

WRITING AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AT A2 LEVEL: A PROPOSAL OF ACTIVITIES

Estrategias de escritura y aprendizaje de lenguas en el nivel A2: una propuesta de actividades

Estratégias de escrita e aprendizagem de línguas no nível A2: uma proposta de atividades

Esp. Sandra Ivón Heredia del Río *, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8233-3359>

PhD. Pura de la Caridad Rey Rivas, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2923-5124>

Lic. Yiset Calás Hernández, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6153-7504>

Universidad de Oriente, Cuba

*Autor para correspondencia. email sandrah@uo.edu.cu

Para citar este artículo: Heredia del Río, S. I., Rey Rivas, P. C. y Calás Hernández, Y. (2024). Writing and language learning strategies at A2 level: a proposal of activities. *Maestro y Sociedad*, 21(4), 1981-1993. <https://maestrosociedad.uo.edu.cu>

ABSTRACT

The improvement of the English language teaching process in the Cuban Higher Education aims at guaranteeing the formation of competent professionals in the mastery of the language so that they can have appropriate levels of communicative competence. In order to achieve that purpose, the syllabuses have been conceived taking into consideration the Cuban pedagogical tradition as well as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is required to continue working on alternatives that contribute to the development of the future professionals' communicative competence since many students still show a very limited use of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) to develop their communicative skills, specifically, an essential productive skill: writing. This research focuses on the design and validation of a set of writing activities to promote the use of language learning strategies in the students of the Basic English Course A2. Some techniques were applied such as the bibliographical analysis, the interview, and the pedagogical test. The results obtained through the implementation of writing activities related to language learning strategies show an improvement in the students' production levels, cognitive independence and self-reflection about their learning progress, which are essential elements in the development of communicative competence.

Keywords: Writing, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), Language Learning Strategies (LLS).

RESUMEN

El perfeccionamiento del proceso de enseñanza del idioma inglés en la Educación Superior cubana se propone garantizar la formación de profesionales competentes en el dominio de este idioma, de manera que puedan alcanzar niveles apropiados de competencia comunicativa. Para lograr este propósito, los programas y planes de estudio se conciben teniendo en consideración la tradición pedagógica cubana, así como el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCERL). Se requiere continuar trabajando en función de alternativas que contribuyan al desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa, por parte de los futuros profesionales, pues muchos estudiantes todavía demuestran un uso limitado de estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas (EAI), en el desarrollo de sus habilidades comunicativas, fundamentalmente, en la habilidad productiva de expresión escrita. Esta investigación se centra en el diseño y validación de un conjunto de actividades de expresión escrita para promover el uso de estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas en los estudiantes del Curso Básico de Inglés A2. Se aplicaron técnicas investigativas, tales como, el análisis bibliográfico, la entrevista y la prueba pedagógica. Los resultados obtenidos a partir de la implementación de actividades de escritura relacionadas con estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas evidencian un avance en los niveles de producción de los estudiantes, en su independencia cognoscitiva, así como en la auto-reflexión de su aprendizaje, los que se constituyen en elementos vitales para el fortalecimiento de la competencia comunicativa.

Palabras clave: Expresión escrita, Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas, estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas (EAI).

RESUMO

A melhoria do processo de ensino da língua inglesa no Ensino Superior cubano visa garantir a formação de profissionais competentes no domínio desta língua, para que possam atingir níveis adequados de competência comunicativa. Para atingir este objetivo, os programas e planos de estudos são concebidos tendo em consideração a tradição pedagógica cubana, bem como o Quadro Europeu Comum de Referência para as Línguas (QECR). É necessário continuar trabalhando com base em alternativas que contribuam para o desenvolvimento da competência comunicativa dos futuros profissionais, uma vez que muitos estudantes ainda demonstram um uso limitado de estratégias de aprendizagem de línguas (LEA) no desenvolvimento de suas habilidades comunicativas fundamentalmente, na habilidade produtiva de expressão escrita. Esta investigação centra-se na conceção e validação de um conjunto de atividades de expressão escrita para promover a utilização de estratégias de aprendizagem de línguas em alunos do Curso de Inglês Básico A2. Foram aplicadas técnicas investigativas, como análise bibliográfica, entrevistas e testes pedagógicos. Os resultados obtidos com a implementação de atividades de escrita relacionadas com estratégias de aprendizagem de línguas mostram um avanço nos níveis de produção dos alunos, na sua independência cognitiva, bem como na autorreflexão da sua aprendizagem, que constituem elementos vitais para o fortalecimento comunicativo. competência.

Palavras-chave: Expressão escrita, Quadro Europeu Comum de Referência para Línguas, estratégias de aprendizagem de línguas (EAI).

Recibido: 9/7/2024 Aprobado: 24/9/2024

INTRODUCTION

Communicating in a foreign language is a way of strengthening ties of friendship with other peoples of the world and keeping updated about the latest advances in science and technology. Therefore, the development of foreign language teaching, particularly, English language teaching, has been a priority in the Cuban educational context. Science, international relations of various types, sports, commerce, among other human interchanges in different fields have given the English language the status of one of the most important languages in the world.

