4)

It is so that Cuba, from a humanistic and caring conception, is influencing in the world with its social advances in the fields of health, education, science, culture and sports, among other spheres. Cuba gives help and contributes with all its knowledge to different countries that, in most of the cases, are Anglophone or where English is a second language used as a means of communication and socialization. This reality brings the necessity of preparing workers and professionals in the English language so that they can communicate to be able to socialize and interact in the new context in which they will probably have to work. (Nodarse, N. 2010: 5)

But, as it was stated before, it is not only a necessity to prepare professionals in our country in the knowledge of the English language, but also to know how to live among other people with different cultural background from theirs, because, as Gloria Rojas in her work, mentioning Aguado (1997) stated: "…although the formal education is necessary, it is not enough for the act of living together, but for the coexistence." (Rojas Ruiz, G. 2010: 9)

All of these things mentioned above, give an idea of the importance of this research work in the preparation of professionals to work having knowledge first, in the use of the English language, and also, on how to behave in different contexts, not to have contradictions; achieving in such a way a good coexistence which will bring better results in their work. According to what Ava Nieves stated in her research: "Nationalism is negative when it is disrespectful and intolerant towards other peoples with different cultural background." (Silva Rivera, A. N. 2010: 3)

Medical students in Cuba take during their first three years in the university the cycle called "General English", which means they should learn the four skills of the language, namely writing, speaking, reading and listening. When they are in the fourth and fifth years of their studies, they take "English for Specific Purposes" (ESP), through which their medical vocabulary in the target language is improved.

When referring to the linguistic skills, in most of English Cuban courses, the least treated has always been writing and, in this case, “General English” is not an exception, even though writing is a very important skill to get the right knowledge and scientific information because most of the articles are accompanied with an abstract in English. At the same time, intercultural communication is also an aspect which is difficult to develop in class, even more having lack of books and basic authentic materials that have to do with activities on this topic.

Lots of books on the teaching of English as a second or foreign language have been written so far; also the methods used to make its learning easier have changed throughout the years but, although many of them deal with writing, none is specifically aimed at activities related to writing through intercultural communication. Among the international authors that have worked on the subject are Finocchiaro, M. (1989); Abbot, J. (1989); Byrne, D. (1998); Nunan, D. (1999); Ur. P. (2000); Fletcher, N. (2007), and others. Also, some Cuban authors such as, PhD. Antich, R. (1978); (1988); PhD. Ruiz Iglesias (1999); PhD. Forteza, R. (2002); PhD. Rodríguez Ruiz, M. (2004); Msc. Artíles, I. L. (2006); PhD. Nodarse, N. (2010), and others have been concerned with writing.

All of what have been stated above, has led to the following **problematic statement**: The lack of activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication, and the reality of students from different countries who have to share their cultures, traditions and customs with others, led us to state the following

- Research question: How to develop the writing skill to improve intercultural communication in third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara?

Scientific object: The teaching and learning process of writing through intercultural communication in the Universities of Medical Sciences.

Field of study: The development of the writing skill through intercultural communication of third year students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara.

The General aim is to propose a system of activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication of third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara.

To accomplish the previous aim, the following **scientific questions** were answered:

1. What is the theoretical and pedagogical background of writing through intercultural communication in the Universities of Medical Sciences?
2. What is the current situation of third year medical students regarding writing through intercultural communication in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara?
3. What characterizes a system of activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication of third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara?
4. What are the specialists´ opinion about the system of activities proposed?

In order to answer the above scientific questions, the following **specific objectives** should be accomplished.

1. To determine the theoretical and pedagogical background of writing through intercultural communication in the Universities of Medical Sciences.
2. To diagnose the current situation of third year medical students regarding writing through intercultural communication in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara.
3. To design a system of activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication of third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara according to students´ learning needs.
4. To assess the proposal of the system of activities through specialists´ criterion.

Population and sample

Population

The population of this research consisted of twelve (12) groups of third year medical students and six (6) professors of English.

Sample

A sample group of 25 students was selected intentionally. This selection was based on four main facts:

- Variety of cultural backgrounds (3 Venezuelan; 2 Bolivian; 3 Honduran; 2 Nicaraguan; 2 Peruvian; 4 Argentinean; 3 Mexican; and 6 Cuban.)
- Most students show difficulty in their English writing skill.
- Closeness to the researcher.
- Willingness to cooperate.

The group of 6 professors was selected considering these criteria:

- Academic degree.
- Scientific degree.
- Teaching experience with 3rd year medical students.
- Willingness to cooperate.

Methodology

The methodology of the research corresponds mainly to a qualitative paradigm since it is based on experiences, perceptions, and suggestions of both students and professors. Also, the quantitative paradigm was used to process data obtained from the surveys, questionnaires, among others.

Theoretical methods

- **Historical-logical.** To evaluate the historical evolution of the object of study in this research.
- **Analysis and synthesis.** To analyze the problem in order to determine its characteristics in the context of the present situation in the research.
- **Induction and deduction.** To determine generalities through the study of the particularities of the situation.
- **Structural-systemic method.** To design the different elements and parts

of the system.

- **Modeling.** To model the different elements and parts of the system.

Empirical methods

- **Analysis of documents.** To analyze and determine the current situation of the writing skill development and the intercultural communication treatment through the syllabus of third year of the medicine studies.
- **Participant observation.** To observe the current situation in the behavior of the students with regard to writing and intercultural communication.
- **Interview.** Applied to third year medical students to obtain data and criteria about the situation.
- **Interview.** Applied to third year professors of English to know about the current situation of the teaching and learning process of writing through intercultural communication in the syllabus of third year of the medicine studies.
- **Pedagogical test.** To diagnose the students' current situation concerning writing through intercultural communication.
- **Triangulation.** To obtain the points of contact and the differences among the different methods.
- **Specialists' assessment.** To assess the system of activities proposed.

Statistical and/or mathematical methods

- **Percent analysis.** To quantitatively evaluate the results, and to translate them into a qualitative description.

Scientific contribution. It is given by the systemic structure of the designed activities which are basically based on two didactic approaches to teaching writing through intercultural communication in third year medical students of the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara.

Theoretical contribution. It is given by the system of writing activities and all the theoretical scaffolding that made it up.

Practical contribution. It is given by the hierarchical organization, dynamism and flexibility of the writing activities that makes up the system.

This thesis is structured into three chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the theoretical and pedagogical background of writing through intercultural communication. Chapter 2 presents the results of the empirical study, the focus of which was to examine the experiences and practices in the English academic writing of undergraduate students and professors from an intercultural perspective. Chapter 3 proposes a system of activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication of third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara. Also conclusions, recommendations, and annexes are provided.

Chapter 1. Theoretical and pedagogical background of writing through intercultural communication.

Taking into account that writing is one of the forms of speech which has a great importance for most students of any foreign language, it is necessary to investigate on the theoretical background of this skill, its nature, and its relationship with intercultural communication.

1. 1. Writing as a communicative process

“The study of language in the twentieth century has tended to concentrate on spoken language. Many linguists from de Saussure through to Chomsky, for what seemed like good reasons at the time, neglected the written mode in favor of the spoken. This, however, contributed to the fact that writing was for a long time a neglected area in language teaching.”(Brookes & Grundy.1998: 1)

Speaking about the history of the teaching and learning process of the writing skill through years, Brookes & Grundy (1998) continue to stating: “… spoken language was treated as of primary and written language as of secondary importance, and partly the results of theories of learning which set great store by oral repetition. Of course, it is also true that there was a specific demand for courses in spoken rather than written English both for business and from those who found that better and cheaper travel facilities allowed them to study in or go on holiday to English - speaking countries. Their first necessity was to have enough spoken language to survive in that situation.” (Brookes & Grundy. 1998: 10)

For sure, the author considers that the history and experience of humanity throughout centuries is known today thanks mostly to writing, as it has allowed preserving all the knowledge of mankind. So, today people know about important facts of the past, thanks to the written word.

As it has been pointed out by García Cabrera (2010), writing, as a communicative process, involves the writer´s decision concerning the expected reader of the text. The writer must negotiate a match between the purpose of the text and the needs of the reader, as far as these needs can be predicted.

García (2010) also added that writing as speaking, listening and reading, is a linguistic skill which is productive and interactive. Productive, according to this author, because the writer has to encode a message by using a graphic and orthographic system that is to say the written word which is interactive, because the message is written to be read by the reader(s) by using a written text as a via or channel of interaction. The researcher agrees with Garcia because one of the features of writing is its permanence which makes the expression of meaning as a permanent medium–pen and paper that is kept and extended for generations.

Abbott et. al. state that: “When we write in our mother tongue, we often rehearse as we go along, in the form of ‘inner speech’, what we intend to put down on paper.” (Abbott et. al. 1989: 144)

The researcher agrees with what has been stated by Abbott, because it is not the same learning how to write in the mother tongue than learning how to write in a foreign language, mainly in those languages where the relationship phoneme-grapheme is not one to one, as it is the case of English. So, the process of writing in a foreign language takes time and becomes difficult.

The process of writing is by no means linear. It is not fixed but dynamic and unpredictable (Raimes 1985: 229). This author also qualifies this process as ´recursive.´ This term refers to the fact that at any step in the production of a text, writers can go backwards and forwards to any other steps at their own convenience,

Christopher Tribble in his book *Writing* establishes what writers need to know:

1. “Content knowledge: knowledge of the concepts involved in the subject area.

2. Context knowledge: knowledge of the social context in which the text will be read, including the readers' expectations and knowledge of the context alongside which this new text will be read.

3. Language knowledge: knowledge of those aspects of the language (e. g. lexis, syntax, mechanics and punctuation) that is necessary for the completion of the task.

4. Knowledge of the writing process: Knowledge of the most appropriate way to do a task." (Tribble, Christopher. 1996: 43-67)

According to Rosa Antich and Villar (1989), mechanics and punctuation are essential in the process of writing; to assert that, she offered a wide explanation on this concern and included as mechanics of writing the following:

- Characteristics of the manuscript
- Capitalization
- Italics
- Quotation marks
- The hyphen
- Syllabication at the end of line
- Numbers
- The apostrophe

Antich and Villar also state that the mechanics of writing does not affect the expression of thought, because they are merely matters of form. According to these authors, punctuation includes:

- The comma
- The semicolon
- The colon
- The dash
- Parentheses
- Brackets

They also state that, unlike mechanics, punctuation affects understanding if not used appropriately. (Antich, R. and Villar, C. 1989: 10–33)

In reference to what has been stated above, Tribble adds that: "Writers do not follow a sequence of planning, organizing, writing, and then revising since although there are identifiable stages in the composition of most extended texts, typically writers will revisit some of these stages many times before a text is complete. That is why the writing process is non – linear." (Tribble, Christopher. 1996: 39)

All the above criteria coincide that although each person writes using his / her personal style, most of them follow a set of steps to get the final version. These steps are: Gather and organize the information focusing on topic, then write a first draft, after that, revise and rewrite till the final version. About this Brookes & Grundy that planning is not a unitary stage but a distinctive thinking process which writers use over during composition. (Brookes & Grundy. 1998: 9)

The characteristics of the teaching and learning process of writing stated above are highlighted mainly in the first three years of medicine studies.

