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ÁREA DE LA EDUCACIÓN, EL ARTE Y LA
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ENGLISH LANGUAGE CAREER**

TITLE

**THE OPEN-MIND DIAGRAM AS A COOPERATIVE
LEARNING STRATEGY TO DEVELOP THE
ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE BASIC
WRITING SKILLS AMONGST NINTH-GRADE
STUDENTS, GROUP “A” AT PROFESOR. JULIO
ORDOÑEZ ESPINOZA HIGH SCHOOL, 2014 –
2015 ACADEMIC PERIOD.**

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requirement to obtain the Bachelor's
Degree in Science of Education English
Language Specialization.*

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CERTIFICATION

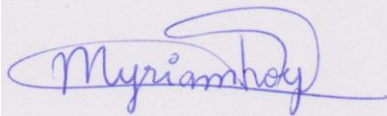
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CERTIFIES

To have directed and thoroughly revised this thesis work entitled: THE OPEN-MIND DIAGRAM AS A COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY TO DEVELOP THE ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE BASIC WRITING SKILLS AMONGST NINTH-GRADE STUDENTS, GROUP “A” AT PROFESOR. JULIO ORDOÑEZ ESPINOZA HIGH SCHOOL, 2014 – 2015 ACADEMIC PERIOD., under the responsibility of Mayra Ivonn Cajamarca Llivigañay, undergraduate student pursuing his Bachelor’s degree in Science of Education: English Language Specialization. This work complies with the norms and requirements of Universidad Nacional de Loja, therefore I authorize its presentation and defense.

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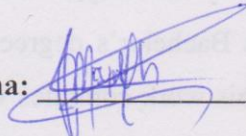
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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to all my family, my parents Ivan and Zoila, my brothers and their children, my aunt Carmen, my Grandfather Luis Emilio and my best friend Karla who are the people I love the most, because they always care, help and support me; the way they treat me is the most sweet and kindness of the world, they are my most precious treasures.

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THESIS OUTLINE

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a. TITLE

THE OPEN-MIND DIAGRAM AS A COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY TO DEVELOP THE ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE BASIC WRITING SKILLS AMONGST NINTH-GRADE STUDENTS, GROUP “A” AT PROFESOR. JULIO ORDOÑEZ ESPINOZA HIGH SCHOOL, 2014 – 2015 ACADEMIC PERIOD.

b. RESUMEN

Este trabajo de investigación titulado: el diagrama Mente-Abierta como una estrategia de aprendizaje cooperativo para desarrollar el Inglés como lengua extranjera en las destrezas de la escritura básica entre los estudiantes de noveno grado, grupo “A”, en el colegio Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza, período académico 2014-2015., se planteó como objetivo principal mejorar las destrezas de escritura en Inglés como lengua extranjera a través del diagrama Mente-Abierta como una estrategia de aprendizaje cooperativo. Para el desarrollo, se utilizaron los métodos: científico, descriptivo, sintético-analítico y estadístico; los instrumentos utilizados fueron la pre y post evaluación y el pre y post cuestionario y la hoja de observación a fin de evaluar los conocimientos de los estudiantes en las destrezas de la escritura básica y los comportamientos y actitudes hacia el diagrama Mente-Abierta antes, durante y después de la intervención; después de la intervención. Se concluyó que los dieciocho estudiantes de noveno grado mejoraron notablemente sus destrezas en la escritura basado en un aprendizaje cooperativo, aumentando un puntaje de 3,32 a 8,17 sobre 10.

ABSTRACT

This action research entitled: the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy to develop the English as foreign language basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group "A" at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school, 2014 – 2015 academic period., as a main objective it was proposed to improve the English Foreign language basic writing skills through the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy. For its development, it was used the: Scientific, descriptive, analytic-synthetic and statistic methods; the instruments used were the pre and post test, pre and post questionnaire and the observation sheet in order to evaluate the students' knowledge in basic writing skills, the behavior and attitudes toward the Open-Mind diagram before, during and after the intervention. It was concluded that the eighteen students from ninth-grade improved considerably their writing skills based on cooperative leaning, increasing a score from 3,32 to 8,17 out of 10.

c. INTRODUCTION

How does the Open-Mind Diagram as cooperative learning strategies improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinosa high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?; The Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative-based learning contributed in the development of the students’ basic writing skills in the best way using techniques according to the students’ age and needs; since the cooperative learning became a good strategy, students after the intervention were able to create sentences and simple paragraphs as opposite they were able to do at the beginning.

An important tool for communicating nowadays is writing, through writing we can inform others and persuade people; in this action research the beneficiaries of improving their writing skills using the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative based learning were the ninth-grade students group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school.

The variables taken into account for this action research were: On the one hand, cooperative learning that is a teaching arrangement that refers to small, heterogeneous groups of students working together to achieve a common goal, students work together to learn and are responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own (Dotson 2001). On the other hand, writing skills that must be practiced and learned through experience. The ability to write well it is usually learned or culturally conducted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments; it is not a naturally acquired skill (Myles, 2002). This components were in function to the main issue of this action research.

In this action work was proposed to research for theoretical and methodological references about the Open-Mind diagram as cooperative learning strategy and its application on the EFL basic writing skill, to diagnose the issues that limit the development of the EFL basic writing skills in the students, to design an intervention plan based on the Open- Mind diagram to improve the EFL basic writing skills in the students, to apply the most suitable techniques of the Open-Mind diagram and finally to reflect upon the effectiveness that the Open-Mind diagram had amongst the ninth-grade students.

It was an action research which used systematic procedures completed by the researcher to gather information, the procedures she used were, Scientific method, which helped in the observations done before and during the intervention, descriptive method, enabled to describe the different stages of the study and the kind of resources used by the researcher, the analytic-synthetic method which was used to analyze the obtained results through the questioners and tests and finally the statistic method that was used to make the quantitative statistical analysis of the data received from the questionnaires and the qualitative text analysis of the data received from the observations.

The instruments used in order to respond to the three of five stated objectives of this action research were the pretest which diagnosed the issues that limited the development of the EFL basic writing skill, the pre and post questionnaire in which was applied the most suitable techniques of the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy to improve the EFL basic writing skills and finally

the posttest to reflect upon the effectiveness that the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative-based learning had amongst ninth-grade students.

This action research was structured by an introduction in which provides basic knowledge and make clear the purpose of this investigation to the reader; in the literature review part were mention the main theoretical references about the two variables: basic writing skills and the Open-Mind diagram as cooperative learning strategy, in the part of materials and methods is explained the research design the materials used to improve the EFL basic writing skills the methods used and the techniques and instruments applied; in the results is showed the results before and after the intervention; in the discussion there were discussing the main results of the date obtained and the impact of the Open-Mind diagram strategy but having in mind some problems that the candidate teacher faced during the process of the intervention plan for what it is necessary future research for improving some real problems with the students. Finally, it is important to mention main conclusions with their recommendations that are the final part of this thesis work and will be useful to get an overview of the whole research and the results obtained and what was recommended for teacher in order to improve the teaching learning process.

d. LITERATURE REVIEW

Basic writing skills

Teaching students to develop basic writing skills is not an easy work; learning how to write may be very difficult for many students, but it takes much practice and patience. Writing is a necessary skill in many job industries and fields; in order to develop this skill, students of ninth-grade have to understand the basics of English grammar and sentence structure, learning essential vocabulary and how to commit thought processes and ideas onto a paper.

According to Ministry of Education (2014), the ninth-grade students, which is the target group of this research, must achieve the level A1.2, in which learners are expected to produce expository, transactional and informational texts consisting of a series of simple sentences that contain more detail and show more variety in lexical range and sentence structure. Consequently, the types of text they will be producing are: short biographies, personal letters, and “thank you” notes or simple messages for a host family.

According to Ministry of Education (2014), the assessment indicators of this level are:

- ✓ Copy familiar words and short phrases e.g. simple signs, instructions, names of everyday objects, shops, and set phrases used regularly.
- ✓ Take simple notes from a recorded or dictated message within the limits of their vocabulary for the level.
- ✓ Write sentences and structures of simple phrases using basic appropriate punctuation marks, about themselves and imaginary people, where they

live and what they do for short transactional, informational and expository texts e.g. flyers, posters, personal letters, autobiographies, etc.

- ✓ Conduct correspondence e.g. personal letter with a partner, giving and provoking information and advice on personal, educational, and public issues.

Importance of writing.

Most contexts of life such as school, the workplace and the community demand for some level of writing skill, and each context makes overlapping, but not identical, demands. Proficient writers can adapt their writing flexibility to the context in which it takes place (Graham & Perin, 2007).

In the school setting, writing place two distinct but complementary roles:

- ✓ It is a skill that draws on the use of strategies such as planning, evaluating, and revising texts to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support evidence (Graham & Perin, 2007).
- ✓ Writing is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Writing in English foreign language.

Writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience. The ability to write well it is usually learned or culturally conducted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments; it is not a naturally acquired

skill. Writing also involves composing, which suggests the ability either in the form of narratives or description to tell or retell pieces of information, or as in expository or argumentative writing to transform information into new texts (Myles, 2002).

Nevertheless, the ninth-grade students' writing have to accomplish proficiency in their second language in the writing strategies, techniques and skills as well as the use of the language. Also students must have to agree with instructors and later, faculty members, who may or may not get beyond their language problems when evaluating their work. Though a certain quantity of consciousness-raising on the part of the readers may be warranted, students want to write close to error-free texts and they enter language courses with the expectations of becoming more proficient writers in the second language (Myles, 2002).

Writing skills.

According to Fitriani (2012), Writing is one of the language skills which is important in our life. Through writing, we can inform others, carry out transactions, persuade, infuriate, and tell what we feel. However, we know that in second language writing or learning is not simply a matter of "writing things down". It is one of the four basic skills that are very complex and difficult to learn.

Types of writing skills.

According to Heaton (1995:138) cited by (Fitriani, 2012), there are four skills necessary for writing. They are:

- ✓ Grammatical skill: It is the ability to write sentences in a correct way.
- ✓ Stylistic skill: It is the ability to manipulate sentence and use language effectively.
- ✓ Mechanical skill: It is the ability to use correctly those conversations peculiar to the written language e.g. punctuation, and spelling.
- ✓ Judgment skill: It is the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with on ability to select, organize and relevant information.