In Cuba, the process of creating a National System of Science and Technological Innovation demands the preparation of competent professionals, in which the mastery of the English language plays a fundamental role. English is considered *Lingua Franca*, the international language of knowledge, particularly in science and technology (Medina Betancourt, s. f.). In almost all spheres of science there is a body of knowledge in English. Therefore, the mastery of the language guarantees the active and creative insertion of future graduates in the socio-economic development of the nation.

Several methods, approaches, programs and strategies have been used to achieve university graduates capable of showing communicative competence in the English language. Despite the efforts, better levels of development of the language skills according to the actual demands of proficiency have not been achieved. As a result, regulations for the improvement of the English language teaching process in the Cuban Higher Education have been established in recent years; their main distinctive elements are based on the conception of the English language proficiency as a graduation requirement, the increase of students' knowledge self-management, cognitive independence and autonomy, as well as the standardized evaluation of communicative competence as a graduation requirement.

Circular 3/18 of the Ministry of Higher Education establishes, on transitional basis, the mastery of the basic level of the English language equivalent to A2 level described by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), (Ministerio de Educación Superior, 2019). In this context, the development of students' language learning strategies play a relevant role, as they constitute an essential tool in the development of communicative competence.

Daily English teaching practice at the Faculty of Education in Universidad de Oriente show that a representative number of students entering the majors of Speech Therapy and Special Education have a low level of development of their language skills, mainly in one of the most important productive skills: writing. In the initial diagnoses applied in the second period of 2023 undergraduate course to the students from the 1st year of the afore mentioned majors, some difficulties aroused: poor organization of nouns, pronouns, adverbs, subject and verb in a paragraph; inappropriate expression of ideas; reduced abilities to relate a given topic to personal experience; low levels to write an outline; difficulties to create the endings to a given story

or dialogue; poor inclusion of connectors; difficulties in grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, they show a limited or null use of language learning strategies, low levels of autonomy, and poor degrees of creativity, which is partly the result of the few lessons they received in their previous educational level, what influences negatively in a better management of the foreign language. These results of the initial diagnoses applied demand care and deepening in writing. The situation described expresses the necessity to design writing tasks in such a way that they promote the use of language learning strategies, so that students can be more independent and creative in the learning of the foreign language and improve communicative competence. Therefore, the general objective of this work was focused on the elaboration and validation of a set of writing activities to promote the use of language learning strategies in the students of the Basic Course A2 so as to enhance their levels of communicative competence as the ultimate aim of teaching.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Theoretical and empirical methods were used to carry out this study. At the theoretical level: Analysis-synthesis, to carry out the bibliographic analysis and synthesize the results obtained; induction-deduction, to establish the general and particular reasoning of the research and to infer and generalize the empirical data logically. The systemic-structural approach, to organize and structure the proposal, according to the content and its gradation in the syllabus. At the empirical level: document analysis, participant observation; in the initial diagnosis and during the application of the proposal, the semi-structured interview to experienced professors, in order to know their perception about the development of the writing skill at the Languages Center as well as the necessity to promote the use of LLS in the students to develop that skill. An interview was also applied to first year students of Speech Therapy and Special Education major courses at the Faculty of Education in Universidad de Oriente, to determine their level of knowledge and use of LLS in the learning of the foreign language. Data triangulation, to contrast the results obtained through the techniques applied. A pedagogical test was applied to diagnose the students' level of development of the writing skill, and the statistical method (percentage calculation), to evaluate the results.

RESULTS

The pedagogical test was applied in the second period of the 2023 undergraduate course to first year students of the Faculty of Education at Universidad de Oriente. For this purpose, a non-probabilistic sampling was applied. Out of a total of 117 first year students, a sample of 34 was selected, representing the 29, 5 % of the total. The criterion used for inclusion was the fact that these students are part of the groups to which the main author of this work teaches.

To evaluate the results of the pedagogical tests, the descriptors and bands given by the CEFR were taken into account: coherence and cohesion, use of stylistic resources and effective use of grammatical structures. Band 9 describes what students are able to do when they are expert users of the language, Band 8, when they are very good users, Band 7, good user, Band 6, proficient user, Band 5, modest user, Band 4, limited user, Band 3, extremely limited user, intermittent user, and Band 1, non-user of the language. The following results were obtained:

- Band 1. Five students, representing 14, 7 %.
- Band 2. Ten students, representing 29, 4 %.
- Band 3. Fourteen students, representing 41, 17 %.
- Band 4. Three students, representing 8, 8 %.
- Band.5. One student, representing 2, 9 %.
- Band 7. One student, representing 2, 9 %.