As Brooks and Grundy state: “Writing (…) is an activity made up of several processes, such as thinking what to write and the order to put it in.”, and conclude saying that, “tackling one by one the elements which determine what we write down is what process writing is about.” (Brookes & Grundy. 1998: 7)

Certainly, writing is a complex process because what makes it successful is the writing of different drafts during the process until the final version, that is why it is said that the writing process is recursive and not linear.

1.2. Essential differences between oral and written language

“Writing is much more than the representation of oral language in a written form. There are features of written discourse not present in oral discourse, or which seem unnatural in oral discourse. The reverse is also true.” (García Cabrera, S. 2010: 221)

The researcher agrees with this affirmation, as it has been said by different authors, there are many differences between writing and speaking because:

1. Writing is more ´attended to´ than speech. We are more conscious of what we are doing and tend to attach more importance to correctness of every kind, knowing that our reader can return to our writing but we cannot, and that we cannot easily rectify misunderstandings on the part of the reader.

2. Writing has text-types of its own, different from those of speech; an example that comes readily to mind is that the way we arrange what we have to say in telephone or face–to–face conversations is different from the arrangement of material in letters or e-mail messages.

3. Writing can make use of visual devices in a way which speech cannot, such visual devices can be compared with the different effects and meanings in spoken English produced by, for instance, different stress and intonation patterns. When we write, not all of us use script consistently, correctly, and effectively.

4. Writing–systems may assist groups of people to communicate, as in the case of Chinese where the different ´dialects´ are mutually unintelligible in spoken form but share a common written form; the position is reverse

in the case of Hindi and Urdu where the different written forms make it difficult for the speakers of those rather similar spoken languages to communicate in writing.

5. Writing is more attended to than speech, we set higher and higher standards for ourselves as we get better at it; so while listening, speaking and reading all feel easier as we become more proficient, the better we get at writing the easier it is to please others, but the harder to please ourselves.

6. Up to now, there have been more varieties of acceptable spoken than written English used internationally. Written English has so far been more uniform, except for relatively minor issues such as the differences between British and American spelling." (Brookes & Grundy.1998: 1 - 3)

According to Abbott, when teachers teach writing, "the writer will be led to think about the difference between spoken and written language." (Abbott et. al. 1989: 141)

This author also added that: "Writing can often be more concise, but it must be fully explicit, whereas spoken communication can often be sketchy and leave things to be clarified later in reply to questions. Writing, sometimes, but not always, needs to be more formal and more impersonal. In writing there are ways in which you can help the addressee's understanding through visual layout– through punctuation, for example. In written communication, also, more care can be devoted to making things easier for the addressee through effective ways of arranging and connecting up what you want to say." (Abbott et. at. 1989: 141)

On the other hand, Antich, (1988); Ur (1999); McCarthy (2000); Fletcher, (2007) stated that there is an essential rank that distinguishes oral from written, and it is precisely because in writing there is only one direction to communicate and there is a physic - temporal distance between the emitter and the receiver; however, when it is desired to fix an idea, the best way to do it is through writing.

"Writing plays an essential role in the formation of the 21st century man, learning how to read and write gives the opportunities to get new understanding about different fields of knowledge." (Nodarse, N. 2010: 28-29)

Ur (2000: 159) and Fletcher (2007: 3) pointed out that the differences between written and spoken discourse is given by:

1. **The Permanence.** Written discourse is fixed and stable so the reading can be done at whatever time, speed and level the individual reader wishes. Spoken text is fleeting, and moves on a real time. (Can be interrupted to request clarification. The speed is set by the speaker.)
2. **The Explicitness.** Written text is explicit; it has to make clear the context and all references to the reader, while in speaking isn't necessary due to speaker-listener mutual interaction. (They are all time in touch)
3. **The Density.** The content is presented much more ´**densely**´ in writing**.** In speaking, the information is ´**diluted** ´ and conveyed through many more words.
4. **The Detachment.** The writing of a text is detached in time and space from its reader. The writer normally works alone and most of the time writes for an unknown. Speaking usually takes place in immediate interaction with known listener and with an immediate feedback.
5. **The Organization.** A written text is usually organized and carefully formulated since its composer has time and opportunity to edict it before making it available for reading. Speaking is improvising as he or she speaks. (Characterized by a disorganized of consciousness´ kind of discourse)
6. **The Slowness of production, speed of reception.** Writing is much slower than speaking. On the other hand, we can usually read a piece of text and understand it much faster than when it is read aloud by someone.
7. **The Standard Language.** Writing normally uses a generally acceptable standard variety of the language, whereas speaking may sometimes be in a regional or other limited-context dialect. Various spoken Dialects may even be mutually incomprehensible, while written language is universally understood.
8. **A learnt Skill.** Most people acquire the spoken language (at least of their mother tongue) intuitively, whereas the written form is in most cases taught and learned.

As it was said above, writing is a skill that, in the majority of the cases, “requires some kind of instruction in the school system” (Rodríguez Ruiz. 1999: 2).

Writing is perhaps, the most difficult skill to be acquired, even in the mother tongue, as it requires the ability of the learner to take the pencil appropriately and drive it correctly to spell the different graphemes of the words. On the other hand, to organize and put the ideas from the mind to paper requires to have a wide knowledge of vocabulary and to know how to write the words correctly, and it is not always easy to find the right word in the right moment for the right place.

It also “involves (…) the application of grammatical rules of a language to form grammatically correct sentences and the selection of correct grammar and vocabulary to achieve the communicative purpose.” (Rodríguez Ruiz.1999: 2)

Besides the statements above, from the writer view point the motivation of the students to get involve in the teaching and learning process of writing brings them many possibilities which are related to the improving of their level of consciousness over the linguistic processes characteristics from students´ mother tongue in general and of their way of writing in particular; it also helps to develop the abilities to learn the foreign language, as writing becomes a way to express their thoughts and feelings better; writing increases their ability to organize their ideas and allows students to understand better other cultures, which helps them to respect and accept other people the way they are.

Writing also allows to improve the cultural level of the learners, offering the opportunity of better jobs after graduating and to defend their identity, culture, and ideology when being in a context different from theirs.” (Vila, C. 2005: 24 – 25)

Donn Byrne looks the difficulties to write correctly under three headings: *psychological, linguistic*, and *cognitive*. (Byrne, D.1998: 4 - 5)

1. **Psychological.** While speaking is the most common way of communication among us, and gives the opportunity to have someone physically present, “writing is essentially a solitary activity (…) without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback, (which) makes the action of writing difficult.”

2. **Linguistic.** “Oral communication allows us to have the help of the participant(s), who usually encourage us to keep it going. On the other hand, speaking is spontaneous and we have little time to correct or organizing sentences; we repeat, backtrack, and expand and so on, in accordance with the way people react to what we say.”

   “In writing, we have to compensate for the absence of these features: we have to keep the channel of communication open through our efforts and to ensure (…) that the text we produce can be interpreted on its own.”

3. **Cognitive.** “Speaking is a skill we acquire while growing and spend, normally, much time doing it. We normally do this apparently without much effort and thought and talk just because we want to do it about anything.” And added that: “Writing, is learned through a process of instruction: we have to master the written form of the language and to learn certain structures which are less used in speech, or perhaps not used at all, but which are important for effective communication in writing. We also have to learn how to organize our ideas in such a way that they can be understood by a reader who is not present and perhaps that is not known to us.” (Byrne, D.1998: 4 - 5)

As Vila states: “The development of the written communication in English includes semantics and pragmatics, due to the achievement of a real expression, is not enough to know what a person writes (semantic), but also to know the intention you have when writing and the effect that it produces on the receptor of the message (pragmatic).” (Vila, C. 2005: 7)

Rodriguez Ruiz (1999) asserts that the development of the writing skill depends on the personality of the learner, though some students can express themselves orally without inhibitions, they may feel inhibited as soon as they take pen and paper in their hands. Such students require a clearly defined topic, an opening sentence, an initial paragraph, or even a framework to start writing.

“The introduction of a British series in the teaching of English with the communicative approach, allowed the integration and development of the four main skills of the language, showing the great importance to teach writing as a

skill and as a means of communication." (Forteza, R.2005, cited in Vila, C. 2005: 5)

"In the teaching and learning process of writing, many teachers focus on the grammatical well-formedness of a composition. However, it seems that lexis may be the element requiring more attention. Research has shown that lexical errors tend to impede comprehension more than grammatical errors, and native-speakers judges tend to rate lexical errors as more serious than grammatical errors." (Schmitt, N. 2000: 155)

Byrne states that: "On a personal level, most of us use writing to make a note of something (things we want to do or want others to do, like our shopping list), and to keep records of things we want to remember. We send messages and write letters to friends, and a few of us keep diaries. Most of us have to fill in forms from time to time (…) and occasionally we write formal letters (…) Apart from this, the amount of writing we do regularly will relate to our professional life. A few of us, on the other hand, are likely to spend any time writing poetry or fiction." (Byrne, D. 1998: 2)

In this case, what Byrne states above, is very closely related to the present research which has the aim to improve the writing skill in a communicative way throughout the writing of messages, notes, reports, letters, etc.

1.3. Approaches to the teaching and learning process of writing

In order to deal with the different didactic approaches in the teaching and learning process of writing, Tribble (1996); Cassany (1999); García and Vicente (2001) Pincas (2001), and Fletcher (2007), asserted that there are basic methodological approaches to develop the teaching and learning process of writing. They are:

- The approach focused on the text. (Product or Model approach)
- The approach focused on the writer. (Process approach)
- The approach focused on the reader. (Gender or Grammar approach)
- The approach focused on functions. (Functional approach)

The approach focused on the text or product is known as Product or Model approach, Tribble (1996); Cassany (1999); Pincas (2001); García y Vicente

(2001), this approach is based on the analysis of real text features, that is to say, the final product. Writing process has to start from a model text which is analyzed and is used as the basic text for a task, which mainly consists of the writing of a similar text of the basic model. (Tribble, 1996). Hence that Pica (1986) uses the term Model Approach.

In this approach, the main emphasis is given by the students´ product form; its main features are: Its main goal is to teach the students to write texts that are mainly found in educational and/or personal contexts (Forteza, 2005). The rhetoric patterns and the grammatical rules used in different kind of texts are presented in model compositions which have the function of showing the rules students should follow in their own writing. According to Hyland (2002).