Writing sub skills.

According to Brown (2007), the writing sub-skills are the following:

- ✓ Produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English
- ✓ Produce writing at an effective rate of speed to suit the purpose
- ✓ Produce and acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns.
- ✓ Use acceptable grammatical systems e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization, patterns and rules.
- ✓ Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.

Henry (2000) cited by (Muhammad , Wu Xiao, & Saima, 2013), mentioned the micro-skills involved in writing skills. These micro-skills help the writer to have good command over writing free of mistakes and errors. In the process of micro-skills the writer needs to:

- ✓ Use the script, spellings and punctuations correctly.
- ✓ Apply the accurate words to state the right tense, case and gender.

- ✓ Apply the vocabulary and terminologies appropriately.
- ✓ Clarify the central ideas from the sustaining information.
- ✓ Use the style of writing suitably to the requirements of the audience.
- ✓ Make use of major components such as subject, verb and object etc. Appropriately which can convey the thought of writer clearly to the reader.
- ✓ Make the text coherent to make the reader understand easily.
- ✓ Place all parts of speech properly.
- ✓ Avoid from jargon, slang, taboos and keep in mind the standard of language according to the mental level of the reader.
- ✓ Judge about the prior knowledge of the audience about the subject.

The most important descriptors that the researcher is going to take into account in order to evaluate the ninth-grade students are the following:

- ✓ Purpose/Task: the reason for which something is done for a specific task, the objective students accomplished (Word Reference, 2015).
- ✓ Organization: the act or process of organizing, planning, or working to put something together: the state or manner of how the writing is being organized. (Word Reference, 2015)
- ✓ Vocabulary: the stock of words used by, known to, or peculiar to, that the students used in their writing (Word Reference, 2015).
- ✓ Tense: a category of verbs or changes in the forms of verbs that serve chiefly to show or refer to the time of the action or state expressed by the verb; one of the forms of a verb that conveys time, in the case of ninth-

grade students they have to perform the simple past (Word Reference, 2015).

- ✓ Word order: the sequence of words in a sentence, especially as governed by grammatical rules and as affecting meaning (Word Reference, 2015).
- ✓ Punctuation: the practice or system of using certain marks or characters in writing or printing in order to separate the elements of sentences and make the meaning clear (Word Reference, 2015).

The stages of the learning process of english foreign language writing.

There are stages that ninth-grade students must follow in order to present a good writing work and be sure the work will have an excellent grade. So, the stages are:

Prewriting.

In this stage, students define what the purpose of the writing is, and identify who the audience will be eg, “My purpose is to tell about my sister’s wedding, and my audience is my teacher and the students in the class.”, also students get together their ideas, and finally they decide what the main idea will be and what supporting details they want to include (Wright, 2010).

Drafting.

In this stage, students get their ideas down on a paper and the idea and materials generated during prewriting are an important source. Students should also be taught not to spend time worrying about spelling or grammar and those

who are unsure where to begin should be encouraged to just start writing. This first draft is assessed by how consistent the content is with its purpose and its appropriateness for the target audiences (Wright, 2010).

Revising.

After reading over the first draft, students may move things around to better organize their arguments or supporting details and rewrite originate sentences. Students can add more details to support their main idea or feel the need to remove some sentences and details that they determine are off topic and that distract from their main idea and purpose for writing. At this stage, students often need the help of their teacher and peers. (Wright, 2010).

Editing.

Students first do their best in order to find errors and correct them on their own. When students have a strong draft in which the main idea and supporting details are presented and well organized, they focus on editing their writing for correct spelling, mechanics and grammar (Wright, 2010).

Publishing.

Publishing means making the final draft available to others. So, a common technique in publishing writing is to read from the author's chair: the student sits on the teacher's chair or another to read his or her writing to the class. Both, the teacher and the class can ask the author questions, pointing out the parts they liked

and if they want, giving constructive feedback to help the student for future writing projects (Wright, 2010).

Techniques to help students to develop a good piece of writing.

- ✓ Teacher must show them that she value communication: Teacher will listen attentively to the students when they talk to her and then she expects them to listen attentively when she talks to them. When she is communicating something important to the class, she must be sure she has eye contact with all the students. Her students' perception of her attitude toward communication will carry over from listening and speaking to reading and writing (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Teacher need to do some writing herself: she can be a more effective guide for her students, if she provides them an example of a writing, if the students see her writing for a variety of purposes, they will understand that she value writing; it provides experience with the writing process and also it gives to the teacher the opportunity to model writing (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Teacher must expose students to a variety of genres: she can expose her students to genres such as stories, poems, non-fiction articles, essays, plays, etc. It's useful to know that reading provides excellent preparation for writing, for example, sometimes a piece that has been read serves as a direct model for writing. Following the same writing process in all subjects will help students see writing as a tool that will serve them well in a variety of situations (Hamilton, 2009).

- ✓ Teacher must help students think of—and keep track of—their ideas for writing: Sometimes thinking about something to write becomes a writer's first difficulty. If students capture ideas when they occur instead of waiting until ideas are needed, they can bypass this obstacle. (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Teacher must help students find an audience for their writing: Writing is more expressive when it is for communication rather than a mere exercise. Teacher can tell students that they have many opportunities to share their writing with their family and their community, also they can write on special paper, and enhance them with a drawing or photograph, to frame them or bind them into a books, in this way, the treatments show high regard for the work and invite a larger audience (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Teacher must provide opportunities for students to get feedback throughout the writing process: Writers should learn to select people who would be most helpful in specific situations. Professional writers regularly consult others, yet adults often make the writing task more difficult for students by requiring them to "do it all themselves." (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Teacher must motivate students to write their first draft without worrying about correctness of anything—spelling, capitalization, punctuation, sentence structure, vocabulary: They should write a very rough first draft, very quickly, teacher can remain them that a first draft does not need to be written in sequence. The important thing is to unleash the flow of ideas. Young writers—like professional writers—may prefer to write at a certain time of day or in a particular place (Hamilton, 2009).

- ✓ Teacher must help students succeed with editing: The researcher can help them by holding students responsible for applying basic rules they have studied, adding new responsibilities as students learn new concepts and provide resources, such as a dictionary, an English handbook, etc. After the content of a composition is established, a writer's attention turns to editing, making mechanical corrections, such as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling) (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Teacher can make writing enjoyable for all. If students understand the value of communication and can share ideas they care about, they are more likely to enjoy writing, and those who enjoy writing will be caught in an upward spiral of writing success. They will have a tool that will serve them well throughout their lives (Hamilton, 2009).

Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy

According to Adler & Rougle (2005), the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy is a visual aid that helps students to step inside another person's mind. Each student brainstorm ideas that they attribute to a specific topic and fill the Open Mind diagram with pictures, symbols, images, words, quotes or phrases. When shared, complete diagrams show rich diversity in students' ideas and opinions. Students, who struggle to write, may use pictures or symbols to convey meaning. Works well as a scaffold for multiple intelligences. It helps students develop a sense of empathy by walking in someone else's shoes.

The materials needed for this strategy are: big cardboard, markers of different color for each student, colored pencils and a black marker for the outline of the head.

In order to develop an Open-Mind diagram the students must form a small group (three students in each group) and each group gets a cardboard. Each student in the group have different colored markers, for example if the group contains three members, they need three different colored markers. Students have to draw a shape of a head on the cardboard and then pass the outline of the head with a black marker, then they write words, quotes from the topic, or any questions that they have from the topic that they have heard (Kohei, 2012).

Not only the teacher but the students are able to identify who has contributed in the group. This cooperative based strategy help the students to encourage each other to participate more if one hasn't written anything on the cardboard. Using this strategy teacher can let the students know that this activity is just a "first step" before they write a summary/sentences/story in order to reduce the pressure that the students may get (Kohei, 2012).

This strategy is a kind of a cooperative-based learning that can help students develop their writing skills in all the classes.

The Principles of cooperative learning that characterized this strategy are:

- ✓ Positive Interdependence. Here the students believe they “sink” or “swim” together. Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (2003) cited by Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu (2013), state that team members are believed to rely on one another to achieve the goal. If any team members fail to do their part,

everyone suffers consequences. Therefore, whatever task students are given to perform, each group member must feel that his or her contribution is necessary for the group's success.

- ✓ Face – to – face Interaction. Also in this strategy, among students whereby they promote each other's learning and success (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013). Johnson (2005) cited by Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu (2013), suggests that it is necessary to maximize the opportunities for them to help, support, encourage, and praise each other. Such interaction helps students to promote orally explaining how to solve problems, teaching one's knowledge to others, checking for understanding, discussing concepts being learned and connecting present with past learning
- ✓ Individual Accountability. Another principle that distinguish this strategy is the individual accountably where in brief words: “What students can do together today, they can do alone tomorrow”. The purpose of cooperative learning groups is to make each member a stronger individual. Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual student is assessed, and the results are given back to the groups (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013).
- ✓ Interpersonal and Small – Group Skills. In this principle students must be taught the social skills and be motivated to use them. Social skills which are needed for both teamwork and task work include leadership, decision –

making, trust – building, communication, and conflict – management skills (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013).

- ✓ Group Processing. And finally, group members think about how well they have cooperated as a team and how to enhance their future cooperation. Some of the keys to successful processing are allowing sufficient time for it to take place, emphasizing positive feedback, and maintaining student involvement in processing. To be cooperative, group members must promote each other's learning and success face – to – face, hold each other personally and individually accountable to do a fair share of the work, use the interpersonal and small group skills needed for cooperative efforts to be successful, and process as a group how effectively members are working together (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013).

As an example of the use of Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative-based strategy to improve the students basic writing skills was after the researcher taught the affirmative and negative statements in the simple past to the students, got students to form groups of three at random, after that the investigator posted an example of an Open-Mind diagram template on the board and explain what they are going to do, also the investigator told that they can use symbols, pictures, quotes, phrases and sentences; each group got a big white cardboard and each student a different color marker. The students in order to start doing the template, they have to draw an outline of a head, and pass it with a black marker to notice the lines, put the title in the front part of the head, and start writing all the things they learned in the class, the researcher gave them 20 minutes to do it, supervising

what the students were doing and also supporting them. At the end the students write their names and give the templates.