The results are represented in the following graph:

Major Courses	Bands							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Special Education	1	--	4	1	--	--	1	--
Speech Therapy	4	10	10	2	1	--	--	--

The triangulated analysis of the data obtained through the techniques applied made it possible to establish the following partial conclusions:

- Only one student shows a high level of development of the writing skill in English. He uses an appropriate range of vocabulary, linking words, several grammar structures and organizes ideas logically, although he makes isolated spelling mistakes. A high percent of students are in bands 3 and 4. They present some ideas, but do not develop them adequately. They make limited use of linking words and make grammatical and spelling mistakes. 29, 4 % try to present ideas, but do not develop them. They make limited use of vocabulary and make grammatical and spelling errors.
- The students show lack of knowledge about the use language learning strategies, although a few use some strategies empirically, such as watching films and music in English, using English Apps as Duo Lingo, making their own glossaries, and one student learns new words and writes sentences with them.
- Professors at the Languages Center with a vast experience in the teaching of English as a foreign language consider that the low level of development of the students' writing skill is caused mainly by the insufficient work with this skill in the previous and current levels, their writing difficulties in the mother tongue, the low level of motivation in learning the language, and the low awareness of some students about the importance of mastering the English language in their future professional performance. There is also a tendency to relegate the writing skill to independent work, hence, emphasizing the result, not the process.
- The professors interviewed recognize the relevance of deepening, from the theoretical and methodological points of view, the students' use of language learning strategies, and how to promote them in and out of class to make students self-regulate their learning and think about their strengths and weaknesses in the mastery of the language.

A total of six writing activities were designed (Writing an article about free time activities, writing an invitation email and a reply, writing a paragraph about a perfect day in the past, writing an email to describe a place, writing an article about plans for the future, and writing a postcard). These activities are associated with the use of different language learning strategies proposed by different authors, such as activating students' prior knowledge to see links between the task and what they already know; grouping language based on type of word, function, similarity, and opposition; using flashcards; creating mental linkages, connecting words with images, using new vocabulary, using synonyms if they can't think of the word in English, taking notes, guessing the meaning of the words in the task instructions by using linguistic clues, planning the writing task, gathering and organizing information during the task, self-monitor and self-evaluate their writing, writing down their feelings on a language diary, and peer interaction. Moreover, suggesting students seek for help from peers and teachers when they need it, as well as teaching them to emotionally control themselves and face the mistake and its correction positively.

The activities are also related to the objectives of the A2 English Basic Course syllabus, consequently, to the basic bibliography Face2face Elementary in its second edition. To design the proposal, the theoretical and methodological aspects related to the development of writing and language learning strategies were taken into account, as well as the methodological guidelines suggested in the syllabus.

E-mails (greetings, closings, expressions of gratitude, etc.), asking for and providing information concerning the place where they study, service, details concerning their teachers, what they study and why etc., their favorite restaurant (a food they like, where they prefer to eat if at home or at a restaurant and why), describing someone, among others, as part of the training given to them from topics that have been present in previous certification exams already developed by other university students. The Internet as a very rich resource for the students to put in practice their own resources to do independent work have also been put in practice. At the beginning, every production of the students is developed in teams together with the teacher who works as a model and writes on the board, and then on the students' own, that is, individually.

Collaborative work, either in pairs or groups, is used whenever possible when generating ideas, self-correction and peer-correction are encouraged as indicated in the course syllabus, and the content is organized in a cyclical way, providing students with opportunities to practice the same content at different levels of depth.

The writing tasks start as controlled and guided and end with free writing. Every activity has been conceived with a real purpose and a given context, which certainly motivates the students to think, plan and write

communicatively.

Essential points in training the students:

WRITING

- Fluent handling of basic mechanics, uniform size, shape, and legibility of handwriting.
- Awareness of spelling rules.
- Awareness of sentence grammar and structure by pointing out errors and demonstrating accuracy.
- Ability to write a range of sentences that show their advances from the single to more complex sentences.
- Awareness of cohesion and coherence as well as connectors.
- Knowledge of nouns, adjectives, verbs in the present and the past, pronouns.
- Skills in planning, source reading, error correction, drafting and rewriting and final draft presentation of assignments.

VOCABULARY

The students:

- Prepare a part of their notebooks for vocabulary, particularly those words and phrases that are new or difficult for them.
- Demonstrate skills in the use of dictionaries or in the creation of their own glossary.
- Show ability to group words according to their degree of relation with a given topic.
- Demonstrate use of word class/functions, nouns, verbs, adjectives.

TASKS

The students:

- Perform simple tasks based on instructions given from the teacher.
- Prepare a list of words and phrases related to a given topic.
- Show aptitude for autonomy.
- Note down messages given over the telephone, from a video, from dialogues.
- Show aptitude for team organization in class group dynamics.
- Make decisions based on specific tasks.
- Coordinate with classmates on group tasks.
- Develop tasks as independent work.
- Create didactic materials, e.g., a poster, a power point presentation, etc.
- Give brief oral presentations on a selected topic.

The proposal is structured as follows: Task, aim, language functions, language learning strategies to promote with their objectives; and the stages are those proposed by Harmer (2004): Pre-writing, writing, revision, and editing. In each stage, the procedures and actions to be carried out by teachers and students are set out. Whenever possible, two strategies with the same objective are proposed and explained, so that students have the possibility to choose the one that better suits their needs or learning style.