The use of models can play an important role in the teaching and learning process of writing, mainly when it is taught together with reading.

The author considers that the limitations of this approach are basically when the students follow a model they do it unconsciously without having a proper analysis and reflection on what they are doing, limiting their autonomy, creativity and independence.

The Process approach has to do with the writer or the emitter of the message. (Tribble, 1996; Cassany, 1990)

This approach focuses on the act of the composition process throughout different stages till getting to the final version of the text. (Cassany, 1990; Murcia, 1993; Tribble, 1996).

Tribble suggests four stages for the process: “pre-writing, composition, revision and publication.” (Tribble, 1996: 38)

Pica adds: "…this way, it is not given so much importance to the final product, and it allows students to express themselves independently.” Pica (1986: 7). This has given the possibility to analyze the writing as a process to create, discover and understand the meaning of what they are writing instead of writing with a preconceived and well-structured meaning.

This process approach is not lineal; it is recursive because there is a close relationship among all the sub-process. Different authors assume the advantages

of this approach, as in the classroom the professor should emphasize on the process to get the final product and not on the product as such.

The Gender or Grammar approach highlights textual writing or academic writing. This approach is based on the person of the reader as a fundamental reference of the written production (Tribble, 1996). According to this author, "…The writing is a social act in which writers should be conscious on the context they are writing on."

The approach focused on functions or Functional approach, states that writing is learned through the comprehension and prediction of the different written texts (Ruiz. 1999)

Artíles (2006), asserts that this approach is born from a communicative methodology; it follows the tradition of notional-functional methods developed in Europe in the 60´s, in which the most important thing was to teach a language to use it; that is, to communicate.

For Cassany (1990), the language is not a close group of knowledge to be memorized by the students, but a useful communicative tool to get things; namely, to ask for a coffee, to read a newspaper, to express feelings, to ask for a given information, to show kindness, etc. A language should be taught in the classroom taking into account this point of view. The main objective of a class is to learn how to do a determined function in the target language.

The most important aspect of this approach is the emphasis on communication or in the use of the target language, in opposition to the grammatical language where the most important thing is the language structure and the grammatical rules.

As it has been stated , writing is a skill used to convey information, opinions, etc. to people that generally are not near or are unknown to the writer so, it is necessary to write as well as possible not to provoke misunderstanding to the reader in any circumstances.

Ur (2000) pointed out that writing is used as a means, and as both, means and end by different courses, and it has been as:

As a means: Writing is widely used within foreign language courses as a convenient means for engaging with aspects of the language other than writing itself.

As an end: Other activities take as their main objective writing itself.

As both means and end: Combines both original writing with the learning or practice of some other skill or content. (Ur. P. 2000:162)

All of the statements above are very important to develop the teaching and learning process of writing through intercultural communication.

According to Cassany (1990), all the different approaches can be complemented one another, but the ones that should be highlighted in the teaching of writing are the Process and the Functional approaches.

García and Vicente stated that: “The selection of a determined approach to teach to write in an effective form is an important aspect to take into consideration. It depends on different factors such as, the idea the teacher has on what is the written production, the starting point of the students, the end followed, each type of writing, the personal preferences, etc.” (2001: 117)

For the proposal of this research work, the author assumes two of the above didactic approaches to develop writing through intercultural communication, they are the product or model approach and the process approach, because for the students is very important to familiarize with an authentic written model but it is much more important when teaching writing as an end to teach students the adequate process to write a good text, that is why teaching the writing stages is so important. (Planning and organizing the ideas, writing the draft, revising, rewriting the final version):

As it has been pointed out by Cassany (1999), Vicente y Garcia (2001) and Fletcher (2007) all the approaches are very important but the professor decides which one(s) select and use in the teaching and learning process of writing, and it depends on the students´ needs, characteristics and context.

The greater knowledge a professor has on the different approaches mentioned above, the better conditions he/she will have to understand and select the most proper of them to improve the development of the writing skill in his/her students.

From the theoretical point of view, it would be good to say that all of these approaches have contributed with different elements to the teaching and learning process of writing in the teaching of English as a foreign language.

1.3.1. The teaching and learning process of English writing in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara

When the Higher Medical Institute of Villa Clara was inaugurated in the year 1976, the English syllabus began to be taught only in first and second years of the medicine studies, but the teaching and learning process was based on reading, the text book series used was English I, II and III, which contents were based on technical medicine vocabulary and writing was not taught as an end it was used as a means to fix other skills and elements of the language such as reading, grammar and vocabulary. The objectives of texts were to develop the students' reading skill and interpretation. The title of the books used at that time was "English". These readings were mostly about medical topics. The development of the teaching and learning process was totally based on traditional methods.

"This situation made that this language fail to be taught in most of the medical studies until later, when it began to be taught again in the technical and medical studies, but only with the objective of preparing the students in the skill of reading and translation of texts." (Vila, C. 2005: 16)

With the introduction of the Communicative approach in the Medical Institute in the middle 80´s, the English teaching and learning process was changed and improved and a new series of text book was introduced and the teaching of the four linguistic skills was stimulated in a communicative way.

The Series "Kernel", which consisted of four books, from one to three and the last one named "Kernel Plus", substituted the previous books and began to be used in all the medical universities of the country as it was considered that the structure of these books was appropriate to achieve the objectives of the teaching of this language: the oral communication with English speaking people, and the comprehension of books, magazines and other scientific issues that are generally printed in English. (Vila, C. 2005: 3). This series was created in Great Britain by Robert O´Neill and Muriel Higgins.

In this series writing was merely used to develop others aspects of the language, that is to say, writing was used as a means and its teaching and learning process was based on product or model approach, which did not allow students´ autonomy, independence and creativity about writing.

As Vila (2005) declared these books signified a revolution in the teaching and learning process of all linguistic skills of English syllabuses in all the medical Institutes as the main objective no longer consisted of the mere interpretation of texts; it went beyond as they gave the opportunity to the students after graduating to communicate reasonably appropriate in the target language." (Vila, C.: 18). The scope was the teaching of English from the lowest level to quite advance. These books were used until more or less the middle 90´s, when they were replaced by the Series "Changes".

This new series was also created in Great Britain by Professor Jack C. Richards, and consisted of three books, namely, "Changes One"; "Changes Two", and "Changes Three".

Like the Series "Kernel" mentioned above, the scope of this new one was the teaching of English from the lowest level to a quite advanced one.

This series was adopted at that time because it was said it was more modern than the previous one to develop a communicative teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language, and adapted better to the new situation in the teaching of English, taking into account the topics it dealt with.

In this series writing was taught through the product or model approach and used as a means to fix other aspects of the language, not as a skill. This series was used until the middle 2000´s, when a new book appeared; this time written by a Cuban author, B.Ed José Suarez Lescano; the book is named, "Vision One".

At first, this book only substituted "Changes One" for first year of Medicine, Psychology and Dentistry, while a Cuban collective of authors from different Universities of Medical Sciences were working on the elaboration of the next volumes for the rest of the years of the Medicine studies. However, Psychology only uses these books until second year from which on, this specialty begins to

use the book “Psycho”, the same way Dentistry uses “Dentistry” from third year on.

General English Cycle is taught from first through third year of Medicine. Fourth year of the specialty begins to take “Medicine through English I”, and in fifth year the students take “Medicine through English II.”

As the titles suggest, students begin to go into medical terms by using these two books also written, as stated above, by a collective of Cuban authors from different medical universities of the country.

Currently, in the third year of Medicine studies, in the syllabuses English V and English VI the four linguistic skills are taught through the text book Vision III, which covers the four basic skills and its main target is to develop students´ knowledge on vocabulary, grammar, culture and value systems as well as to prepare students to face the challenge they will meet when learning English for Specific Purpose (ESP) in the Medicine studies.

In the methodological aspects of the book, the collective of authors suggests to use the task based-learning theory which has to do with meaningful activities in oral and written reports. The teaching and learning process of writing skill is based on the product or model approach and writing is used as a means to develop other structures and aspects of the language.

As it could be seen so far, the teaching of English has suffered lots of changes throughout the years since the moment it was decided to include it in the studies of Medicine in Cuba. This situation obeys to the new responsibilities assigned to the Cuban medical staff that has to go beyond the seas to attend people who need medical services; to teach or to research.

This necessity obliges Cuban Health professionals to acquire good knowledge on English language, which, as it has been stated, has become a world language of technology and sciences, and in fact, the most appropriate to communicate all around the world. So, it has not only an academic role, but also it constitutes an instrument for the work of our Health professionals (Vila, C. 2005: 19 – 20)

The development of the teaching and learning process of the writing skill in the syllabuses English V and English VI in the context of the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara has been through different traditional methods and text books up to the current trend of the communicative approach with the implementation of text book Vision III, but throughout the centuries the didactic approach used in the teaching and learning process of the writing skill has always been the **Product or Model Approach** and as Ur (2000) pointed out, the process of writing in this context has been taught only **As a means.** Writing is widely used within foreign language courses as a convenient means for engaging with aspects of the language other than writing itself.

This has basically been the evolution of the teaching and learning process of English throughout the years after the triumph of the Revolution in the Universities of Medical Sciences in Cuba and, specifically, in Villa Clara.

1.4. Intercultural communication through writing in the EFL classroom

It is important to assess the different positions to define the concepts of culture and intercultural communication.

For many people, the word *"*culture" means just to know how to read and to write. Some people consider that if a person knows how to do these two things and have some knowledge about history, geography and some other aspects of intellectual life is a cultivated or cultured person. In fact, this is not so far from reality.

But *"*culture" is much more than that. It is a broader concept that affects all the people who live in a country and comprises traditions, customs, character of these people, religion, and way of seeing the world; it is a particular way of thinking, beliefs, and language, which is very close related to the culture of a country. All of these aspects enclose the identity of a country with the people living in it, and form the values (the part not seen of the culture) of the peoples of the whole world.

Some definitions about culture have been given by different authors, one of the earliest is the one provided by Edward B. Taylor in 1871*,* who defined culture as

the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society.

Another definition was stated Hofstede who defined it as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another, Garbey (2010) added in this sense that Culture includes systems of values and values are among the buildings blocks of culture. Otherwise, Trompenaars stated that culture is a shared system of meanings. It dictates what we pay attention to, how we act, what we value.

Some authors consider culture as an iceberg; some aspects of it are seen, but there is another part that lies lower and cannot be seen. Only the highest part of this iceberg can be noticed, and includes artifacts and behavior; but there are values and beliefs in the lowest part of the iceberg, where people keep nature, human activity, and social relationships.