Therefore, the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy helps students develop their writing skills in which they can brainstorm ideas that they attribute to a specific topic, students can fill the Open Mind diagram with pictures, symbols, images, words, quotes or phrases; the principles that characterized the strategy are positive interdependence, face – to – face interaction, individual and group accountability, interpersonal and small – group skills, group processing.

e. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

The materials used for this action research were human: the students interviewed from ninth-grade, group “A” of basic education, the English teacher of the classroom and the researcher; and material: The Open-Mind diagram templates as the principle media, that were very useful and helpful for the researcher in the intervention, this templates were collected weekly and also, Teacher’s book as the guide for the teacher and Students’ book level two that provides the Ministry of Education, the students’ notebook for this subject in which the students took notes every class, posters with the topics the researcher taught and cardboards with lots of verbs that were posted every day, and finally the board and markers that were used to write examples and where the students participated, writing their own writing samples.

Design of the research

This was an action research design in which there are systematic procedures completed by teachers or any other individual in an educational background, to gather information and improve the ways their particular educational setting operates, their student learning and their teaching. Consequently, the researcher uses action research as a solution for a specific problem found Mills (2001) cited by Creswell (2012).

Methods

This study made a description of the data resulting from the application of an intervention plan. The following general methods were applied along the descriptive research:

Scientific method.

The scientific method facilitated the study of the use of the Open-Mind diagram to improve the EFL basic writing skills. It helped in the observations done before and during the intervention. This one also assisted during the prediction of the possible solution and it was suitable to gather data in order to make relevant predictions and the analysis of it.

Descriptive method.

The Descriptive method enabled to describe the different stages of the study and the kind of resources used by the researcher. It served to explain and analyze the object of the investigation.

Analytic-synthetic method.

The analytic-synthetic method was used to analyze the obtained results through the questioners and tests. It also was used to make the interpretation of the data, the logical analysis and draw up the conclusions.

Statistic method.

The statistic method was used to make the quantitative statistical analysis of the data received from the questionnaires and the qualitative text analysis of the data received from the observations.

Techniques and Instruments

Data Collection.

Since this work is an action research, elements of both quantitative and qualitative research were selected for data collection. Quantitative research considers variables and statistics whereas qualitative research considers an understanding of words or actions. Both qualitative and quantitative instruments were self-developed by the researcher taking into account the principles of question construction. Being this the case, paper and pencil methods (test) were used to develop quantitative data collection instruments, and observations and interviews (questionnaire, observation sheet) for the qualitative ones.

Tests.

Tests allowed participants to perform cognitive tasks in relation to the basic writing skills. Additionally, tests yielded a numerical score by which the researcher calculated and compared the pre- and posttest results.

Pretest – Posttest.

A researcher-made pretest provided a measure on the performance of writing skills before the participants (ninth-grade students at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza High School) receive a treatment through the intervention plan designed in this research project. After the treatment or intervention plan, a posttest measured again the performance of the writing skills in order to make a pretest-posttest comparison of the cognitive dimension of the performance of writing skills of the participants being treated.

Questionnaire.

A researcher-made questionnaire was administered to the participants to answer questions related to their attitudes and feelings toward the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy. Likewise the tests, a pre and posttest questionnaire was administered in order to make a comparison between the results. Furthermore, the data collected by the questionnaires supported the tests results.

Observation.

The emphasis during the observation was on understanding the natural environment as lived by the ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza High School during their English classes. There were two types of observations as detailed below.

Nonparticipant observation.

In nonparticipant observation, the researcher was not involved in the situation being observed. He/She observed and recorded behaviors but did not interact or participate in the setting under study. The objective of this nonparticipant observation was to identify the issue for this action research project which was supported through the participant observation (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

Participant observation.

In participant observation, the researcher became a part and a participant in the situation being. The researcher participated deliberately in the problematic situation by means of the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy in order to improve the writing skills amongst the ninth -grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza High School during 2014-2015 school year.

Observation sheet.

Whether in the participant and non-participant observation, the researcher needed an observation sheet to record the participants’ behaviors showed on both variables: performance of the basic writing skills and the attitudes and feelings toward the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative-based strategy. This observation sheet was a self-developed instrument that described accurately and comprehensively all the relevant aspects. In other words, it contained the descriptors of the variables of the action research; the issue under treatment (basic

writing skills), and the treatment itself (Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy).

Pilot testing the questions.

Once the questions for both the test (pre and post) and questionnaires (pre and post) were developed under the principles of questions construction, the researcher tested the questions in order to evaluate the instruments and to make the necessary changes based on the feedback from a small number of individuals who evaluated the instruments. Because the pilot group provided feedback on the questionnaire or test, the researcher excluded them from the final sample or population for the study.

Population.

The participants of the present action research were the students of ninth-grade, group “A” of basic education, seven girls and eleven boys.

f. RESULTS

The following section shows the results that were obtained from the subsequent data collection sources. A Pre test and a Post test were used to measure the students' performance on writing skills, in this test the aspects that were taking into account are: Purpose of the task, Organization, Vocabulary, Tense, Word order and Punctuation. Also, a Pre questionnaire and a Post questionnaire were used to measure the students' attitudes and feelings toward the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy.

The data obtained were reinforced by related results gotten throughout the statistical method that contain the means and percentage calculation of the total scores. Finally the data were examined in accordance with 3 of the 5 objectives of the research since they supported and reflected emphatically the investigation.

Objective 1: To research the theoretical and methodological references about the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy and its application on the EFL basic writing skills.

In order to reach this objective, there was a research about the literature review consistent of two variables of her investigation (The Open-Mind diagram and the Cooperative learning), both helped as the bases to build up an intervention plan.

Objective 3: To design an intervention plan based on the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy in order to improve the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group "A" at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.

To attain this objective, the researcher elaborated lesson plans for ninth-grade students during eight weeks (24 lesson plans), which were based on the Open-mind diagram as a cooperative based strategy in order to help students improve their basic writing skills, the researcher took into account the topics of the students' book. (see annex page. 86).

Pre-test Results

Objective 2: To diagnose the issues that limit the development of the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.

a. Table 1

Results of Performance of Ninth-Grade Students' Writing Skills

<i>Students' Code</i>	<i>P</i> <i>2/2</i>	<i>O</i> <i>2/2</i>	<i>V</i> <i>2/2</i>	<i>T</i> <i>1/1</i>	<i>WO</i> <i>2/2</i>	<i>PM</i> <i>1/1</i>	<i>TOTAL</i> <i>10/10</i>
JOE9A01	0,50	0,50	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	2,50
JOE9A02	0,50	0,50	1,00	0,25	1,00	0,50	3,75
JOE9A03	1,00	1,00	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	3,50
JOE9A04	0,50	0,50	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	2,50
JOE9A05	0,50	1,00	0,50	0,50	1,00	0,25	3,75
JOE9A06	0,50	1,00	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	3,00
JOE9A07	0,50	0,50	1,00	0,25	0,50	0,25	3,00
JOE9A08	0,50	0,50	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	2,50
JOE9A09	0,50	1,00	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,50	3,25
JOE9A10	0,50	0,50	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	2,50
JOE9A11	0,50	0,50	1,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	3,50
JOE9A12	0,50	0,50	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	2,50
JOE9A13	0,50	1,00	1,00	0,25	0,50	0,50	3,75
JOE9A14	1,00	1,00	0,50	0,50	0,50	0,25	3,75
JOE9A15	0,50	1,00	1,00	0,50	1,00	0,25	4,25
JOE9A16	0,50	0,50	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	2,50
JOE9A17	1,50	1,00	1,50	0,25	1,50	1,00	6,75
JOE9A18	0,50	0,50	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,25	2,50
Mean	0,61	0,72	0,72	0,29	0,64	0,33	3,32

Note. The descriptors above were assessed in the rubric of writing skills. P=Purpose/Task, O= Organization, V= Vocabulary, T=Tense, WO= Word Order, PM= Punctuation Marks. JOE9A01: Julio Ordoñez Espinoza Ninth Grade A First Student.

b. Interpretation and Analysis

A pretest was administered to ninth-year students in order to measure a starting point of the amount of knowledge existed before the intervention about the writing skills. Looking at table 1, the highest descriptors are Organization and Vocabulary, the mean of both is 0,75/2; but the lowest is Tense with the mean of 0,29/1; The **total mean** of the performance of ninth-year students writing skills is 3,32 out of 10, which is evident that is below the average (See grading scale page. 118); consequently, the ninth-year students had difficulty on creating a sentence or paragraph with a specific purpose, also they have a lack of vocabulary, they could not describe something in the past, the sentences did not have a word order and the punctuation was not the adequate; thus this represented a matter for the researcher to carry out the investigation in this classroom.

Organization: the act or process of organizing, planning, or working to put something together: the state or manner of how the writing is being organized. (Word Reference, 2015). Vocabulary: the stock of words used by, known to, or peculiar to, that the students used in their writing (Word Reference, 2015). Tense: a category of verbs or changes in the forms of verbs that serve chiefly to show or refer to the time of the action or state expressed by the verb; one of the forms of a verb that conveys time, in the case of ninth-year students they have to perform the simple past (Word Reference, 2015).

Objective 4: To apply the most suitable techniques of the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy in order to improve the EFL basic

writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.

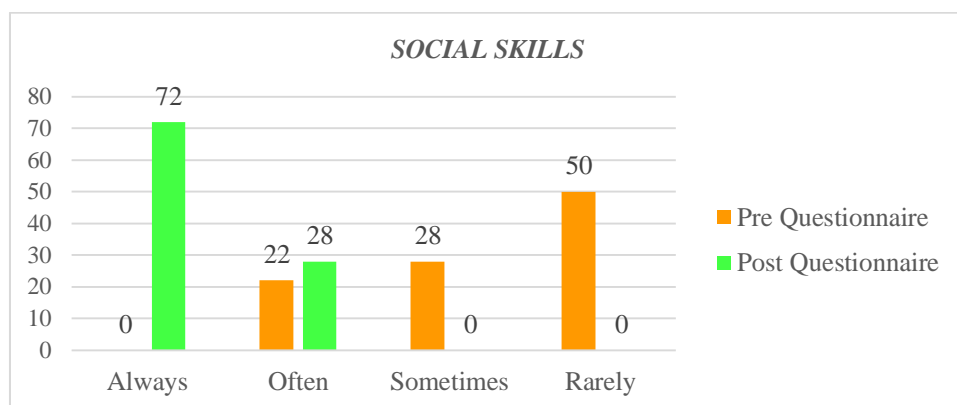
a. Table 2

Statement 1. English class activities are developed in groups and pairs.