At the end of each activity, the completion of checklists and progress portfolios is suggested as a method of self-assessment. The checklist takes into consideration the correct use of formal aspects and verifies if the students were able to fulfill all the requirements of the task, according to the demands in the proficiency tests. The progress portfolio reflects what students learned, how they learned it (through what strategies), what they need to improve, and what they could do differently next time. In other words, it allows them to analyze their weaknesses and strengths in the development of the task and become more and more autonomous in learning the foreign language. The sample task below illustrates what was previously stated about the proposal.

Sample task:

You want to go to a restaurant with a friend this weekend. Write an email to your friend in which you:

- Invite him/.her
- Say why you want to go there (food, music, service, prices, location, etc)
- Suggest when and where to meet.

Write your email in about 120 words

Aim: Writing an invitation email

Language functions: Inviting someone, giving reasons, suggesting time and place to meet.

Language learning strategies to promote:

- Cognitive strategies:
 1. Activating students' prior knowledge to see links between the task and what they already know.
 2. Grouping language functions to classify them into meaningful units
- Social strategy: suggesting students peer-interaction and seeking for help from peers and teachers when they need it.
- Metacognitive strategy: Using a checklist and a progress portfolio to self-evaluate how well they completed the learning task, their strengths and weaknesses and what they might do in the future to improve their performance.

Pre-writing:

- The professor asks the students: What do you usually do on weekends? Do you stay at home or do you go out? Do USUALLY EAT OUT? HOW OFTEN DO YOU DO IT? DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE RESTAURANT OR CAFÉ? WHY IS IT YOUR FAVORITE? DO YOU USUALLY INVITE YOUR FRIENDS OUT?
- THE Professor presents the writing task, but before students start to generate ideas, the professor asks them to complete this task and explains its objective.

Look at these language functions. What are these language functions used for? Complete the table below:

1. Let's meet at the library at 10 am.
2. That sounds great.
3. Do you want to go to the beach on Saturday?
4. I'm sorry, but I'm busy.
5. I'd love to.
6. How about going camping at the weekend?
7. We can meet at home in the afternoon.
8. Would you like to join our party on Sunday?
9. I'd love to, but I have to study for a test. Thanks anyway.

I want to...	Useful phrases
Invite someone	
Accept an invitation	
Refuse an invitation	
Suggest time and place to meet	

(Adapted from Developing and assessing writing skills for A2 key for School and B1 Preliminary for Schools)

Writing stage.

Making notes. Generating ideas.

Make notes on what to say in your writing.

The students are asked to generate ideas collaboratively for the notes in pairs or small groups.

Drafting: The students are asked to work individually to write a first draft from their notes.

Editing. Peer-editing.

Now, correct your first draft. Check if you:

- opened and closed the email properly
- addressed it to and from the right person
- included all the points
- made an appropriate use of linking words and connectors.
- used correct punctuation marks.
- wrote 100-120 words.

First, the professor asks the students to get feedback from each other. Then, he/she makes some comments on the work.

Re-writing:

Write the final version.

- The professor decides the way to give feedback and assessment and the students complete the following table to reflect on their language learning.

What I learned	How I learned it	What I need to improve	How to do it better next time

(Adapted from Metacognitive Learning Strategies. Developing Students 'Study Skills)

Follow-up activity:

After teacher's feedback, the students are asked to exchange their emails, so they can write a reply to the invitation.

Before validating the proposal, a brief talk about learning strategies and learning styles was developed with the students taken as sample, in order to have them think about their own preferred ways of learning and raise their interest about the use of LLS.

Out of six activities, four were applied, which allowed the authors of this paper validate their effectiveness. The students were in better conditions to plan their writing, their motivation towards the learning of the foreign language was enhanced, and the level of anxiety diminished when they were instructed to generate ideas in pairs. So the impact from the psychological point of view was positive. Self-correction was accepted positively; nevertheless a few students were reluctant to peer-correction. They preferred teacher's correction. Spelling and grammar mistakes still persisted in the first drafts, but a better use of vocabulary and linking words was achieved, so the students' performance on the writing tasks improved. They were able to self-reflect about their progress and weak areas in the writing skill, but some students filled in the final portfolio and made the metacognitive self-reflection in the mother tongue.

It is important to reveal some vital characteristics of first year students from the majors of Speech Therapy and Special Education at Universidad de Oriente that significantly contributed to the implementation of learning strategies in the teaching-learning process of English, especially in writing: they are always enthusiastic and open to challenges. Their learning styles are the combination of visual and auditory. These are essential aspects, which are strengths, and permitted the teacher the inclusion of activities from previous proficiency tests as part of the students' training.

Despite the limitations, the proposal resulted in an increase in the students' use of LLS, a better performance on the writing tasks, and an improvement in the teaching-learning process of the English language at the Languages Center.