From the Marxist point of view culture is: "…closely linked to the human beings´ transforming social practice, being the source and existing independently of our ideas. Culture cannot exist without human beings who find their origin and source of life in culture. It is the result of the human values, both material and spiritual, together with the activities carried by them." (Garbey Savigne, E. 2010: 13)

"Culture" refers itself to a set of ideas in accordance with people acts. (Iglesias Casal, I**:** 2)

From an anthropological perspective, Vivelo, cited by Iglesias Casal in her work, states that "culture" can be defined as "an adaptation mechanism: the totality of tools, acts, thoughts and institutions by means of which a population maintains itself." (Iglesias Casal, I: 3)

Culture has sometimes been defined as the literature or civilization of a country. (Brooks, 1997; cited by Hassan. 2008: 46)

But "culture" not only influences the people of a whole country, it also can be shared by people of one company, one region, one social ethnic group or one profession. (Garbey Savigne, E. 2010: 11)

Fidel Castro defined culture as: " It is closely related to the idea of freedom, when he said that "comprehensive general culture which embodies not only the given concepts of culture but also sees culture as a course of action in which ideas play a vital role in the struggle for mankind." (Garbey Savigne, E. 2010: 14)

Professor Savigne added that: "To some extent, all the cultures are ethnocentric, this is natural, and since people have been brought up thinking that their way is ´the natural' way to do things. However, ethnocentrism can also lead to cultural misunderstanding if it is not recognized because it provides us with only limited choice of human thinking and behaving." (Garbey Savigne, E. 2010: 24)

After having done an analysis of the different given definitions of culture, the researcher assumes the one stated by Fidel Castro, because in few words a complete concept is expressed, from a holistic view point.

Another important definition that should be analyzed is Intercultural Communication which is dialectically interrelated with culture.

Iglesias Casal refers to intercultural communication by stating that: "It can be defined as the symbolic, interpretative, transactional, and contextual process in which a certain level of difference among people is enough important as to create different expectations and interpretations about what is considered competent behaviors that should be used to create shared meanings." (Iglesias Casal, I: 8 – 9)

Garbey Savigne defined intercultural communication as: "The interactions among people from different cultures; it means that some sort of sensitivity and understanding." (Garbey Savigne. 2010) He also added that: "To be intercultural means to have the necessary skill to be positive in difficult and stressful situations. It means to have the skill to use appropriate nonverbal communication cues, the strength to survive culture shock when arriving in a foreign country and the ability to be aware of and maintain your own cultural identity without jeopardizing intercultural relations." (Garbey Savigne, E. 2010: 24)

The researcher partly coincides with the definition given by professor Garbey about intercultural communication, however, the researcher considers that intercultural communication also implies the attitude that a person should have to

live among people of different cultural background offering respect to their way of thinking and behaving. All these concepts give an idea of respect and tolerance towards and among the people of the same and different countries when living together or when visiting one another for any reason; be it on business, as immigrants or just as tourists.

It is not enough to teach a foreign language if we do not take into account the teaching of the culture of the people that speak the target language, and there are many reasons to think so. To prepare students to be able to face the situations they will probably have to deal with when working abroad or just meet, live and share with people with different cultural background, professors´ duty is to make medical students aware of cultural diversity and multiculturalism and train them to cope with the new situations under the respect to this diversity.

Learning the syntactic and semantic rules of the language is necessary, but not sufficient for communication in that language. Byram and Morgan (1994), (cited by Hassan, 2008: 45), stated that: “knowledge of the grammatical system of a language (grammatical competence) has to be complemented by an understanding of culture-specific meanings (communicative or cultural competence).”

Thus, to teach a second language, one must teach the culture of that language. In fact, according to Fairclough, (2001), (cited by Hassan. 2008: 45) “disregarding aspects such as pragmatics and sociolinguistics in teaching foreign languages can only cause misunderstandings and leads to cross - cultural miscommunication. Thus, language is not an autonomous construct, but a set of social practices.” In other words, “in order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with culturally appropriate behavior.” (Hassan, M. A. 2008: 47 - 48)

Closely related with the teaching of any foreign language and its culture, Hassan asserts that teachers must make their students aware that “there are no superior or inferior cultures, and that there are differences among groups within the target language.” (Hassan, M. A. 2008: 50)

1.5. The system of activities as a scientific result

The systemic approach constitutes a group of conceptual models which are tools for the study of phenomena and it supposes a multilateral analysis. It is characterized by its integrating perspective.
Many kinds of systems have been created or nominated by man to facilitate his work and to organize things, as Martínez González states in his work: "…there are different kinds of systems; some not conditioned by the human action, such as the solar system, the nervous system, etc., but others have been created by the human beings to organize their scientific knowledge and development, which constitute a scientific achievement at earlier times." (Martínez González,2009. L. E: 2-3)

According to this author the common characteristic of any system is the integrating part of other smaller ones inside them; and also added that the word ´system´ has been closely related to the history of sciences in general and to the development of Philosophy for centuries. It also has a great significance related with the holistic approach, the general theory of systems and the systemic approach. A system should take into account the following categories:

- **The general:** it groups the main characteristics that appear, with no exception, in all the objects of a class.
- **The particular:** it integrates the specific characteristics of some of the objects of a given class.
- **The singular:** it determines the particular characteristics of an object, which makes them unique, and allows grouping them in some given classes.

All of these philosophical categories express the relationships between the whole and the part; the complex and the simple, and also the analysis and synthesis." (Martínez González, 2009. L. E.: 5)

"So, a system, to be considered as such, should have the quality of a close relationship among its components." (Martínez González, 2009.L. E.: 8)

Some other authors have created their own definitions of what a system is. So, we must say that these different concepts of systems were also taken into consideration for this research work, some of which are described below:

Alvarez de Zayas defined a system as: “A group of elements very close related among them, which keep the system direct or indirectly joined to its form, and which global behavior follows an objective.” (Alvarez de Zayas, C.1992: 12)

Vigotsky defined a system as “A group of components interrelated among them, from a static and dynamic point of view and which performance is aimed at the achieving of determined objectives.” (Vigotski, L. S. 1987: 32)

Chávez, on his part, defines the system as: “An analytical construction more or less theoretical that treats the modification of the static structural aspect of a determined pedagogical system or the creation of a new one which end is to obtain better results in certain practical educative activity.” (Chávez. 1999: 25)

All the authors mentioned above coincide when they consider that a system consists of a group of elements very closely related. This necessary interrelation constitutes its unity or systemic character, and also, they coincide when asserting its contribution in the theoretical order.

Although there are not great differences among these definitions, the author to assumes the definition given by Carlos Alvarez de Zayas, as he gives in a very clear way, the basic characteristics of the concept: a group of elements, their interrelation and the unity among them, all aimed at the accomplishment of a given objective.

Partial Conclusion

In this chapter the theoretical foundations that support the teaching and learning process of writing through intercultural communication, its evolution, the different didactic approaches to teach writing and the system of activities as a scientific result have been analyzed; the next chapter will be devoted to the application of different methods and instruments to get the diagnosis.

Chapter 2. Methodology of research and diagnosis of needs

This chapter discusses the methodology employed in the study. It outlines the research design, describes the sampling process, the data collection and data analysis procedures adopted in the study. In each instance, the chapter shows how each subsection and research aims are integrated.

To deal with diagnosis of needs in a foreign language, it would be impossible to fail to mention what Hutchinson and Waters stated: "…It is not the needs in a foreign language but the lack what really determine the curriculum as professors are much more interested in the existing gap between the wished competence and the real one that students have; in other words, in the difference between the expected situation and the real situation the students have…" (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 53 – 64)

Santiago Borges points out that: "…the diagnosis is just a process of taking decisions that is conceived on the basis of consciously collected information with the aim of designing a coherent system of pedagogical actions that satisfy the specific needs of each individual…" (1996: 10)

All these ideas were taken into account to determine and set up the needs of the present research work.

2.1. Methodology and stages of research

The methodology corresponds mainly to a qualitative paradigm because it is based on the experience, perceptions, and suggestions of students and professors regarding the writing skill from an intercultural perspective. Nevertheless, the quantitative paradigm was used to complement the findings obtained.

The whole research process was organized into three stages:

- 1st stage: diagnosis of the current situation about the writing skill from an intercultural perspective.
- 2nd stage: design of a system of activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication of third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara

- 3rd stage: assessment of the proposal by specialists´ criterion.

2.2. Context of research

The research was carried out in the University of Medical Sciences “Dr. Serafín Ruiz de Zárate Ruiz” of Villa Clara at the Medicine Faculty.

The **population** was made up of 3rd year medical students and 6 professors of English. Third year is the last of the “General English” Cycle, prior to the “English with Specific Purposes” that students take in further academic years. Also, in their 3rd year, students should develop the writing skill, so that they are better prepared for writing scientific texts in English in their future as professionals.

The **sample** consisted of one group of 25 students chosen intentionally. For this selection other additional criteria were taken into account:

- Variety of cultural background of students (3 Venezuelan; 2 Bolivian; 3 Honduran; 2 Nicaraguan; 2 Peruvian; 4 Argentinean; 3 Mexican; 6 Cubans)
- Most students showed difficulty in their English writing skill
- Closeness to the researcher
- Willingness to cooperate

For the selection of the professors, these criteria were considered:

- Academic rank (full professor, associate, assistant)
- Scientific degree (PhD, Master)
- Teaching experience with third year students
- Willingness to cooperate

2.3. Categories and Subcategories of analysis

This sample was selected to carry out a descriptive study based on a transversal dialectical-materialistic methodology based on a qualitative approach for which it was necessary to determine the categories of analysis.

Category 1. Cognitive: To have knowledge on the writing skill. Contextualized as, "…knowledge of those aspects of the language (e. g., focus the topic, lexis, syntax, mechanics and punctuation) which are necessary for the completion of the task." (Tribble, C. 1996: 43-67). Students´ knowledge on focus the topic, English writing coherence, English writing cohesion, English writing punctuation, and English writing grammar.

Sub-category. To have knowledge on the English writing skill.

Indicators:

1.1. Students´ knowledge on focus the topic.
1.2. Students´ knowledge coherence.
1.3. Students´ Knowledge on cohesion.
1.4. Students´ Knowledge on punctuation.
1.5. Students´ Knowledge on grammar.

Category 2. Procedural: Contextualized as: To know how to write, applying the knowledge on focus the topic, lexis, syntax, mechanics and punctuation, which are necessary for the completion of a written task.

Sub-category. To know how to write applying the knowledge.

Indicators:

2.1 Focus the topic.

2.2 Coherence.

2.3 Cohesion.

2.4 Punctuation.

2.5 Grammar.

For the measurement of the categories, different methods and instruments have been selected and designed, which are presented in the next subheading.

2.4. Methods

During the research process, different methods were used, which are explained as follows.