Social Skills as a Cooperative Learning Principle

	<i>Pre Questionnaire</i>		<i>Post Questionnaire</i>	
	f	%	f	%
Always	0	0	13	72
Often	4	22	5	28
Sometimes	5	28	0	0
Rarely	9	50	0	0

b. Figure



c. Interpretation and Analysis

It can be seen in table 2 that any ninth-grade student in the first questionnaire answered that they always work in-group or pairs in the activities of the English classes; this percentage was below the expected level. Accordingly, the researcher decided to search for a cooperative-based learning strategy to improve the students’ writing skills, since writing is the matter of the action research. Thus, the

researcher elaborated an intervention plan which consisted of cooperative learning plans during eight weeks, where students work in groups of three. After the intervention plan, the students were evaluated once more, the post questionnaire increased from 0% to 72%, which was at the expected level (See grading scale page. 118). Therefore, during the intervention plan in the English classes, the researcher used the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy and its techniques to develop the group work activities in class and motivate students to participate cooperatively, developing their social skills.

Students must be taught the social skills and be motivated to use them. Social skills which are needed for both teamwork and task work include leadership, decision – making, trust – building, communication, and conflict – management skills (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013).

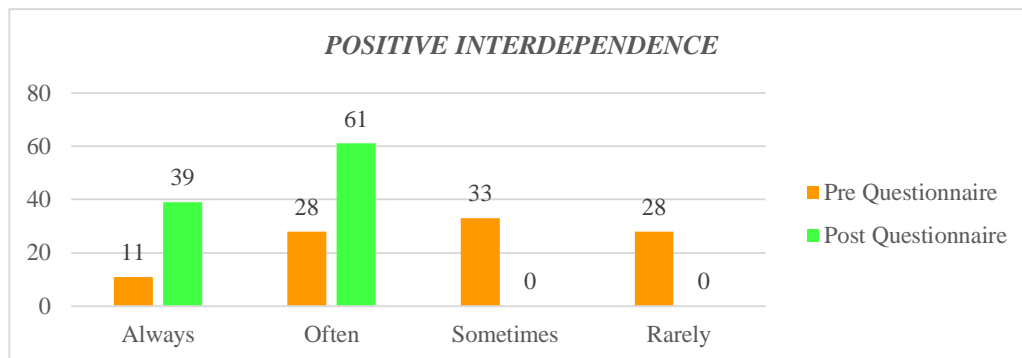
a. Table 3.

Statement 2: The group or pair activities are conducted in a positive and respectful environment.

Positive Interdependence as a Cooperative Learning Principle

	<i>Pre Questionnaire</i>		<i>Post Questionnaire</i>	
	f	%	f	%
Always	2	11	7	39
Often	5	28	11	61
Sometimes	6	33	0	0
Rarely	5	28	0	0

b. Figure



c. Interpretation and Analysis

The results in table 3 reflected on the environment in which cooperative-based strategies were put into practice and also the table shown that the ninth-grade in the first questionnaire answered that only the 28% of them often worked in a group or pair activities in a positive and respectful environment, which was below the expected level; therefore, the researcher looked for a strategy to help students work in a respectful and adequate environment while they were working in groups in order to develop their writing skills. Once the researcher finished the intervention plan mentioned previously, students were interviewed once again, and the questionnaire increased from 28% to 61% and that percentage of students (61%) answered that when they worked in groups they often worked in a positive and respectful environment, this showed that the techniques the researcher used for applying the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy produced a positive impact in the environment of the classroom, because the majority of the ninth-grade students could participate in a positive and respectful way.

The gotten percentage was below the expected level, because of the limitations of the action research, for example, there were some students who did not matter

anything, and they behaved in a bad way in class, they did not respect neither themselves nor other people, but almost the majority of students worked in a positive environment.

Positive Interdependence: the first requirement for an effectively structured cooperative learning environment is that students believe they “sink” or “swim” together. Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (2003) cited by Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu (2013), state that team members are believed to rely on one another to achieve the goal. If any team members fail to do their part, everyone suffers consequences. Therefore, whatever task students are given to perform, each group member must feel that his or her contribution is necessary for the group’s success.

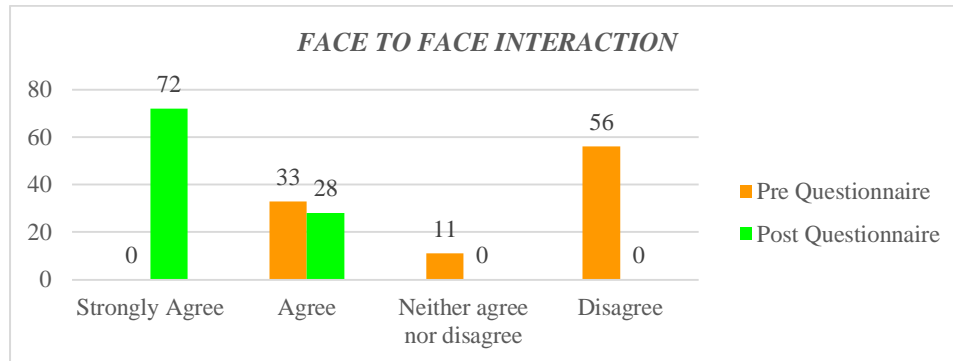
a. Table 4.

Statement 3: Having good relationships and positive interactions are essential for group work.

Face to Face Interaction as a Cooperative Learning Principle

	<i>Pre Questionnaire</i>		<i>Post Questionnaire</i>	
	f	%	f	%
Strongly Agree	0	0	13	72
Agree	6	33	5	28
Neither agree nor disagree	2	11	0	0
Disagree	10	56	0	0

b. Figure



c. Interpretation and Analysis

As seen in table 4, it reflected on relationships and interactions among the students in the group work. In the first questionnaire the students let the researcher know that any student agreed on having a good relationship and positive interaction were essential for group work, this percentage was below the expected level. Once the researcher finished with the intervention plan, the students responded a second questionnaire and this changed from 0% to 72%, which was at the expected level. Hence, the techniques that the researcher used in the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative-based strategy produced in the students to have a good relationship and positive interaction while they were working together.

Face – to – face Interaction among students whereby they promote each other’s learning and success (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013). Johnson (2005) cited by Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu (2013), suggests that it is necessary to maximize the opportunities for them to help, support, encourage, and praise each other. Such interaction helps to promote the following: orally explaining how to solve problems, teaching one’s knowledge to others, checking

for understanding, discussing concepts being learned, and connecting present with past learning.

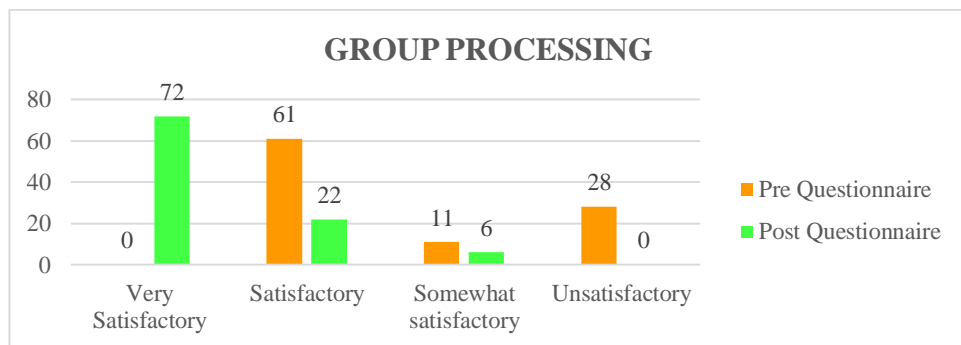
a. Table 5.

Statement 4: How satisfying is it for you to work in groups?

Group Processing as a Cooperative Learning Principle

	<i>Pre Questionnaire</i>		<i>Post Questionnaire</i>	
	f	%	f	%
Very Satisfactory	0	0	13	72
Satisfactory	11	61	4	22
Somewhat satisfactory	2	11	1	6
Unsatisfactory	5	28	0	0

b. Figure



c. Interpretation and Analysis

It has been found in table 5 that it reflected the satisfaction that students feel when they work cooperatively. During the pre-intervention plan phase the ninth-grade students responded to a questionnaire, in which let researcher know that any of them were very satisfactory in working in groups, this percentage was below the expected level. At the end of the intervention plan, the researcher applied a second questionnaire to them, the pre questionnaire increased from 0% to 70%

which was at the expected level. As a consequence, the techniques the researcher used in the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy helped students to feel very satisfactory while they were working in groups and in this way increase their achievement in the English classes.

Group members should think about how well they have cooperated as a team and how to enhance their future cooperation. Some of the keys to successful processing are allowing sufficient time for it to take place, emphasizing positive feedback, and maintaining student involvement in processing. To be cooperative, group members must promote each other's learning and success face – to – face, hold each other personally and individually accountable to do a fair share of the work, use the interpersonal and small group skills needed for cooperative efforts to be successful, and process as a group how effectively members are working together (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013).

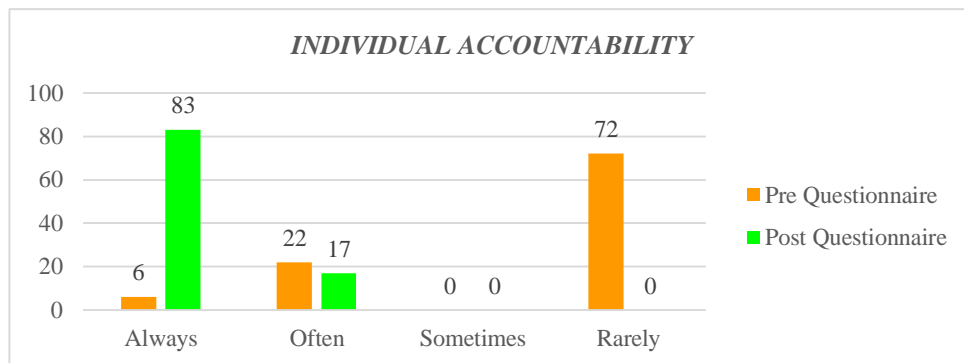
a. Table 6

Statement 5: In group activities, all members contribute to the development of collective work.