DISCUSSION

Writing is an important way of communication in everyday life. However, for many people it is one of the most complex language skills, even in their native languages. Therefore, for the students of English as a foreign

language, the improvement of this skill represents a challenge, but it is at the same time a need. Teaching this productive skill is of paramount importance, since it not only enhances students' academic abilities, but also prepares them for life in an interconnected world that requires writing for different purposes, whether expository, descriptive, narrative, or persuasive, and using various genres (Burns and Siegel, 2018). It is precisely through writing that people can communicate a variety of messages to known, unknown, close, or distant readers (Celce, 2001).

Written language is perhaps the most difficult of all skills to acquire, among other factors, because its development involves the effective coordination of different cognitive, linguistic and psycho-motor processes. Writing involves complex thinking that must integrate multiple components including the topic or theme, choice of words, organization, purpose, audience, clarity, sequence, cohesion, and transcription (Sturm and Koppenhaver, 2000). Spelling is also essential. Saddler (2006); Thomson and Snow (2002) highlight that learning to spell in English is not an easy task; and many students have difficulties generating the correct spelling of the words they want to use in their writing.

Due to the importance and complexity of the writing process, the search for alternatives to promote its development has been a focus of attention for teachers of English as a foreign language for several decades. At the beginning, the attention was focused on the correct use of grammar, spelling, as well as on the correct and complex writing of sentences, among other aspects. Thus, the development of other sub-skills was neglected. The text-based approach, on the other hand, focused on the analysis and imitation of specific text models. In contrast, in the process-based approach, the text emerges as the result of a creative process (Thornbury, 2006).

The tasks of this essential communicative skill should emphasize the process, the strategies, the steps that students must follow when writing a text. Matías, Valdés and Almeida, (cited by Fundora and Llerena, 2017), state that for the teaching of a second language, the learning of writing must follow a process approach, which means that the learner must be given enough time to write his ideas, and also to revise them, so that he incorporates his cognitive reference to the text, since the intelligence and personality of the writer are reflected in every text. For the authors of this work these are essential statements because they support the students to be able to use the foreign language creatively, originally, in such a way that they can construct meaning and become deeply involved in further production levels, and what also enhances their skills in writing in the mother tongue.

The writing skill has been defined by several researchers in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Thornbury (2006) conceives it as "an act of communication in which the writer interacts with the reader for a particular purpose" (p. 249). Romeu (2006), states that the writing process is closely related to reading comprehension and highlights the active role of the writer, who "reads" the "texts" of his culture from his environment and creates new texts based on it. This author establishes the role of comprehension in the development of writing and emphasizes the role of feedback in the process.

Saddler et al. (2004, p.3) wisely remark that: "Good writing is not only hard work, it is an extremely complex and challenging mental task". Hess and Wheldall (1999); Saddler and Graham (2007) state that effective writing usually has to pass through a number of stages, starting with the initial formulation of ideas through the first written draft, with subsequent editing and revising to yield the final product. This planning, composing, editing and publishing sequence must be made clear to students, and they must have many opportunities to go through the stages with feedback.

Harmer (cited by Disotuar, López and Almaguer, 2018), consider that writing involves communicating a message by making signs on a page. Writing requires a message and someone to communicate it. The writer needs to be able to form letters and words; sentences or a series of sentences that link together to communicate a message.

This author states that ideas should be considered as the most important element in writing and points out the necessity to consider formal aspects, such as the adequate selection of vocabulary, grammar, spelling, among others. Furthermore, the use of strategies during the writing process is suggested. For instance, in the planning stage, students should be encouraged to think not only about the content of what they want to say, but also about the purpose and the target audience. These elements enhance the students' abilities to observe, explain and comprehend which are basics for further processes of interpretation.

Several researchers agree that the elaboration of a written text implies the development of different episodes (stages or sub-processes). These episodes are inseparable and interact constantly throughout the

whole process: planning or prewriting, writing, revision and editing. The moment of sharing the final version is considered by some authors as another stage. Kashan (cited by Richards and Redanya, 2002), Harmer (2004), assert that these stages do not occur in an orderly or linear way, but recursively, that is, the writing of a first draft might be interrupted by a new planning, and the revision may lead to a reformulation. These processes function as tools for discovering ideas and can help students feel less inhibited, and generate ideas that finally guide them into the right direction (Patwary, N. and Fardose Sayib, N., 2018).

The prewriting stage represents the period when the writer, in some way, prepares for what will be displayed on the paper. This preparation can be for the writing of a draft, but also for the writing of a word, a sentence, a paragraph or a text. It involves sharing ideas, choosing the topic. It is suggested that this process should end at least with one sentence and a list. The writing stage involves the moment when words flow and find meaning. It is necessary to take into consideration unity, coherence, emphasis, and variety. Revision is possibly the most difficult stage, in which the work is improved. Moreover, irrelevancies and inconsistencies are eliminated. In essence, the work is enhanced from the point of view of content and structure (Enriquez, 2016).

Another foundation of this work is established on the principles to be considered in the design of writing tasks. Brown (1994), suggests to incorporate practices of “good” writers, for example, focusing on an objective or main idea, valuing the audience, not exceeding the time in the planning stage, allowing the main ideas to flow and reflecting them in written form, revising the writing patiently and doing it as many times as necessary, among others. Besides, it should not be taken for granted that students know the rhetorical conventions of English, instead, teachers should help the students understand them in case there is any contrast with their own traditions.