Theoretical Methods

- **Historical-logical:** To evaluate the historical evolution of the object of study in this research.
- **Analysis and synthesis:** To analyze the problem in order to determine its characteristics in the context of the present situation in the research.
- **Induction and deduction:** To determine generalities through the study of the particularities of the situation.
- **Structural and systemic:** To design the different elements and parts of the system.
- **Modeling:** To model the different elements and parts of the system.

Empirical Methods

Analysis of documents: This method was applied to analyze and determine the current situation of the writing skill development through intercultural communication in the syllabuses English V and English VI and the previous studies carried out related to this topic and context. (**Annex 1)**

The analysis of the syllabuses showed that the students should know and respect the existence of the different customs and cultural features for peace, solidarity and peaceful coexistence among peoples, as biodiversity and environmental care. However, the syllabuses did not state how to deal with the knowledge on intercultural communication, neither its relation with the writing skill, as the rest of the courses designed to be applied in Cuba; it only emphasized the oral skill, but writing, is based on the product or model approach; so students are given models and they have to write a similar text.

In general, this method gave the opportunity to realize that the writing skill and intercultural communication are not dealt with neither in the syllabuses nor in the text book “Vision III” suggested.

Participant observation: This method was applied to observe the students´ performance related to the writing skill development through intercultural communication based on two moments. **(Annex 2)** The results showed that:

1. All students had problems when expressing themselves in English writing, because they made lots of mistakes as they could not focus on the topic

due to lack of vocabulary, cohesion and coherence problems, and with punctuation.

2. Most of the time it was very difficult for the sampled students to write a short text in English about any topic, and mainly those related to intercultural communication.
3. Students were not interested in sharing intercultural communication. They expressed that they felt disappointed because they did not have enough knowledge on the topic of intercultural communication either in Spanish or in English. They said that they knew a lot about their habits and customs, but they did not know how to express it in English
4. The observation proved that in relation to knowledge in English writing, 3 students had K; 10 had SK, and 13 had NK. Concerning the use of each indicator 3 students were Excellent (E); 10 were Good (G) and 13 were Poor (P).
5. Most of the time students lacked self confidence to share criteria about intercultural communication, what represented an obstacle to develop the writing skill through it.
6. The writing skill through intercultural communication was developed only occasionally because the content of the text book is not adequate to do it more frequently, and neither the syllabuses take this aspect into account nor the professors introduce this kind of teaching. (writing through intercultural communication)

This method gave as a result the existing problems with writing through intercultural communication.

Individual interview: Applied to determine the students´ opinion about their knowledge on the writing skill and intercultural communication. Category 1. Cognitive. **(Annex 3)**

With the application of this instrument, it was possible to prove that:

1. Most of the students disliked writing; they stated it was difficult for them to do it in Spanish and much more to do it in English which is a foreign language very different from theirs. They also argued that they would really like to learn it and do it because they consider it is important for their future health professional lives.

2. All the students asserted that they knew how to write very simple texts like a note or about personal information, but it was not easy for them because they did not know how to manage the English writing rules.
3. The majority of the students referred the difficulties they had to organize their thoughts to write in English, and they added that it is not an easy task for them; since the sentences are not organized the same way as in Spanish and they do not know how to write in English with coherence, cohesion, correct punctuation, vocabulary and grammar.
4. Regarding what they understood by intercultural communication, the answers of each of the students were associated with their customs, habits, beliefs, and traditions; which is not far from the real definition.
5. The whole sampled group agreed that it is really important for them to have an adequate knowledge on how to apply the intercultural communication in their daily lives. They also stated that the main importance of intercultural communication lies on the respect for other cultures, behaviors, traditions and religions. Also, they considered that having vast knowledge on intercultural communication would make them better health professionals to help, heal, understand and respect people from different countries based on internationalist feelings.
6. In reference to sharing viewpoints in English about intercultural communication related to each of their countries, most of them stated that it was not really easy for them, because they are limited due to their lack of correct vocabulary about the topic; they also added their lack of enough knowledge on English punctuation, coherence and cohesion, and grammar; but they would like to learn writing through intercultural communication in English because it prepares them to be better health professionals.

The result of this instrument asserted the real situation the students have related to writing in English through intercultural communication.

Individual interview: Applied to 3rd year professors of English to determine the current situation of the teaching of writing through intercultural communication in the syllabus. (**Annex 4)**

1. About the treatment given to the writing skill through the syllabuses, all the

professors asserted that much more importance is given to speaking than to writing, and added that any methodological guidance to teach writing is included. They also stated that the writing skill is almost never taught in 3rd year English classes.

2. With regards to the textbook “Vision III”, they stated that most of the activities designed for writing not always correspond to the communicative approach and do not favor the teaching of writing through intercultural communication.
3. The whole sample declared that it is quite difficult for their students to organize and express their thoughts when writing in English, but they also added that the students admit the importance of writing and reading for their future lives as health professionals.
4. In reference to the teaching of intercultural communication in the English classes, all the professors (6) answered that sometimes it was possible to do it indirectly, even though it is not included in the syllabuses, and the students prefer much more to speak on the topic than to write about it; they would like, but it is hard for them to do it.
5. All of the sampled professors (6) considered that teaching their students intercultural communication would make them better health professionals who would be ready to fulfill their work in any place that they would be assigned to, and it would also allow them to be in better conditions to get scientific information from different cultures of the world.
6. With reference to teaching intercultural communication through writing, all the sampled professors stated that writing is the most difficult skill to be taught and the most difficult to learn, because it requires a well-prepared professor; it is even difficult for them to do it in their native language, so the teaching of writing through intercultural communication is much more difficult for teachers to teach and for students to learn. They considered important to have some methodological support to teach intercultural communication in their classes. They added that their students would like to learn more about it as that would be very important for them.
7. All the professors stated that they almost never develop the writing skill through intercultural communication, because the time devoted to writing in the syllabuses is not enough, though it would be interesting.

8. All the professors said that students are not able to write complex texts in English, mainly those related to intercultural communication.

Pedagogical test: Applied to diagnose the current situation of third year medical students on writing through intercultural communication. Category 2. Procedural **(Annex 5)**

This test was applied based on these parameters: **good quality; accepted; poor.**

Good quality: the student is able to write using correct grammar, spelling, cohesion, coherence, punctuation and knowledge on the given topic.

Accepted: the student is able to write, but having less than four (4) mistakes on the aspects stated above and has little knowledge about the given topic.

Poor: the student is able to write, but having more than four (4) mistakes on the aspects stated above and is not able to express himself about the given topic.

From this test, it was found that most of the students were poor in their writing through intercultural communication. **(Annex 5)**.

Methodological triangulation: Applied to obtain the points of contact and the differences among the different methods used.

The triangulation is an essential procedure the use of which requires from the researcher´s skill to make that the contrast among the different perceptions leads to right and valid interpretations.

It is a powerful procedure of analysis that offers the researcher different ways to prove, through crossed verification, the different points of view, methods, spaces and time among others. Particularly, it refers to the application or combination of various methodologies of research in the study of the same phenomenon, which could be applied in qualitative, quantitative or mixed research. (Hernández, G. PhD. 2011: 6)

In this research, the triangulation was applied to the participant observation, students' individual interview and the pedagogical test in which the results were as follows:

- Students of the sampled group had problems to express themselves in writing simple texts in English.
- The entire sample was not so interested in writing through intercultural communication, but they would like to learn how to express themselves about it.
- The sampled group showed lack of self confidence when sharing criteria on intercultural communication.
- The sampled group demonstrated their difficulties to organize and write their ideas on intercultural communication in English, and even in Spanish.
- The students' individual interview and the pedagogical test asserted that the sampled group associated the intercultural communication definition with having knowledge on habits, customs, traditions, etc. of other peoples.
- The participant observation, the interview and the pedagogical test showed the students´ lack of knowledge and use of the needed rules to write in English.

Triangulation allowed the researcher to diagnose strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning process of writing through intercultural communication of 3rd year medical students.

Strengths

- The sampled group would like to learn how to express themselves about intercultural communication through writing.
- The students were motivated to writing through intercultural communication.
- The professors considered important to have methodological supporting materials to teach writing through intercultural communication.
- The English teaching staff of the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara is well prepared to develop a well-qualified teaching and learning process of writing.

Weaknesses

- **T**he students had limited knowledge on writing through intercultural communication in English; however, they associated it with habits,

customs, traditions, etc. of other peoples.

- The students did not know how to write properly in English because of their lack of vocabulary, punctuation, coherence and cohesion in this language and also, they had problems focusing on the topic.
- The students demonstrated their difficulties to organize and write their ideas on intercultural communication in English.
- Students showed lack of self confidence to share criteria by writing through intercultural communication in English.
- Lack of methodological supporting materials to teach writing through intercultural communication in English.
- Lack of time in the syllabus for the teaching and learning of writing.

Partial Conclusion

This chapter outlined the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. The data collection instruments used in the study, such as interviews, participant observation, and a pedagogical test, were also discussed. In addition, the data analysis process was explained. The importance of ensuring validity and reliability was also taken into consideration. The next chapter will introduce the proposal of the system of written activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication, as well as its assessment by specialists´ criterion.

Chapter 3. A system of activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication in third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara

3.1. Theoretical framework of the system of activities proposed

The proposal consists of a system of activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication in third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara.

The idea of the system as a pedagogical and scientific has been studied by different authors; therefore, there are various types of systems, such as the didactic systems, systems of activities, systems of actions, task-based system, among others.

Different authors have given the definition of a system of activities and all of them have coincided in the following elements:

- A system is a form of the objective reality that can be studied and represented by man.
- A system is a group of elements distinguished by a certain order.
- A system has relative limits; its elements are only “detachable”, “limited” for their study with certain purposes.
- Each system belongs to a wider system; it is “connected”, it is part of another system.
- The idea of a system surpasses the idea of the sum of the parts that form it. It is a new quality.

As it has been stated in chapter 1, among so many definitions studied so far, the author assumes the one given by Álvarez de Zayas (1999), who defined a system of activities as: “A group of components interrelated among them, from the static and dynamic point of view, whose performance is aimed at the achievement of a specific objective of reality.” And he added that, “In all systems there are two types of functional relations:

- **Of coordination:** Expressing the organic interrelationship among its components.

- **Of subordination:** Expressing a subsystem that fulfills certain functions

within a wider system."

Based on the above definition, the proposal of activities of this research assumes

1. The systematic organization of the object due to:
    - Its selection (implication)
    - The activities distinguished among them (differentiation)
    - The activities are interrelated (dependance)
2. The most important features of the proposal are:
    - The activities proposed have been very carefully designed taking into account the experience accumulated through years of teaching and considering the students' needs.
    - The proposal covers all units of the textbook used in this academic year.
    - The activities were designed considering different issues such as customs, nature, culture, family, religion, proverbs, and history; all of them closely related with other cultural background different from that of the students´.