Individual Accountability as a Cooperative Learning Principle

	<i>Pre Questionnaire</i>		<i>Post Questionnaire</i>	
	f	%	f	%
Always	1	6	15	83
Often	4	22	3	17
Sometimes	0	0	0	0
Rarely	13	72	0	0

b. Figure



c. Interpretation and Analysis

As seen in table 6, it reflected the contribution of all the members during the group work. The results showed that the ninth-grade students answered a first questionnaire in which only the 6% of them, perceived that always all the members of the group contribute to the development of the collective work, this percentage was below the expected level. The researcher elaborated an intervention plan of eight weeks, once the researcher finished with the intervention plan, it was administered a second questionnaire in which it increased from 6% to 83%, the percentage was at the expected level. As a result, it is evident that the techniques the researcher used in the Open-Mind diagram as cooperative-based strategy engaged students to collaborate in the best way in the development of the work and succeed as a single group.

The Individual and Group Accountability leads to the belief “What students can do together today, they can do alone tomorrow”. The purpose of cooperative learning groups is to make each member a stronger individual. Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual student is assessed, and the results are given back to the groups (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013).

Objective 5: To reflect upon the effectiveness that the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy had amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.

Pos-test Results

a. Table 7

Results of Performance of Ninth-Grade Students’ Writing Skills

<i>Students’ Code</i>	<i>P1 2/2</i>	<i>O2 2/2</i>	<i>V3 2/2</i>	<i>T4 1/1</i>	<i>WO5 2/2</i>	<i>P6 1/1</i>	<i>TOTAL 10/10</i>
JOE9A01	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	1	5
JOE9A02	1,5	1,5	2	1	1	1	8
JOE9A03	1,5	1,5	2	1	2	1	9
JOE9A04	1,5	1	2	0,75	1	1	7,25
JOE9A05	1,5	1,5	2	1	1	1	8
JOE9A06	2	1	2	1	1,5	1	8,5
JOE9A07	1,5	1,5	2	1	1,5	1	8,5
JOE9A08	1,5	1	2	1	2	0,75	8,25
JOE9A09	1,5	1,5	2	1	1,5	0,75	8,25
JOE9A10	1,5	1	2	1	1,5	1	8
JOE9A11	1,5	1,5	2	1	1,5	1	8,5
JOE9A12	2	1,5	2	1	2	1	9,5
JOE9A13	1,5	1,5	1,5	0,75	1,5	1	7,75
JOE9A14	1,5	1,5	2	1	1,5	1	8,5
JOE9A15	1	1,5	2	1	2	1	8,5
JOE9A16	1,5	1,5	2	1	1	1	8
JOE9A17	2	2	2	1	2	1	10
JOE9A18	1	1,5	1,5	1	1,5	1	7,5
Mean	1,50	1,36	1,89	0,97	1,47	0,97	8,17

Note: The descriptors above were assessed in the rubric of writing skills. **P**=Purpose/Task, **O**= Organization, **V**= Vocabulary, **T**=Tense, **WO**= Word Order, **PM**= Punctuation Marks. JOE9A01: Julio Ordoñez Espinoza Ninth Grade A First Student.

b. Interpretation and Analysis

Looking at table 2, the results shown that on the one hand, the means for writing skill Punctuation Mark and Tense got the highest score both with (0,97/1), and on the other hand the writing skills Organization got the lowest mean which is 1,36/2. The total mean of the performance of writing skills was 8,17 out of 10, which is evident that is a high score.

Hence, the post-test means showed a strong indication that ninth-grade students were able to accomplish the given task giving good details and minor errors, so they could create a sentence or paragraph with a specific purpose, they evidently increased their vocabulary, the organization of the sentence did not affect the message since most of the facts were presented in a logical sequence, there was not almost verb disagreement since the majority of the time students could describe something in the past, the sentences have a word order, the punctuation was the adequate and the punctuation marks were used when they were necessary.

Writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience. The ability to write well is usually learned or culturally conducted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments; it is not a naturally acquired skill. (Myles, 2002).

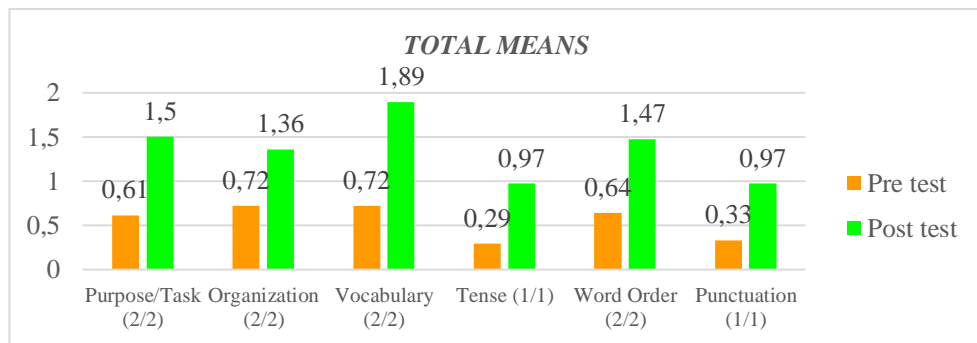
a. Table 8

Pre-test and Post-test Means Summary. Performance of Ninth-Grade Students

Writing Skills

Descriptors	Pretest	Posttest
Purpose/Task (2/2)	0,61	1,50
Organization (2/2)	0,72	1,36
Vocabulary (2/2)	0,72	1,89
Tense (1/1)	0,29	0,97
Word Order (2/2)	0,64	1,47
Punctuation (1/1)	0,33	0,97
Means	3,32	8,17

a. Figure



b. Interpretation and Analysis

As shown in table 7, Tense got the highest score means which is 0,97, and Organization got the lowest score (1,36). The total score mean changed from 3.32 to 8.17 which is evident the improvement that the ninth-grade students had after the intervention plan, using the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative-based strategy to help students develop their writing skills, the score is at the expected level.

In cooperative learning method when the teacher gives a writing task, the members of the groups work together towards certain shared learning goals. They help each other during the process of drafting the writing. They plan, translate and review the work together. They monitor and evaluate their writing. They try to gain appreciation for their group. In such class activities team members try to make sure that each member has mastered the assigned task because the teacher randomly calls upon the students to answer for the team (Mandal, 2009).

g. DISCUSSION

The Open-Mind diagram as a Cooperative Learning strategy to develop the English as foreign language basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “a” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school, 2014 – 2015 academic period., had a significant impact since the students’ knowledge on writing skills increased after the intervention, the pre and posttest and pre and post questionnaires showed the significant progress students got.

The intervention showed very significant changes on ninth-year students after the intervention. The pretest showed that the major problem that students had is on identifying the tenses; however it changed after the intervention plan because the perception of the students in identifying the tense improved highly as it is explained in the means (3,32) from the pretest and the posttest (8,17).

This action research based on cooperative learning indicated that ninth-year students before, during and after the intervention had major changes, the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative-based learning helped to change the attitudes and feelings that the students had toward a cooperative learning, the percentages of Social skills changed from 0% to 72%; Positive interdependence changed from 28% to 61%; Face to face interaction changed from 0% to 72%, Group processing changed from 0% to 72%; and finally Individual accountability changed from 6% to 83%.

The attitude the students showed at the beginning of the intervention was amazing, because they were anxious of doing a different thing and start writing in a good way, that’s why the majority of students collaborate every class

participating, writing on the board and taking notes on their books, at the end they were grateful because the level they had at the beginning change notably.

The materials used in the intervention were very helpful since students the majority of time put attention at classes, the researcher could interact with the students in the best way making dynamic classes, using didactic material and working hard, the collaboration the English teacher made in the interventions was decent helping with the students discipline during the classes.

Even the grades were above the expected average, this action research had some limitations such as it was kind of difficult for the researcher to manage the whole class because of the experience; some students paid little attention to the English classes, in addition at the beginning students did not have the adequate level of vocabulary, consequently the researcher had to start from the very basic teaching; and finally, some students did not have good study habits; thus, the limitation did not allowed the ninth-grade students to accomplish a major higher score.

The Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy facilitated the improvement of the students' basic writing skills, making the learning process dynamic and helping students work in group supporting each one and noticing errors and learn from others.

h. CONCLUSIONS

- The issues that limited the development of the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-year students is the difficulty that students had at the moment of creating a sentence or paragraph, their writing was not well organized, there was a lack of grammar and vocabulary and the punctuation was not the adequate; the mean of this single class before the intervention plan was below the average.
- The techniques of the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy that were implemented and helped to ninth-year students group “A” were face to face interaction that promote each other’s learning and success, Individual accountability that makes each member a stronger individual, group processing in which group members think about how well they have cooperated as a team, social skills which includes leadership, decision-making, trust-building and positive interdependence in which members relied on one another to achieve the goal, this techniques were adequate and supportive because students could improve their writing skills in a better and clearly way.
- The results of this investigation revealed that the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy was effective in the ninth-grade students, since after the intervention plan the total mean increased from 3.32 to 8, 17 out of 10 which is a high score. Consequently, the students were able to create a sentence or simple paragraph with a good organization and grammar structure, with rich vocabulary and adequate punctuation.

i. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The authorities and teachers of the Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school should socialize the results of the execution, application and evaluation of “The Open-Mind diagram as a Cooperative Learning strategy to develop the English as foreign language basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school, 2014 – 2015 academic period.”, in order to raise awareness about the importance of having in the curriculum cooperative-based strategies to improve the students’ basic writing skills.
- Teachers should share with the rest of classes of the school or even with another schools the techniques the researcher used in the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative based strategy to help students improve their basic writing skills in the EFL, adapting the content to the different ages and needs of the students, and in the context in which the learners are developing.
- Teachers should continue using the principles and components of the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy, since this strategy was effective to improve the students’ basic writing skills.