Parr et al. (cited by Ross, 2022), details nine principles that contribute to effective writing instruction:

1. Opportunities to write in and out of class for different purposes. Tasks should be motivating.
2. View writing as a process.
3. Clear and precise instructions.
4. Relevant and constructive feedback, so that students take action to improve their writing.
5. Use of technology.
6. Collaboration. Sharing ideas, working together, learning from each other.
7. Differentiation. Meet students’ individual needs.
8. Integrating language skills.
9. Better practices in teaching emergent bilingual students.

In general, from the perspective of the authors of this work the different conceptualizations and analyses about writing imply common elements that are vital, such as its process approach and complexity, the authenticity of the communicative situation that responds to real life situations that students might face in their social interaction, its inseparable link with the rest of the language skills, the formal aspects to be taken into account when writing, the role of correction and feedback, the fact that it is a complex language skill that needs to be trained. It is a process that implies comprehension in order to create a message to communicate, a process in which planning or prewriting, writing, revision and editing are key moments, the adequate selection of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. So the role of the teacher is of paramount importance to facilitate and enhance learning, creativity and production.

The authors of this work also highlight that it is necessary to place more emphasis on the creative side of writing since it produces not only more creative writers but also people who are more creative as they go about their lives. Creativity is largely an attitude toward life. Creative people are those who are more willing to redefine the ways in which they look at problems, to take risks, to seek to overcome daunting obstacles, and to tolerate ambiguity even when its existence becomes psychologically painful. Teaching students how to write creatively helps teach them how to approach life in a creative way. (Sternberg, Robert J., 2009).

One more important basis in this work is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as the source that guides the national policy in the Cuban Higher Education; it rules the teaching-learning process and at the same time evaluates the advances of the students in English as a foreign language through descriptors from the different levels this standard contains, that is, Basic User, Independent User, and Proficient

User. So far, what is demanded from the students is A2 level, which is within Basic User.

In its version of the year 2020, it describes the interaction and productive activities that an A2 user should be able to perform in the writing category. In general written interaction, students should be able to write simple and short texts related to topic of areas of immediate need. Other descriptors in writing are related to creating text messages, emails, notes, etc. Hence, in general written production, the students must be able to produce a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors (and, but, because). Additional descriptors are related to describing people, places, their environment, basic descriptions of past activities and personal experiences, etc.

Hence, following the perspectives of the Common Reference Levels: global scale, the Basic User of A2 level:

A2: Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate needs.

In its Overall Written Production: Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with sample connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'

This means that the role of the teacher is unquestionable in order to promote in the students motivation to be productive and creative. Therefore good teaching strategies are needed to contribute to the growth of the students. The use of language learning strategies (LLS), will definitely enable students to achieve these goals and become better language students. The use of appropriate strategies gives them the possibility to assume greater responsibility for their own learning (Dickinson, 1987). It has been emphasized the positive impact of integrating learning strategies into regular language teaching practice, which enable students to master, and apply the knowledge that the teacher has conveyed (Cohen and Weaver, 2005).

For O'Malley and Chamot (1990), LLS are "special behaviors and thoughts that individuals use to understand or retain new information" (p. 1). In other words, they are special ways of processing information that enhance learning comprehension. For Thornbury (2006), "learning strategies are techniques and behaviors that learners consciously apply to enhance their learning" (p. 115). This author emphasizes that these behaviors become strategies when the intention is the achievement of long-term learning, not only immediate comprehension. Richards and Schmidt (2010), consider that a second language learning strategy is an intentional or potentially intentional behavior that is carried out with the goal of learning.

Cohen (cited by García Fernández, et al. (2019), states that language learning strategies "are thoughts and actions, consciously chosen and operationalized by language learners, to assist them in carrying out a multiplicity of tasks from the very onset of learning to the most advanced levels of target-language performance" (p. 169).

Based on the analysis of the different concepts, it is worth to highlight the broad spectrum of language learning strategies in language learning, the possibility for students to choose the ones that better suit their needs and execute them, regardless the level of development of language skills achieved by the students.

LLS have been classified according to their use, to the skill they develop or to their function (Cohen and Weaver, 2005). The classification according to their function, a criterion taken into account in this study, divides them into four groups: cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social strategies (Chamot, 1987), (Oxford, 1990). Cognitive strategies are related to the way in which students process data and perform specific tasks in the second language. They require physical or mental manipulation of the language.

Metacognitive strategies are those that students need to identify and reflect on their skills and approaches to learning. In essence, they are actions that students execute to plan, monitor and evaluate their language learning, which enable them to assess how successful their performance was and what they can do in the future to improve it. Social strategies are cooperative learning activities that involve peer interaction to achieve a common goal in learning (Slavin, cited by Fajardo, 2021). Students learn from each other, from peers, from professors or native speakers. Affective strategies allow the control of emotions, motivation, and attitude towards learning. They contribute to the consistency of language learning.