In general, the proposal corresponds with these requirements:

1. The general didactic principles

- **The accessibility principle:** Because the activities are designed according to the different teaching cycles: from the easiest to the most complex.
- **The systematization principle:** Because the development of the writing skill is only possible through a systematic practice.

2. The communicative principles: assuming the ones recontextualized by Nodarse 2010 to the teaching and learning process of writing.

3. Two of the didactic approaches of the teaching and learning process of writing: Product and Process Approaches.

The proposal intends to cover these areas:

- **Cognitive:** Closely related to the contents and skills that students should know; it has to do with the development of the communicative competence in the English language and with it, in the writing skill, with a high degree of development of the linguistic competence. This area also implies the

development of capacities that allow the cognitive independence.

- **Methodology:** Related to **how to do it**, that is, the most adequate methods, techniques, and procedures through which students might acquire, in an effective way, the knowledge and the needed skills.
- **Research:** Related to the improvement of the students´ motivation towards the research work. This area involves the development of research skills such as observation, analysis and synthesis, deduction and induction, problem solving, etc. It also includes searching for information, working with bibliography, project works and simple activities.
- **Cultural:** Related to the development of a general and integral culture. This involves the formation and development of advanced feelings and esthetical likes, and the capacity to evaluate the national and universal cultures. Health professionals should be cultivated people.
- **Formative:** Related to the ideological, political, ethical and esthetical formation. This area has to do with:
  (1) Development of strong convictions based on principles and values in correspondence with the social interests in order to persuade with solid arguments.
  (2) Development of skills to establish criteria that allow them to distinguish beautiful things from the others, and to be able to value their own and other cultures.
  (3) Development of the capacity to accept reflexively and respectfully others´ criteria; to accomplish the norms, principles and demands of a health professional, and to keep a good moral behavior, not only while at school, but also in the community; they should behave on the basis of human principles.
- **Philosophical foundations**

From a philosophical point of view, the proposal is based on the dialectical – materialist conception of man and society supported on the theory of knowledge, which considers practice as the beginning and the end of the cognitive activity. In this research work, writing as a productive process.

Another important element is the principle of the correlation between language and thought. Language is the wrapping of thought.

The proposal also agrees with the historical and cultural conception of human development, which sees education as a process whose goal is the formation of man and culture in a dialectical unit; during the process of his own education, man nourishes from an accumulated culture and, at the same time, is able to develop it.

- **Psychological foundations**

The proposal assumes the historical and cultural approach of Vigotsky´s Theory, which constitutes the basic psycho-pedagogical support. The main thesis of this theory is supported by the social origin of the upper psychological functions, which have a half-full character as they arise from the interactions during the writing teaching and learning process. A central concept of his conception is that of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is stated as the distance between the level of development, what is known, determined by the capacity of solving independently a writing given problem, and the Level of Proximal Development, what could be known as determined through a solving writing problem activity being guided by a professor or a more capable student. The limits of that zone are given by the real development and the potential development. In this space aids are given as a modeling process of the interactions.

This proposal is based on this approach because its main purpose leads to the students´ autonomy, independence and creativity while developing their writing skills and at the same time, improving and sharing their intercultural knowledge.

Meanwhile, students are going to interact as independent and reflexive subjects during the process of constructing and reconstructing written situations.

- **Sociolinguistic foundations**

From the sociolinguistic point of view, the proposal of the system of written activities deals with a group of basic sociolinguistic contents according to the students from different countries who share the same classroom.

Also, it is concerned with the knowledge required to deal with the social dimension of language use and its remarks with regards to sociocultural competence, since language is a sociocultural phenomenon.

- **Sociocultural foundations**

It is supported on the bases of respect to the different sociocultural points of view of the students because its goal is to develop the students´ writing skill through

intercultural communication while socializing and sharing different cultures and social ways of living according to their cultural background.

- **Didactic foundations**

The proposal assumes the combination of two of the didactic approaches to teaching writing: The product approach and the process approach. It also assumes the principles of the communicative approach as the basic didactic-methodological elements for the development of the English writing skill in the University of Medical Sciences ´classrooms. These didactic principles were elaborated by Morrow (1983), reelaborated by Naiman (1989) and they have been reelaborated and contextualized to the Cuban Educational system by Antich (1989), Domínguez (1999) and Camacho (2002) in the didactic-methodological performance of professors through the development of the teaching and learning process; however, in this research the author assumes the fitness to four of them aimed at the teaching and learning process of writing proposed by Nodarse (2010) to develop the writing skill which are given below:

1. Class centered in students´ practical needs. The lesson should be didactically planned and organized based on students´ needs so that the design of each activity develops students´ protagonist role from the affective and psychomotor point of view; mobilizing their will, thought and action in the different stages of the writing process. Each activity should be a mental challenge throughout pair and group work, stimulating interaction and flexibility, and information gap, which warrant the selection and organization of the content. The professor monitors, guides and gives material and aids.
2. Not only to make students conscious of the authentic idiomatic samples, but to make them reflex on the language system structures and on the writing process; to make them conscious of the social aims they are accomplishing while writing, and think of the utilitarian character of this skill.
3. The planning of the activities should be conceived properly to teach more communicatively. This allows students know what they are going to do. Writing is learned through writing; throughout a planned, fluent and

systematic practice, not from theoretical acquisitions, giving them the right algorithm for the different stages of the writing process.

4. Mistakes are not always mistakes, but in writing they are not taken into account as soon as they do not interfere with communication; but it is sometimes recommended to take the mistakes as a means to improve learning. Students should practice among them by peer correction, under the supervision of the professors so that they could be able to be self confident as they interact by using the target language in communicative functions in a natural form.
5. The professor and the students together could create a system of symbols to identify the different kind of mistakes, and in a vey practical way, make students reflect on them so that they could be able to value the mistakes and search for strategies to solve them.

3.2. Characteristics of the proposal of the system of activities

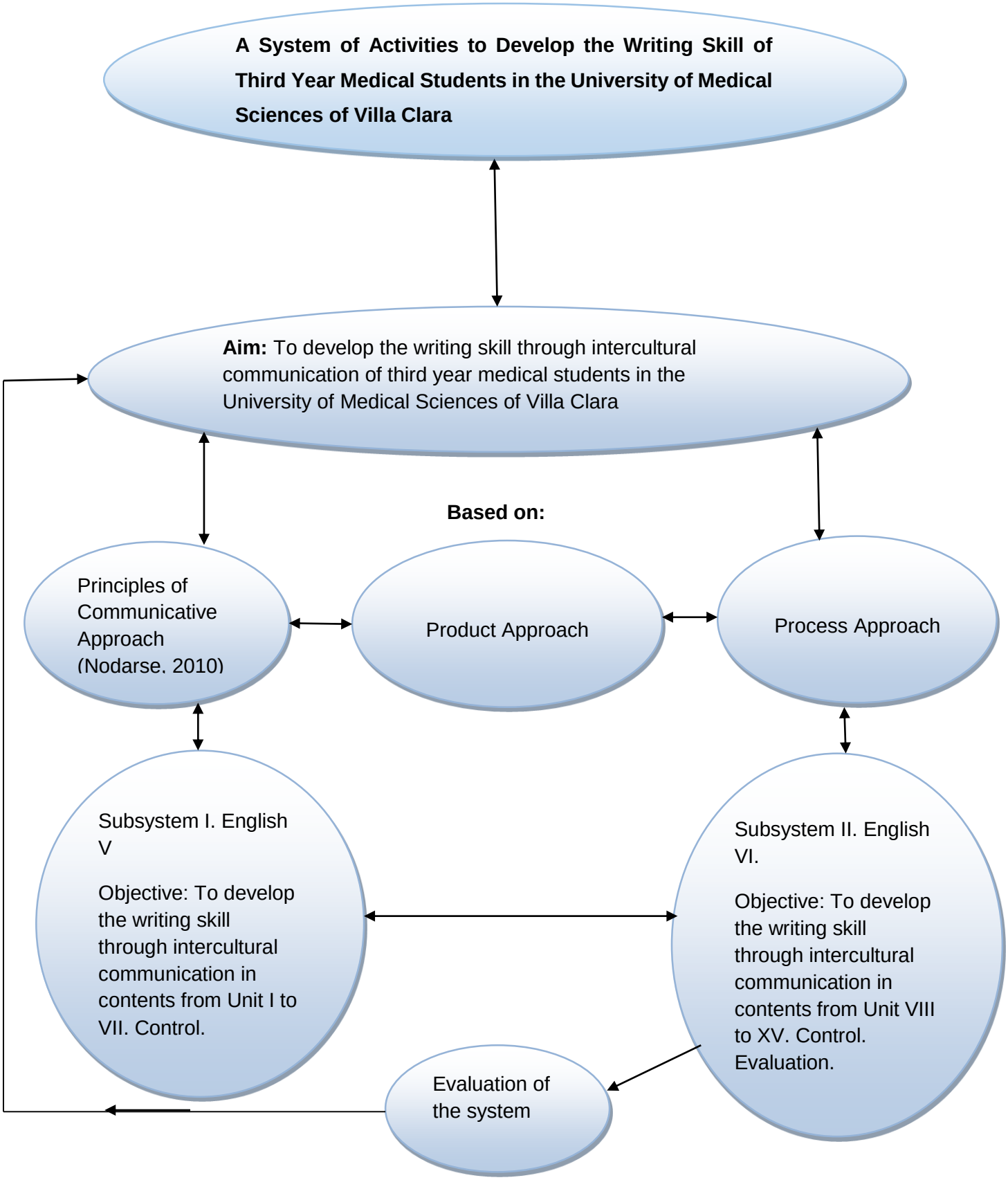
The proposal of the system is characterized by:

- **Systemic Character:** because it has been designed as a system in which both subsystems are very closely interrelated and in correspondence with the linguistic content set up for syllabus English V and syllabus English VI, and it is also designed according to each unit of each syllabus and also conceives the teaching and learning process of writing in logical and systematic stages: Pre-writing, While writing and Post Writing. The systemic vision is comprises the characteristics of the completeness and the independence of the elements that integrate the system (different stages of the system as a scientific result) and the features of the context.

- **Hierarchical Character:** It is organized hierarchically based on the accessibility principle and the diagnosis of students' needs. Each subsystem is hierarchically organized taking into account the content of syllabus English V and syllabus English VI.
- **Flexible Character:** it is given by flexibility and interaction of the designed activities for each unit and each subsystem because all activities answer to students´ needs and interests and they can be redesigned if necessary.