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k. ANNEXES



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE LOJA
ÁREA DE LA EDUCACIÓN, EL ARTE Y LA
COMUNICACIÓN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE CAREER

THEME

THE OPEN-MIND DIAGRAM AS A COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY TO DEVELOP THE ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE BASIC WRITING SKILLS AMONGST NINTH-GRADE STUDENTS, GROUP “A” AT PROFESOR. JULIO ORDOÑEZ ESPINOZA HIGH SCHOOL, 2014 – 2015 ACADEMIC PERIOD.

Research work as a previous requirement to obtain the Bachelor's Degree in Science of Education English Language Specialization.

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Loja- Ecuador
2015

a. THEME

THE OPEN-MIND DIAGRAM AS A COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY TO DEVELOP THE ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE BASIC WRITING SKILLS AMONGST NINTH-GRADE STUDENTS, GROUP “A” AT PROFESOR. JULIO ORDOÑEZ ESPINOZA HIGH SCHOOL, 2014 – 2015 ACADEMIC PERIOD.

b. PROBLEMATIC STATEMENT

Background

This research project is carried out at a public school “Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinosa” of Loja. This Public high school is located in El Sagrario parish, on Universitaria Avenue between Juan de Salinas and Pasaje Rodriguez Streets, near from the center of the city. The current population that attends to this educational center have low economic level.

This institution was founded on October 7th in 1938 by Honorio Cabrera. The institution first started as the name of “Indoamerica” school, then in 1941 was changed as the name of “José Ángel Palacio” and finally in 2002 was changed as the name of “Julio Ordoñez Espinoza”. The public school has a staff of 40 teachers in the morning and in the afternoon, two of them are English teachers and 936 students, boys and girls.

The institution’s vision is provide a quality education with warmth, it is focused on the human being; that is constituting in a free thinking and democratic space of fully exercising of the human rights and peace culture promoter, that guarantee the equity and the students’ inclusion; its action is supported in the education of values, excellent interpersonal relationship, perseverance and good lifestyle; directors and well-formed teachers and updated is scientific, technical and pedagogical fields, willing to assume the role of mediators and counselors of the educational process.

Current situation of the research problem.

The education system in Ecuador has been in advanced, teachers are motivated to take courses in order to get a better knowledge and share it with the rest of the students, even it is a great advantage in order to get the target language, most of the students do not pay interest on it. In school and high schools there exist a lack of children and teenagers' attention in the English classes, that's why it is very difficult for the teacher to teach the language and also for the students to acquire it.

The researcher in the months of September and November made a closer observation at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school with the ninth-grade students, group "A"; this classroom is integrated by seven girls and twelve boys, both have low economic level, they have classes five days per week.

As other public schools, the students' English level is not as good as teachers want it to be, but the majority of the students in the English classes put their best effort in order to learn the language. The English teacher of ninth-grade students use good strategies in order to get students attention, but some of them are very imperative students.

However, at the moment to write something, there exist a lack of this skill, almost all the students do not have the enough knowledge and good strategies or techniques in order to develop a paragraph or write a sentence, so that's why the researcher focused to find a good strategy that help students in this trouble.

The researcher fined the Open-Mind diagram as a very useful technique to assistance students to develop the skill in a cooperative learning, where each other

can contribute with their knowledge. Also this technique is very funny that get students' attention and maintain them engage with the classroom objectives.

Research problem

How does the Open-Mind Diagram as a cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group "A" at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinosa School during the 2014-2015 academic period?

Delimitation of the research

a) Timing.

- ✓ This present research work will be carried out during the 2015-2015 academic period.

b) Location.

- ✓ This Action research will be done at "Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinosa" public high school amongst ninth-grade students, group "A" of basic education, which is a public institution located in Loja city.

c) Participants.

- ✓ The researcher: Mayra Ivonn Cajamarca Llivigañay as the candidate teacher of this study who is going to take part in the intervention plan.
- ✓ Students of ninth-grade, group "A" of basic education at "Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza"; seven girls and eleven boys, one student (girl) of them has different capabilities.

d) Sub problems

- ✓ What theoretical and methodological references about the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy are adequate for improving the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?
- ✓ What are the issues that limit the development of the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?
- ✓ What are the phases of the intervention plan that help the current issues to achieve a satisfactory outcome on developing the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?
- ✓ Which Open-Mind diagram techniques as a cooperative learning strategy are implemented to improve EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?
- ✓ How does the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy reduce the difficulty to develop the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?

c. JUSTIFICATION

Language is a vital tool for communication, it is not only a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but it builds friendships, economic relationships and cultural ties. English language is the third most common primary language around the world, so has become one of the most important and useful languages in any field.

English as a foreign and target language in Ecuador has many roles in education and communication with other countries. In education, the necessity of teaching this language has been increasing nowadays, in schools and universities is mandatory to teach English as a media to help students find better opportunities in their future lives.

One important factor in teaching English is writing, through writing we can inform others carry out transactions, persuade, infuriate, and tell what we feel. Writing in an English foreign language is not easy for learners, also there are a lack of vocabulary and grammar accuracy, so teachers have to find the best and funny strategies to help students develop that skill, and become writing a useful tool for communicating.

For this reason the researcher has consider to carry out this action research project to help ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinosa public high school, to improve their writing skill using the Open-Mind Diagram as a cooperative learning strategy. This study will provide a solution for students and teachers using a good and funny strategy to improve students’ writing skill, the researcher also focused on this strategy because have considered

that the work in group motivate students, increase the value of help each other and help students do their best.

According to Felder & Brent (2014) asseverate: “Cooperative learning is an approach to group work that minimizes the occurrence of those unpleasant situations and maximizes the learning and satisfaction that result from working on a high-performance team” (p. 1). So The Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy to improve writing skills, will help students to encourage each other to participate more if one hasn't written anything on the poster paper.

Finally, the researcher decide to do this action research project a requirement in order to get the Bachelor's Degree in Science of Education, English Language Specialization as established in the regulations of the Education, Art and Communication Area of the National University of Loja.

d. OBJECTIVES

General

- ✓ To improve the English Foreign language basic writing skills through the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.

Specific

- ✓ To research the theoretical and methodological references about the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy and its application on the EFL basic writing skills.
- ✓ To diagnose the issues that limit the development of the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.
- ✓ To design an intervention plan based on the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy in order to improve the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.
- ✓ To apply the most suitable techniques of the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy in order to improve the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.
- ✓ To reflect upon the effectiveness that the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy had amongst ninth-grade students, group “A”

at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.

e. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Basic writing skills

Teaching students to develop basic writing skills is not an easy work; learning how to write may be very difficult for many students, but it takes much practice and patience. Writing is a necessary skill in many job industries and fields; in order to develop this skill, students have to understand the basics of English grammar and sentence structure, learning essential vocabulary and how to commit thought processes and ideas onto a paper.

According to Ministry of Education (2014) the ninth-grade students, which is the target group of this research, must achieve the level A1.2, in which learners are expected to produce expository, transactional and informational texts consisting of a series of simple sentences that contain more detail and show more variety in lexical range and sentence structure. Consequently, the types of text they will be producing are: short biographies, personal letters, and 'thank you' notes or simple messages for a host family.

According to MinEduc (2014) the assessment indicators of this level are:

- ✓ Copy familiar words and short phrases (e.g. simple signs, instructions, names of everyday objects, shops, and set phrases used regularly).
- ✓ Take simple notes from a recorded or dictated message within the limits of their vocabulary for the level.
- ✓ Write sentences and structures of simple phrases using basic appropriate punctuation marks, about themselves and imaginary people, where they

live and what they do for short transactional, informational and expository texts (e.g. flyers, posters, personal letters, autobiographies, etc.)

- ✓ Conduct correspondence (e.g. personal letter) with a partner, giving and provoking information and advice on personal, educational, and public issues.

In order to know about the skill I am going to teach I have to have clear what it is so, according to Collins Dictionary (s.f.) a brief definition about writing is that it is a group of letters or symbols marked or written on a surface by making each symbol stand for an idea, concept, or thing as a means of communicating ideas, by using each symbol to represent a set of sounds grouped into syllables (syllabic writing), or by regarding each symbol as corresponding roughly or exactly to each of the sounds in the language (alphabetic writing).

Importance of writing.

Most contexts of life such as school, the workplace and the community demand for some level of writing skill, and each context makes overlapping, but not identical, demands. Proficient writers can adapt their writing flexibility to the context in which it takes place (Graham & Perin, 2007) .

In the school setting, writing place two distinct but complementary roles:

- ✓ It is a skill that draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising texts) to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support evidence (Graham & Perin, 2007).

- ✓ Writing is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Writing in English foreign language.

Writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience. The ability to write well it is usually learned or culturally conducted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments; it is not a naturally acquired skill. Writing also involves composing, which suggests the ability either in the form of narratives or description to tell or retell pieces of information, or as in expository or argumentative writing to transform information into new texts (Myles, 2002).

Nevertheless, students' writing have to accomplish proficiency in their second language in the writing strategies, techniques and skills as well as the use of the language. Also they must have to agree with instructors and later, faculty members, who may or may not get beyond their language problems when evaluating their work. Though a certain quantity of consciousness-raising on the part of the readers may be warranted, students want to write close to error-free texts and they enter language courses with the expectations of becoming more proficient writers in the second language (Myles, 2002).

Writing skills.

According to Fitriani (2012) Writing is one of the language skills which is important in our life. Through writing, we can inform others, carry out

transactions, persuade, infuriate, and tell what we feel. However, we know that in a second language writing or learning is not simply a matter of “writing things down”. It is one of the four basic skills that are very complex and difficult to learn.

Types of writing skills.

According to Heaton (1995:138) cited by (Fitriani, 2012), there are four skills necessary for writing. They are:

- ✓ Grammatical skill: It is the ability to write sentences in a correct way.
- ✓ Stylistic skill: It is the ability to manipulate sentence and use language effectively.
- ✓ Mechanical skill: It is the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language e.g. punctuation, and spelling.
- ✓ Judgment skill: It is the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with an ability to select, organize and relevant information.

Writing sub skills.

According to Brown (2007) the writing sub-skills are the following:

- ✓ Produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English
- ✓ Produce writing at an effective rate of speed to suit the purpose
- ✓ Produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns.

- ✓ Use acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns and rules.
- ✓ Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.