The adequate selection and application of learning strategies is a determinant factor in the achievement of language learning goals. In this respect, both, teacher and learners have a part of responsibility. Nyico (cited

by Cohen and Weaver, 2005), makes some practical suggestions on what teachers and students can do in this respect. For instance, teachers should establish an atmosphere of trust, where students feel comfortable, ask for help, and share their learning difficulties, they should also find out strategies the students already use, suggest and model multiple strategies for each teaching point, as well as practice and have students create their own strategies. As for the students, they can give suggested strategies a chance to take hold, be aware of their attitudes towards learning, keep a list of possible strategies on hand, and set short and long term goals, among others. In short, a wise and creative attitude in the learning process, a positive atmosphere, a good planning and reflection on learning goals are required from both, teachers and students, to achieve a more strategic learning.

The use of language learning strategies to develop writing skills is definitely a useful tool for students. Chalk et al. (2005) report that students begin to exhibit more sophisticated writing once they develop effective strategies for planning or revising a text, and as they learn to self-regulate. Strategy training typically involves teaching students to follow a sequence of steps as they make their way through the various stages of planning, transcribing, evaluating and improving their writing on a chosen topic. Nevertheless, explicit instruction in writing strategies must involve the teacher in giving clear demonstrations, explanations and modeling, followed by guided practice with feedback, leading eventually to students' independent use. When demonstrating, teachers need to highlight critical features of different forms of text, so that students become more versatile in text construction for different purposes (Isaacson, 2004).

The use of language learning strategies in foreign language teaching has been the focus of attention for different Cuban authors, including Casar Espino (2001), Concepción (2004), Rodríguez and García (2016), who recognize their importance in the development of language skills and make contributions to their study. García Fernández, I. et al. (2019), Ochoa and Ponce de León (2023), make proposals to promote the use of LLS for the development of speaking skills, taking into account the Task-Based Approach, one of the approaches the CEFRL is based on. With regard to the use of language learning strategies to develop writing skills, Cárdenas Marrero, B. et al. (2009) highlight the significance of analyzing the effectiveness of the strategies used by apprentices to learn a foreign language and the pertinence of integrating them to regular teaching activities. In a more recent study on the subject, Smith (2023), analyzes their relevance in students' language acquisition and proposes some strategies to develop written communication in future foreign language teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

In the professional model demanded by today's Cuban society, the development of communicative competence in English is one of its main objectives, at present from the insights of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages.

Writing as proposed in this work is structured around basic activities that have in the essence the implementation of language learning strategies by the students.

In spite of the fact that writing has been the most complex communicative skill to reinforce in 1st year students of Speech Therapy and Special Education major courses at the Faculty of Education in Universidad de Oriente, the systematic practice of this proposal has been indispensable to achieve preliminary steps forward on the students.

The effectiveness of the set of activities proposed was validated. It contributed to promote the use of language learning strategies, which enhanced the students' autonomy, self-monitoring, self-reflection, and motivation in the teaching learning process. These tools contribute to the development of communicative competence and can be applied in future contexts of academic and professional exchanges, where a proficient level of the writing skill is essential.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by principles*. Prentice Hall Regents.
- Burns, A. y Siegel, J. (Ed.). (2018). *International perspectives on teaching the four skills in ELT*. Polgrave Macmillan
- Cárdenas Marrero, B., Del Risco Machado, R., Díaz Magdalena, M., Acosta Moré, I., Davis Blanco, D., Arrocha Rodríguez, Y., Gómez Casola, K., Del Pozo Gutiérrez, A. & Morales Socorro E. (2009). Las estrategias de aprendizaje y el desarrollo de la habilidad de escritura durante el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje del español como lengua extranjera. *Revista*