- **Dynamic and protagonist Character:** because the design of the activities takes as main principle students centered class and its dynamic interaction according to context demands either in the macro level (the system), in the middle level (each subsystem) and in the micro level (each task that makes up every activity) which stimulates students´ autonomy, independence and creativity in the writing process.
- **Mixed Character:** It is given by the use of two didactic approaches in the teaching and learning process of writing: the product or model approach to motivate and familiarize students with English writing and the process approach to teach them the English writing process, because writing is learnt by writing. Teaching the pre writing, writing, revising and writing the final version of a text.
- **Contextual Character:** Because the system has been designed with the linguistic contents of the syllabuses English V and English VI of the academic curriculum of 3rd year Medicine studies.
- **Developing Character:** it is given by the interaction in which students have the opportunity to share their knowledge and criteria, use peer correction and work with autonomy, independence and creativity with a metacognitive reflection while researching and writing on specific topics.

3.2.1. Graphic representation of the system of activities.



3.2.2. A System of activities to develop the writing skill through intercultural communication in third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara.

Objective: To develop the writing skill through intercultural communication in third year medical students in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara.

The system consists of two subsystems. It is based on the product and process approaches. The first subsystem is designed to develop the students' writing skill in the contents of "English V" that deals with Unit 1 to Unit 7, corresponding to the first term.

The second subsystem is designed to develop the students' writing skill in the contents of "English VI" that deals with Unit 8 to Unit 15, corresponding to the second term.

First Subsystem. "English V"

Objective: To develop third year medical students´ writing skill through intercultural communication in the contents of "English V".

Activities

Unit I. "A standard Cuban family"

Objective: to develop students´ writing skill related to habits and customs of their foreign partners.

Technique: group work and individual work.

Procedure: Firstly, the students walk all around the class, asking each other as indicated below. Then, by themselves, they write what they found out and, later, discuss in plenary what they wrote.

1. Find out which are your partners' nationalities.
    a) Make your own decision of which to write about and,
    b) Write a paragraph about customs, habits, and culture of at least 3 foreign families. Be ready to report.
2. Working with proverbs.

Objective: to develop students´ writing, reading and speaking skills.

Technique: group work and individual work.

Procedure: the professor asks students to do as follows:

a) Search for those proverbs in English related to family´s culture, habits, and customs.
b) Compare them with some Cuban´s proverbs. Write your point of view about them. Be ready to report to your class.
c) (Team group), 3 students per team. Give each team, according to their nationality, a group of proverbs.
d) Read these proverbs and their translations. Then, write what definition is given to each of them from your cultural point of view.
   Proverbs:

   Necessity is the mother of invention

   La necesidad es la madre de la invención.

   Money makes the mare to go

   Por el dinero baila el mono.

e) Write different examples in which the message of these proverbs is demonstrated.

Evaluation: the professor will ask each team to report to the rest of the class about their findings.

Unit II. "Remembrances"

Objective: to develop the students´ writing skill by reporting past anecdotes in writing.

Technique: individual work while writing and then group work after finishing writing.

Procedure: the professor asks students to write a personal anecdote taking as a model the one they just read written by Sarah. (Text book "Vision III", pag. 23)

Story writing. Team work.

1. After reading in teams Sarah's anecdote, as a model:

a) Write in a personalized way a story similar to this that might have taken place in your town/country.

b) Be ready to share it with your classmates.

2. Write another ending to this cultural anecdote, from the beginning of paragraph 3: "After a few days…"

3. Write a letter/e-mail message to a pen friend from abroad telling him/her about a cultural anecdote that has happened to you.

   Evaluation: as a follow-up, the professor asks students to bring the e-mail message they wrote to a pen friend to be handed in. Be ready to share the final version with your partners.

Unit lll. "Health mission in a foreign country"

Objective: to develop students´ writing skill by writing a report as if they had been to a mission in Jamaica.

Technique: individual work while writing and then report in plenary after finishing writing.

Procedure: the professor asks students to write about what they found out about Jamaica. Then, they will report in plenary their writings.

1. Search about Jamaica and write down a paragraph in which you refer about most important traditional and religious celebrations; also, refer to most common diseases of the Jamaican population.

2. E-mail message: Write and send an e-mail message to your partner telling him/her about the most important celebrations, traditions, food, music, and jokes in Jamaica.

   Evaluation: students will bring for next class a report about important celebrations, traditions, food and music in their own countries to be handed in.

Unit IV. “Travelling here and there”

Objective: to develop students´ writing skill and culture by writing about important personalities of the world.

Technique: brainstorming. Work in plenary to select an important personality students brainstorm, then by themselves while writing about the chosen person.

Procedure: the professor asks students think of important personalities they remember, while he/she writes on the board the different names. After that, the students make the decision about whom they will write to. Finally, they exchange notebooks for peer correction.

Pre writing activity: The professor shows the students a text of an outstanding writer and based on the model ask them to talk about it.

While writing

1. Write a story of a most outstanding writer, musician, filmmaker, dancer or singer in your country.
2. Look for and write the Spanish equivalent to the following proverbs and their value.
    - Actions speak louder than words.
    - When in Rome do as the Romans do.
    - What is done cannot be undone.
    - The master’s eye fattens the horse.
    - One, who lives in a glass house, should not throw stones.

Post writing: Exchange notebooks and check your partner´s mistakes. Be ready to analyze them.

Correct the mistakes and write a new text.

Evaluation: peer correction.

Unit V. “Helping people”

Objective: to develop students´ writing skill by making descriptions. **Technique:** individual work.

Procedure: the professor asks the students to write about the places they have worked in and the people they have met during their medical practices and let their family know by sending an e-mail message.

Describing people, places, and things.

1. Write and send an e-mail message to a member of your family telling about your experiences in Cuba’s hospitals and the health technology studies.

   Evaluation: select one of the places you have been during your practice in the Cuban hospital and describe its main characteristics. Share ideas with your partner about treatments, diseases, case reports, patients’ behaviors, admission general conditions. To be handed in.

Unit VII. “Looking towards the future!”

Objective: to develop students´ writing skill by writing in future tense by writing a report.

Technique: individual work and group work.

Procedure: the students will decide what friend each of them is going to write to tell him/her how they imagine their future lives.

Write a letter to your best friend telling about how you imagine your life in 10 years ahead.

1. Work in teams. Read the Miscellany subheading on page 110 of the text book “Vision III”, and:
   a) Study and give your opinion(s) through writing on Albert Einstein´s thoughts.
   b) Report what you wrote about Albert Einstein´s thoughts to the rest of the classmates and to your professor.

- Imagination is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited while imagination embraces the entire world.

- Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.
- Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.
- The important thing is not to stop questioning.

2. Independent study. Search for an important personality of your country and write a report taking into account: life, work, hobbies, likes and dislikes. Be ready to discuss it in class.

   Evaluation: the professor will ask students to exchange their reports among the teams for peer correction.

Second Subsystem. "English VI"

Objective: To develop third year medical students´ writing skill through intercultural communication in the contents of "English VI".

Activities

Unit VIII. "Almost always"

Objective: to develop students´ writing skill by writing about other cultures habits and customs.

Technique: group work.

Procedure: after having searched about food in different countries, each team will write a report about it and will illustrate their report with a real dish, a poster, photographs, etc.

1. In teams search for most commonly dishes different cultures are used to having for breakfast, lunch, and dinner time.
   a) Each team will be assigned a world area, such as, The Caribbean, South Africa, South America, Central America and The United Kingdom.
2. Work as if in a round table and:
   b) Be ready to participate by reporting to the rest of the teams about your findings.

c) Bring a traditional dish of your country. You can use posters, videos, photographs, etc.

Evaluation: as there are students from different countries, each of them will write a recipe of their typical food to the classroom**.**

Unit XI. "What did they say?"

Objective: to develop writing skill through activities related to different standards of English spelling.

Technique: group work.

Procedure: the general activity instructions written on the board.

Divide the group into two teams, one group is given a set of cards with British word spellings. A student from group 1 is going to write on the board a word and a student from group 2 is going to write the American spelling. Then, each of them is going to read the two words**.**

1. You are going to be given some words written according to the British variant.
   a) Find out the American variant of the following words and expressions:
      - Chemist´s
      - To make up a prescription
      - Packet of cotton wool
      - The telephone is engaged
      - Flat
      - Holidays
   b) Write a note or a message to one of your partners the word equivalent found.
   c) Report one of your notes or message received to your closest partner in the classroom.

      Evaluation: the professor evaluates the students while doing the exercise.

Unit XII. “My last day in Jamaica”

Objective: to develop writing skill by letting know in written form their knowledge on foreign cultures.

Technique: individual and team work.

Procedure: the professor will have the students to write about what they will do related with other cultures after graduating.

1. In three years to come, you will graduate as doctors in medicine. Now answer:
    a) What culture would you like to share your knowledge with?
    b) Write what are the cultural points of view that have made you take such a decision up. Mention at least 3 or 4 of them.

Evaluation: the professor asks the students to define by writing what they understand by the word “culture.”

Unit XIII. “Family? Family!”

Objective: to develop writing skill by writing about family customs. Learn the real meanings of the so called cognate words.

Technique: individual and team work.

Procedure: students will write individually about their customs while sitting at the table.

They will gather in teams and look in dictionaries the real meanings of some cognate words which will be reported to the other teams. Finally, in teams, they

will write sentences using these words and their real meanings in Spanish letting know to the others by reading.

Write about the most important customs in your country when sitting in family at the table.

1. What are the main topics of conversations in your country while sharing in family?
2. Find the real Spanish meaning of these words.

Actual	Library
Gracious	Actually
Creature	Support
Emotional	Sympathetic

3. Write sentences with each of them, in Spanish and in English.
   Evaluation: the professor will evaluate in class the work with cognate words. Students will exchange their reports for peer correction.

Unit XIV. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever"

Objective: to develop writing skill by describing important places they have visited. Increase their culture by searching about the Seven Wonders of the Ancient and Modern World.

Technique: individual and team work.

Procedure: After having searched for important places in their countries or towns, the students will write a description of these monuments, and as they read what they wrote to the class, they could be supported by other means such as posters, photos, power points, etc.

1. Write a letter to one of your partners about the most important historical monument or place of your country/town/city.
   a) Remember to write the most descriptive details of that place.
   b) Be ready to participate in an intercultural colloquium next class.
   c) You can support your exposition with posters, photographs, power points, videos, etc.

Evaluation: to search in teams about the Seven Wonders of the Ancient and Modern World. Their characteristics, who sponsored the contest to select the Seven Wonders of the Modern World, etc. Report to the rest of the class and the professor next meeting.

Unit XV. "We love nature"

Objective: to develop the writing skill by writing about traditional nature medicine in students countries.

Technique: a workshop about traditional nature medicine.

Procedure: students will gather in teams with participants from different countries and write about the plants used to heal different diseases in their countries. Then each team will read to the others what they wrote to be discussed.

Workshop activity about nature.