Henry (2000) cited by (Muhammad , Wu Xiao, & Saima, 2013) mentioned the micro-skills involved in writing skills. These micro-skills helps the writer to have good command over writing free of mistakes and errors. In the process of micro-skills the writer needs to:

- ✓ Use the script, spellings and punctuations correctly.
- ✓ Apply the accurate words to state the right tense, case and gender.
- ✓ Apply the vocabulary and terminologies appropriately.
- ✓ Clarify the central ideas from the sustaining information.
- ✓ Use the style of writing suitably to the requirements of the audience.
- ✓ Make use of major components such as subject, verb and object etc. Appropriately which can convey the thought of writer clearly to the reader.
- ✓ Make the text coherent to make the reader understand easily.
- ✓ Place all parts of speech properly.
- ✓ Avoid from jargon, slang, taboos and keep in mind the standard of language according to the mental level of the reader.
- ✓ Judge about the prior knowledge of the audience about the subject.

The stages of the learning process of English foreign language writing.

There are stages students must follow in order to present a good writing work and be sure the work will have an excellent grade. So, the stages are:

Prewriting.

In this stage, students define what the purpose of the writing is, and identify who the audience will be (e., “My purpose is to tell about my sister’s wedding, and my audience is my teacher and the students in the class.”), also students get together their ideas, and finally they decide what the main idea will be and what supporting details they want to include (Wright, 2010).

Drafting.

In this stage, students get their ideas down on a paper and the idea and materials generated during prewriting are an important source. Students should also be taught not to spend time worrying about spelling or grammar and those who are unsure where to begin should be encouraged to just start writing. This first draft is assessed by how consistent the content is with its purpose and its appropriateness for the target audiences (Wright, 2010).

Revising.

After reading over the first draft, students may move things around to better organize their arguments or supporting details and rewrite originate sentences. Students can add more details to support their main idea or feel the need to remove some sentences and details that they determine are off topic and that distract from their main idea and purpose for writing. At this stage, students often need the help of their teacher and peers. (Wright, 2010).

Editing.

Students first do their best in order to find errors and correct them on their own. When students have a strong draft in which the main idea and supporting details are presented and well organized, they focus on editing their writing for correct spelling, mechanics and grammar (Wright, 2010).

Publishing.

Publishing means making the final draft available to others. So, a common technique in publishing a writing is to read from the author's chair: the student sits on the teacher's chair or another to read his or her writing to the class. Both, the teacher and the class can ask the author questions, pointing out the parts they liked and if they want, giving constructive feedback to help the student for future writing projects (Wright, 2010).

Techniques to help students develop a good writing.

- ✓ Show them that you value communication: Listen attentively to the students when they talk to you and then expect them to listen attentively when you talk to them. When you are communicating something important to the class, be sure you have eye contact with all the students. Your students' perception of your attitude toward communication will carry over from listening and speaking to reading and writing (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Do some writing yourself: you can be a more effective guide for your students, if you provides them an example of a writing, if the students see your writing for a variety of purposes, they will understand that you value

writing; it provides experience with the writing process and also it gives you the opportunity to model writing (Hamilton, 2009).

- ✓ Expose students to a variety of genres: you can expose your students to genres such as stories, poems, non-fiction articles, essays, plays, etc; both for reading and for writing. It's useful to know that reading provides excellent preparation for writing, for example, sometimes a piece that has been read serves as a direct model for writing. Following the same writing process in all subjects will help students see writing as a tool that will serve them well in a variety of situations (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Help students think of—and keep track of—their ideas for writing: Sometimes thinking about something to write becomes a writer's first difficulty. If students capture ideas when they occur instead of waiting until ideas are needed, they can bypass this obstacle. (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Help students find an audience for their writing: Writing is more expressive when it is for communication rather than a mere exercise. You can say to students that they have many opportunities to share their writing with their family and their community. Also tell them that they can write some pieces on special paper, and enhance them with a drawing or photograph, and/or frame them or bind them into a books, in this way, the treatments show high regard for the work and invite a larger audience (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Provide opportunities for students to get feedback throughout the writing process: Writers should learn to select people who would be most helpful

in specific situations. Professional writers regularly consult others, yet adults often make the writing task more difficult for students by requiring them to "do it all themselves." (Hamilton, 2009).

- ✓ Free students to write their first draft without worrying about correctness of anything—spelling, capitalization, punctuation, sentence structure, vocabulary: They should write a very rough first draft, very quickly, reminding them that a first draft need not be written in sequence. The important thing is to unleash the flow of ideas. Young writers—like professional writers—may prefer to write at a certain time of day or in a particular place (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Help students succeed with editing: The researcher can help them by holding students responsible for applying basic rules they have studied, adding new responsibilities as students learn new concepts and provide resources, such as a dictionary, an English handbook, etc. After the content of a composition is established, a writer's attention turns to editing (making mechanical corrections, such as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling) (Hamilton, 2009).
- ✓ Make writing enjoyable for both you and your students. If students understand the value of communication and can share ideas they care about, they are more likely to enjoy writing, and those who enjoy writing will be caught in an upward spiral of writing success. They will have a tool that will serve them well throughout their lives (Hamilton, 2009).

Cooperative learning

The Cooperative learning is a strategy which helps students develop the four skills, productive skills: speaking and writing and receptive skills: listening and reading; but the purpose of this research project is to use the cooperative learning strategy to develop ninth-grade students' basic writing skills, so the researcher will focus on writing using this cooperative-based strategy called Open-Mind diagram.

First of all, it is worth to describe the principles of cooperative learning, but the researcher is aware about the characteristics and principles of this strategy and how this strategy works. The strategy Open-Mind diagram is cooperative-based learning that helps develop the students' basic writing skills, in which students work in groups, share ideas and support each other.

According to Dotson (2001) cooperative learning is a teaching arrangement that refers to small, heterogeneous groups of students working together to achieve a common goal. Students work together to learn and are responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own.

In cooperative learning method when the teacher gives a writing task, the members of the groups work together towards certain shared learning goals. They help each other during the process of drafting the writing. They plan, translate and review the work together. They monitor and evaluate their writing. They try to gain appreciation for their group. In such class activities team members try to make sure that each member has mastered the assigned task because the teacher randomly calls upon the students to answer for the team (Mandal, 2009)

Advantages of cooperative learning.

According to Mandal (2009) the advantages of cooperative learning are:

- ✓ Cooperative learning develops higher level thinking skills.
- ✓ Skill building and practice can be enhanced and made less tedious through cooperative learning activities in and out the classroom.
- ✓ It creates an environment for active, involved and exploratory learning.
- ✓ It improves the performance of the weaker students when grouped with higher achieving students.
- ✓ It addresses learning style differences among students.

Five basic elements of cooperative learning.

According to Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu (2013) cooperative efforts are expected to be more productive under certain conditions. The teachers should perceive the five basic elements of cooperative learning approach. The elements are as follows:

- ✓ Positive Interdependence. The first requirement for an effectively structured cooperative learning environment is that students believe they “sink” or “swim” together. Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (2003) cited by Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu (2013) state that team members are believed to rely on one another to achieve the goal. If any team members fail to do their part, everyone suffers consequences. Therefore, whatever task students are given to perform, each group member must feel that his or her contribution is necessary for the group’s success.

- ✓ Face – to – face Interaction. The second element of cooperative learning requires face – to face interaction among students whereby they promote each other’s learning and success (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013). Johnson (2005) cited by Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu (2013) suggests that it is necessary to maximize the opportunities for them to help, support, encourage, and praise each other. Such interaction helps to promote the following:
 - ✓ orally explaining how to solve problems
 - ✓ teaching one’s knowledge to others
 - ✓ checking for understanding
 - ✓ discussing concepts being learned
 - ✓ connecting present with past learning
- ✓ Individual Accountability. The third element leads to the belief “What students can do together today, they can do alone tomorrow”. The purpose of cooperative learning groups is to make each member a stronger individual. Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual student is assessed, and the results are given back to the groups (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013).
- ✓ Interpersonal and Small – Group Skills. Students must be taught the social skills and be motivated to use them. Social skills which are needed for both teamwork and task work include leadership, decision – making, trust – building, communication, and conflict – management skills (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013).

- ✓ **Group Processing.** Group members should think about how well they have cooperated as a team and how to enhance their future cooperation. Some of the keys to successful processing are allowing sufficient time for it to take place, emphasizing positive feedback, and maintaining student involvement in processing. To be cooperative, group members must promote each other's learning and success face – to – face, hold each other personally and individually accountable to do a fair share of the work, use the interpersonal and small group skills needed for cooperative efforts to be successful, and process as a group how effectively members are working together (Vidyalaya & Nagar Jammu, 2013).

Current strategies of cooperative learning.

There are lots of strategies of cooperative learning, in this case the researcher is going to talk about some of them but focusing especially in her strategy that is called The Open-Mind diagram which helps students develop their basic writing skills.

Time paired share

This structure encourages self-expression and idea exchange by having students "share the floor" equally. In this strategy, students pair off, then number off, 1-2. The teacher chooses a number, 1 or 2, to speak first. That student speaks about a specified topic for a specified length of time, while the other student listens quietly and can nod or smile, but cannot speak or interrupt the speaker (Kagan, Kagan, 1998).

After the allotted time has finished, students change roles, so the other student speaks for the same period of time on the same, or another, stipulated topic, with her or his partner in the listener role. After both partners have had equal opportunity to speak, the teacher randomly chooses a number of students, and asks them to summarize what their partners have said (Kagan, Kagan, 1998).

Folded value line.

In this strategy a problem, or issue, is raised. The teacher elicits which students are strongly supportive of, or against, the issue or idea via a show of hands. Students who feel strongly for or against the issue stand at either end (the "poles") of the Value Line, where one end of the line represents strong support for an issue/concept, and the other represents its opposite. The rest of the students physically position themselves along the line at the point reflecting their own opinion. Thus, those who feel squarely in the middle of an issue stand at the middle, while those who feel rather strongly in agreement with either "pole" stand near that end of the line. In pairs, they can exchange opinions and explain rationales for their viewpoints. (Kagan, Kagan, 1998)

Corners.