- Casar Espino, L. A. (2001). Didactic Proposal for the development of reading comprehension and speaking skills in English in engineering students. (Doctoral Thesis). La Habana: Instituto Superior Politécnico "José Antonio Echeverría".
- Celce, Marianne. (Ed.). (2001). Teaching English as a second or foreign language. Thompson Learning.
- Chalk, J. C., Hagan-Burke, S., & Burke, M. D. (2005). The effects of self-regulated strategy development on the writing process for high school students with learning disabilities. *Learning disability Quarterly*, 28, 1, 75-87.
- Chamot, A. U. (1987). The learning strategies of ESL students. En A. Wenden y J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language leaning* (pp. 71-83.) Prentice Hall International.
- Cohen, A. D. y Weaver S. J. (2005). *Styles and strategies-based instruction: A teacher's guide*. Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. <https://www.researchgate.net>
- Concepción Pacheco, J. A. (2004). *Didactic Ludic Strategies to Encourage the Development of Communicative Competence in the English Language of Students of Biomedical Specialties*. (Doctoral Thesis). Santa Clara: Universidad Central Marta Abreu de las Villas.
- Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Companion volume*.
- Dickinson, L. (1987). *Self-instruction in language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Disotuar Abao, J. A., Lòpez Palomares, R y Almaguer Àvila, A. A. (2019). La habilidad escribir en anglès en la formaci3n del profesional de las ciencias humanísticas. *Opuntia Brava. Monografico Especial*, 11. <https://www.academia.edu>
- Enrriquez O'Farril, I. J., G3ngora Perdomo, A., Camacho Delgado A. A., Bermello Lastra, G., Gonz1lez P3rez M. L., Vega Puente, J. C., Ulloa Tejera, Y., Rodr3guez D3az, O., Ronda Pupo, J. C., L3pez Serrano, M., C., Garbey Savigne, E., Spicer, H., Patterson Peña, M. C. & Patterson peña, M. L. (2016). *A guide to the teaching of English in the Cuban context II*.
- Fajardo, R. (2020, November). *Online language learning strategies*. [webinar]. International House Mexico. <https://www.youtube.com>
- Fundora, D. y Llerena, O. (2017). Características de las habilidades comunicativas en idioma ingl3s en estudiantes del curso introductorio de lengua inglesa. *Tzhoecoen*. 10(2) <https://doi.org/10.26495/rtzh1810.226317>
- García Fernández, I., Bernal D3az, P. S., y Abreus Gonz1lez, A. (2019). Learning to learn English towards the development of speaking skills in Higher Education in Cuba. *Universidad y Sociedad*, 11(2), 167-172. <https://rus.ucf.edu.cu/index.php/rus>
- Harmer, J. (2004). *How to Teach Writing*. Longman.
- Hess and Wheldall (1999). Strategies for improving the written expression of primary children with poor writing skills. *Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 4, 4, 14-20.
- Isaacson (2004). Instruction that helps students meet state standards in writing. *Exceptionality*, 12, 1, 39-54.
- Medina Betancourt, A. (2012). Complejidad didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras.
- Metacognitive Learning Strategies. (Developing Students' Study Skills). (2018). [video] <https://www.youtube.com>
- Ministerio de Educaci3n Superior. (2019). *Orientaciones generales para la implementaci3n de la Pol3tica de perfeccionamiento del proceso de formaci3n en idioma ingl3s de los estudiantes de la educaci3n superior cubana*.
- Ochoa Ponce de Le3n, S. y Ponce de Le3n Narv1ez, R. M. (2023). Estrategias de aprendizaje para mejorar la expresi3n oral en estudiantes de medicina. <https://scholar.google.com>
- O'Malley, J. M. y Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Heinle & Heinle.
- Patwary, N. y Fardose Sayib, N. (2018). Improving writing skills in English at the tertiary level: The gap between the standard practice and classroom scenario. *Crossings*, 9. <http://deh.ulab.edu.bd>
- Richards, J. C. y Redanya W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching. An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., Schmidt, R. (2010). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Pearson.
- Rodr3guez Ruiz, M. Y Garc3a Meras, E. (2016). Las estrategias de aprendizaje y sus particularidades en lenguas extranjeras. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educaci3n*. <https://doi.org/10.35362/rie3642807>
- Romeu, A. (2006). *El enfoque cognitivo, comunicativo y sociocultural en la enseñanza*. Pueblo y educaci3n.
- Ross, C. (2022, June). *Developing and assessing writing skills for A2 key for School and B1 Preliminary for Schools*. [webinar]. Cambridge. <https://www.youtube.com>

Saddler, B., Moran, S., Graham, S., & Harris, K. R. (2004). (2004). Preventing writing difficulties: The effects of planning strategy instruction on the writing performance of struggling writers. *Exceptionality*, 12, 1, 3-17.

Saddler (2006). Increasing story writing ability through self-regulated strategy development: Effects on young writers with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 29, 4, 291-305.

Saddler and Graham (2007). The relationship between writing knowledge and writing performance among more or less skill writers. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 23, 3, 231-247.

Smith Batson, M. C. (2023). Writing Instruction: A reflection on the demands Teacher training in Cuba from a didactic perspective. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 4, 88-94. www.ej-edu.org

Sternberg, Robert J. (2009). *The Psychology of Creative Writing*. Cambridge University Press.

Sturn, J., and Koppenhaver, D. A. (2000). Supporting writing development in adolescents with developmental disabilities. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 20, 2, 73-92.

Thompson and Snow (2002). The written expression of children with reading disabilities: A comparison of written and dictated narratives. *Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 7, 4, 13-19.

Thornbury, S. (2006). *An A-Z of ELT*. Macmillan.

Conflicto de intereses

Los autores declaran no tener ningún conflicto de intereses.

Declaración de responsabilidad de autoría

Los autores del manuscrito señalado, DECLARAMOS que hemos contribuido directamente a su contenido intelectual, así como a la génesis y análisis de sus datos; por lo cual, estamos en condiciones de hacernos públicamente responsable de él y aceptamos que sus nombres figuren en la lista de autores en el orden indicado. Además, hemos cumplido los requisitos éticos de la publicación mencionada, habiendo consultado la Declaración de Ética y mala praxis en la publicación.

Sandra Ivón Heredia del Rio, Pura de la Caridad Rey Rivas y Yiset Calás Hernández: Proceso de revisión de literatura y redacción del artículo.