Make a research work and be ready to participate in a workshop about the following topics:

1. What is understood by traditional nature medicine?
2. The importance of traditional nature medicine.
3. The way traditional nature medicine is used in your country.
4. Give your opinion(s) about the relationship among culture–nature and medicine.

Useful notes to help you write.

A text should be organized as follows:

Introduction, body, and conclusion(s)

These clues will help you begin,

Traditional nature medicine is...

The importance of... / Traditional nature medicine is important because...

In my country people use traditional nature medicine because... / There are different ways of using...

In my opinion, traditional nature medicine is related to...

Evaluation: during the exposition of the works, the professor will evaluate each team in accordance with the quality of their researches.

Once the proposal was designed, the researcher determined to assess it through specialists´ criteria.

3.3. Assessment by specialists´ criteria

3.3.1. Selection of specialists

For the assessment of the proposal, the researcher selected ten experienced specialists in English foreign language teaching as professors of higher education. They hold teaching ranks of Assistant, Associate Professors and Full Professors and scientific degrees of master and PhD. **(Annex 6)**

Full professors and PhD. 3; Associate Professor and PhD. 1; Master and Associate Professors, 5 and Bachelor in Education and Assistant Professor 1. They were given a survey to assess the system of the activities proposed. **(Annex 7)**

3.3.2. Assessment of the proposal

The scale used to assess the proposal, ranges from Very Adequate (VA), Adequate (A), and Not Very Adequate (NVA) to Inadequate (I).The indicators are stated below**. (Annexes 6, 7 and 8)**

The following results were obtained. **(Annex 8)**

1. **Social pertinence:** 100% assessed the proposal as Very Adequate.
2. **Application:** 100% assessed it as Very Adequate.
3. **Logical Structure:** 80% assessed it as Very Adequate and 2 specialists, 20%, assessed it as Adequate.
4. **Flexibility:** 80% assessed it as Very Adequate and 2 specialists, 20% assessed it as Adequate.
5. **Originality:** 100% assessed it as Very Adequate.

Specialists' suggestions

The specialists suggested that the most important scientific contribution of the proposal is given by its creativity and originality and the systemic interrelation of the activities proposed.

They also stated that another important contribution is given by the interrelation and logical order of each subsystem and the inner organization of the didactic components in each subsystem.

Partial Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the design of the proposal of the system of activities and the assessment by the specialists' criteria.

Conclusions

The research process has led to the following conclusions

1. It has been determined the theoretical and pedagogical foundations through the analysis carried out on the theoretical positions which has made evident the transcendence the process of writing through intercultural communication has had, the different theoretical foundations and didactic approaches in the current trends within the teaching and learning process of English as a Foreign Language in the context of the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara.

2. t has been stated the current situation of the 3rd year medical students of the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara, regarding students´ Strengths and weaknesses in writing through intercultural communication, and that the teaching and learning process of this skill has been based on the product or model approach and has basically been used as a means to fix other aspects of the English language.

3. The theoretical study carried out and the results of the students´ learning needs on English writing led to the design of a proposal of a system of activities to develop the writing skill through Intercultural Communication, according to 3rd year medical students´ needs in the Medical University of Villa Clara which is based on the Product and Process Didactic Approaches and the communicative principles.

4. The 10 specialists assessed the proposal´s social pertinence, application and originality as Very Adequate; 8 specialists assessed logical structure and flexibility as Very Adequate and 2 assessed them as Adequate. In general, the 10 specialists assessed the application of the proposal.

Recommendations

- To apply the proposal in the practice of the English teaching and learning process of writing in the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara.

- To disseminate the results in different symposia, conferences and publications.

- To go on doing research in other academic years of studies.

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Annexes.

Annex 1. Analysis of Documents.

Objective: To determine the current situation of the writing skill development through intercultural communication treatment in the syllabuses English V and VI and the textbook “Vision III” for third year medical students, and the previous studies carried out related to this topic and context.

Guide for the Analysis of Documents.

- The syllabuses of English V and English VI in the discipline.
- Methodological guide.
- The general and specific objectives of English V and English VI.
- The textbook “Vision III” used in the classroom to determine the given treatment of writing through intercultural communication and the activities designed for this purpose.
- The procedure in the teaching and learning process of writing. Determination of the didactic approaches used.
- The conduct of intercultural communication in the classes.
- Previous studies about the topic.

Annex 2. Participant Observation.

Objective: To observe the students´ performance related to the writing skill development through intercultural communication based on two moments:

1st Moment: to observe the students´ English writing knowledge on: focus the topic, coherence, cohesion, punctuation, and grammar.

2nd Moment: to observe the students´ performance related to the writing skill development through intercultural communication throughout writing activities related to: focus the topic, coherence, cohesion, punctuation, and grammar.

Observation Guide.

Scale to observe

a. Knowledge. 1. Has K 2. Has some K 3.Has no K

b. Use. 1. E__ 2. G__ 3. P __

Indicators	**Knowledge**	**Use**
Focus the topic		
Coherence		
Cohesion		
Punctuation		
Grammar		

2. Writing is developed through intercultural communication.

Always (in all units) _____

Sometimes (in more than 2 units) _____

Never (in no unit) _____

Annex 3. Individual Interview. Applied to the sampled group.

Objective: To determine the students´ opinion about their knowledge and preparation on the writing skill and intercultural communication. Category 1. Cognitive.

Dear student:

The present interview is part of a research that is taking place in the third year of Medicine. The researcher will be very grateful if you give your collaboration and sincere answers.

Thank you,

The author.

Interview Guide:

1. Do you like writing?
2. Do you know how to write in English?
3. Is it easy or difficult for you? Why? Why not?
4. Can you easily organize your thoughts while writing in English?
5. What do you know about English writing rules? What do you know about coherence, cohesion, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary?
6. Do you have enough vocabulary?
7. Do you know how to write simple texts in English?
8. What do you know about intercultural communication?
9. Would you like to learn writing through intercultural communication in English?
10. As many of you are from different countries, would you like to share written criteria about your different cultures, customs, and traditions with your classmates in English?
11. Do you consider that having vast knowledge on intercultural communication would make you a better health professional?

Annex 4. Individual Interview. Applied to sampled third year professors of English.

Objective: To determine the current situation of the teaching of writing through intercultural communication in the syllabuses English V and English VI for third year medical students.

Dear colleagues:

The present interview is part of a research that is taking place in the third year of Medicine. The researcher will be very grateful if you give your collaboration and be sincere with your answers.

Thank you,

The author.

Interview Guide.

1. What do you think about the behavior given to the writing skill through the syllabuses English V and English VI for third year medical students? What about intercultural communication?
2. What is your opinion about the textbook “Vision III”?
3. Is it easy for your students to write in English?
4. Do you teach intercultural communication in your English classes?
5. Do you consider that teaching your students intercultural communication would make them better professionals? If possible, explain your answer.
6. How often do you develop the writing skill through intercultural communication?
7. Do you find it easy to teach intercultural communication through writing?
8. What can you say about students’ knowledge and preparation to write simple texts in English? Refer about the knowledge and use of focusing the topic, coherence, cohesion, punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary your students have.

All the collected data will be described from a qualitative point of view.

Annex 5. Pedagogical Test. Applied to the sampled group of students.

Objective: To diagnose the current situation of 3rd year medical students on writing through intercultural communication. Category 2. Proceeding.

I. Write what you understand by:

- Culture: _____
- Intercultural Communication:_____

II. Answer the following question.

III. Is it important for you to have knowledge about intercultural communication? Yes___ No___ Why?

IV. Is it important for you to know how to write correctly in English? Yes ____ No ____ Why?

V. Write a text in no less than 120 words about some of your country´s customs.

In order to obtain the final results of this Pedagogical Test, the researcher will apply the following measuring scale to evaluate the students´ writing skill and their knowledge on intercultural communication: **good quality, accepted, poor.**

Good quality: the student is able to write using correct grammar, spelling, cohesion, coherence, and punctuation; and expresses a right knowledge on the given topic.

Accepted: the student is able to write, but having less than four (4) mistakes on the aspects stated above, and has little knowledge about the given topic.

Poor: the student is able to write, but having more than four (4) mistakes on the aspects stated above, and is not able to express himself about the given topic.

Final Results of the sampled group. (25 students)

Questions /Text	Good quality	Accepted	Poor
I	7_____ 28%	7_____ 28%	11_____ 44%
II	8_____ 32%	7_____ 28%	10_____ 40%
III	5_____ 20%	6 _____ 24%	14 _____56%
IV-Text	3 _____ 12%	10_____ 40%	12 _____ 48%

Annex 6. Selection of specialists.

Objective. To select the specialists to assess the proposal of the system of written activities.

In order to assess the system of activities proposed, ten experienced specialists in English foreign language teaching as professors of higher education were selected.

The criteria for the selection were:

- Teaching ranks of Full Professors, Associate Professor and Assistant.
- Scientific degrees of PhD and Master.
- More than 10 years of experience teaching English in Higher Education.
- More than 10 years as professor of English.
- They all were given a survey and a sample of the proposal to be assessed.

Annex 7. Specialists´ Assessment.

Objective. To assess the Proposal of the System of Written Activities.

Survey applied to the selected specialists with vast knowledge in English High Education to assess the Proposal of the System of Written Activities.

Names and Last Names: _____
Work Place: _____
Years of Experience: _____
Scientific Degree: _____
Teaching Rank: _____
Teaching Discipline: _____

Dear Colleagues:

Due to your vast knowledge and preparation in the Teaching of English in High Education and in the topic of this research work, is why we ask you to be as critic as possible in assessing the Proposal of the System of Written Activities that is added below.

Thank you,

The author.

I. Assess the given proposal using the following indicators according to the following Scale:

- Very Adequate (VA).
- Adequate (A).
- Not Very Adequate (NVA).
- Inadequate (I).

Indicators.

1. **Social Pertinence**. Very Adequate ____ Adequate____
   Not Very Adequate ___ Inadequate____
2. **Applicability**. Very Adequate ____ Adequate____
   Not Very Adequate___ Inadequate____
3. **Logical Structure**. Very Adequate ____ Adequate____
   Not Very Adequate___ Inadequate____
4. **Flexibility.** Very Adequate ____ Adequate____
   Not Very Adequate___ Inadequate____
5. **Originality.** Very Adequate ____ Adequate____
   Not Very Adequate___ Inadequate____

II. Please, write your suggestions to improve the Proposal.

Annex 8. Results of Specialists´ Assessment.

Objective. To state the results of the applied methods.

Indicators	Very Adequate	Adequate	Not Very Adequate	Inadequate
1. Social Pertinence	**10/ 100%**			
2. Applicability	**10/100%**			
3. Logical Structure	**8/80%**	**2/20%**		
4. Flexibility	**8/80%**	**2/20%**		
5. Originality	**10/100%**			