Corners can be used to have students express, and listen to, various opinions on a topic, honing listening, critical thinking, and self-expression skills. The teacher can make each corner of the classroom represent a stipulated view. For example, three possible corners could constitute For, Against, and Undecided relative to a topic. Students move to the corner that represents their viewpoint. Next, students

discuss their opinions, or respond to a comment, within their corners. This could first be done in pairs, and later with pairs joining other pairs to make groups of 4, or with subsequent changes of partners to form new pairs (Kagan, Kagan, 1998).

Team statements, blackboard share.

Students first think about a stipulated topic alone. After students have had time to think Ñndash; and perhaps take notes if they wish Ñndash; they share their ideas in pairs or small groups. Next, students again work alone and devise one statement that reflects their view. Students then alternate presenting their individual statements to each other, allowing other students in their group to ask for clarification, or further information. The team then creates a Team Statement that represents an opinion everyone in the group agrees with relative to the topic (Kagan, Kagan, 1998)

Open-Mind diagram.

The researcher has decided to apply this strategy in order to improve the basic writing skills of ninth-grade students at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school because the researcher finds this strategy very interesting and helpful that is based on the cooperative learning to support students' basic writing skills.

According to Shimizu (2012) learning how to work with other students is one of the most important things for the students to learn at school. Learning and working together (cooperative learning) is one of the best ways for the students to learn different materials, however, some people are shy. Therefore, it is important for teachers to know how they can encourage every student to participate. Open

Mind Diagram will help teachers keep track of how much each student has contributed.

How to work in an Open-Mind diagram?

Students will form a small group (three to five) and each group will get a poster paper. Each student in the group will have different colored markers, for example if the group contains four members, they will need four different colored markers. Students will draw a shape of a head on the poster paper, and write words, quotes from the topic, or any questions that they have from the topic that they have heard or read (Kohei, 2012).

Purpose/benefits of Open-Mind diagram.

Not only the teacher but the students are able to identify who has contributed in the group. This will help the students to encourage each other to participate more if one hasn't written anything on the poster paper. Teacher can let the students know that this activity is just a "first step" before they write a summary/sentences/story in order to reduce the pressure that the students may get. (Kohei, 2012)

Techniques.

- ✓ Blender – Students silently write a definition or brainstorm an idea for several minutes on paper. Then they form into groups, and two of them read their ideas and integrate elements from each. A third student reads his, and again integration occurs with the previous two, until finally

everyone in the group has been integrated (or has attempted integration) (University of Central florida, 2007).

- ✓ Group Instructional Feedback Technique – Someone other than the teacher polls groups on what works, what doesn't, and how to fix it, then reports them to the teacher (University of Central florida, 2007).
- ✓ Interactive Video Quizzes – the teacher will show students a video where they will learn new vocabulary, and then have to complete the task according to the video (University of Central florida, 2007).
- ✓ Anonymous Peer Feedback – For student presentations or group projects, encourage frank feedback from the observing students by asking them to rip up a page into quarters and dedicating comments to each presenter. Multiple variations are possible in “forcing” particular types of comments (i.e., require two compliments and two instances of constructive feedback). Then, ask students to create a pile of comments for Student X, another pile for Student Y, and so on (University of Central florida, 2007).

To sum up, teaching students at any age, to develop their basic writing skills is not an easy work; unlike, is one of the skills that is very difficult to acquire, so in order to help ninth-grade students at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school improve this skill, the researcher has to be an expert on what basic skills ninth-grade students must achieve, what are the stages to develop a good writing, and what strategy the researcher can use. According to Ministry of Education (2014) they must achieve the level A1.2, in which learners are expected to produce expository, transactional and informational texts. So the researcher decided to use

a cooperative-based strategy. In cooperative learning students work together in order to achieve a common goal, and also they can share ideas among them and support each other, therefore, the researcher uses a strategy called Open-Mind diagram that is a cooperative-based strategy in which students follow a cognitive process monitored by the teacher in order to develop basic writing skills as well the cooperative learning; using this strategy, the researcher will accomplish with the purpose of this action research.

f. METHODOLOGY

Design of the research

Action research in education involves finding immediate solutions in the teaching- learning environments. According to Burns (2010) the main aim of action research is to identify a problematic situation or issue that the participants- who may include teachers, students, managers, administrators and even parents- consider worth looking into more deeply and systematically. Additionally, action research can be undertaken by undergraduate and postgraduate students, assisted or guided by professional researchers with the aim of improving their strategies, practices and knowledge of the surroundings within which they practice.

The choice for this action research design is to help to promote cooperative learning in English as a foreign language classes. Furthermore, action research will allow the candidate teacher become a participant in the research because he/she is going to intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation by means of the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy in order to improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during 2014-2015 academic period.

Action research assists the candidate teacher, who is the researcher conducting this investigation, to find immediate solution to the issue of writing skills in which students, who are the participants for this research, have experimented and showed some trouble due specially to the lack of implementation of cooperative learning strategies such as the Open-Mind diagram.

Methods, Techniques and Instrument

Methods.

This study will make a description of the data resulting from the application of an intervention plan. The following general methods will be applied along the descriptive research:

Scientific method.

The scientific method will facilitate the study of the use of the Open-Mind diagram to improve the EFL writing skills. It will help in the observations done before and during the intervention. This one will also assist during the prediction of the possible solution; it will assist with gathering data to make relevant predictions and the analysis of it.

Descriptive method.

The Descriptive method will enable to describe the different stages of the study and the kind of resources used by the researcher. It will serve to explain and analyze the object of the investigation.

Analytic-synthetic method.

The analytic-synthetic method will be used to analyze the obtained results through the questioners and tests. It will be used also to make the interpretation of the data, the logical analysis and draw up the conclusions.

Statistic method.

The statistic method will be used to make the quantitative statistical analysis of the data received from the questionnaires and the qualitative text analysis of the data received from the observations.

This work will use the research spiral cycles proposed by (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) since the process is likely to be more fluid, open and responsive. It includes planning, acting and observing, and reflecting suggests.

Action research is an inquiry, undertaken with rigor and understanding in order to constantly refine practice; the emerging evidence-based outcomes will then contribute to the researching practitioner's continuing professional development (Koshy, 2005).

Research is a process of study done by systematically collecting data on one's everyday practice and analyzing it in order to draw conclusions about how future practice should be.

It involves a self-reflective cycle of identifying a situation or problem, planning a change, acting and observing the processes and consequences, and then re-planning, and so forth. It offers a valuable opportunity for teachers or practitioners to be involved in the research to collect first-hand information. (Atweh, Kemmis, & Weeks, 1998) Action research will be applied in this study because it will enable the researcher to follow the steps in the spiral that will help her reflect upon her teaching and improve her students' situation. The researcher intends to see if the plan would work well or if any necessary modification or amendment would be needed to improve her students' language learning.

Techniques and Instrument.

Data collection.

Since this work is an action research, elements of both quantitative and qualitative research will be selected for data collection. Quantitative research considers variables and statistics whereas qualitative research considers an understanding of words or actions. Both qualitative and quantitative instruments are self-developed by the researcher taking into account the principles of question construction. Being this the case, paper and pencil methods (test) will be used to develop quantitative data collection instruments, and observations and interviews (questionnaire, observation sheet) for the qualitative ones.

Tests.

Tests will allow participants to perform cognitive tasks in relation to the basic writing skills. Additionally, tests will yield a numerical score by which the researcher will calculate the mean to compare the pre- and posttest results.

Pretest – Posttest.

A researcher-made pretest will provide a measure on the performance of writing skills before the participants (ninth-grade students at Julio Ordoñez Espinoza High School) receive a treatment through the intervention plan designed in this research project. After the treatment or intervention plan, a posttest will measure again the performance of the writing skills in order to make a pretest-posttest comparison of the cognitive dimension of the performance of writing skills of the participants being treated.

Questionnaire.

A researcher-made questionnaire will be administered to the participants to answer questions related to their attitudes and feelings toward the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy. Likewise the tests a pre and posttest questionnaire will be administered in order to make a comparison between the results. Furthermore, the data collected by the questionnaires will support the tests results.

Observation.

The emphasis during the observation will be on understanding the natural environment as lived by the ninth-grade students, group “A” at Julio Ordoñez Espinoza High School during their English classes. There will be two types of observations as detailed below.

Nonparticipant observation.

In nonparticipant observation, the researcher is not involved in the situation being observed. He / She observes and records behaviors but does not interact or participate in the setting under study. The objective of this nonparticipant observation is to identify the issue for this action research project which will be supported through the participant observation (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012)

Participant observation.

In participant observation, the researcher will become a part and a participant in the situation being. The researcher will participate deliberately in the problematic situation by means of the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative

learning strategy in order to improve the writing skills amongst the ninth -grade students, group “A” at Julio Ordoñez Espinoza High School during 2014-2015 school year.

Observation sheet.

Whether in the participant and non-participant observation, the researcher will need an observation sheet to record the participants’ behaviors shown on both variables: performance of the basic writing skills and the attitudes and feelings toward the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative-based strategy. This observation sheet is a self-developed instrument that describes accurately and comprehensively all the relevant aspects. In other words, it contains the descriptors of the variables of the action research; the issue under treatment (basic writing skills), and the treatment itself (Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy).

Pilot testing the questions.

Once the questions for both the test (pre and post) and questionnaires (pre and post) have been developed under the principles of questions construction, the researcher will test the questions in order to evaluate the instruments and to make the necessary changes based on the feedback from a small number of individuals who will evaluate the instruments. Because the pilot group will provide feedback on the questionnaire or test, the researcher will exclude them from the final sample or population for the study.

Procedures

The process of this action research work will include the following stages:

The intervention plan will start with the application of the questionnaire and the test, the questionnaire will let the researcher to know what are the students' attitudes and the test that will let the researcher to know what the students' level before the intervention are. These results will also help the researcher to reflect about the best teaching practices, the motivation, the evaluation process and the attitude that a teacher should have in order to catch students' attention, and in this case, to get students develop their writing skills.

The practitioner also will use a checklist in the all classes in order to observe students' performance during the lessons and to record what has happened in classes that helps her investigate, analyze and reflect upon her findings when the project comes to an end.

Then the principal strategy that the practitioner will apply is the Open-Mind diagram to help students develop their writing skills, this process will be done with the help of other didactic resources and teaching aids that provide a good classroom environment, motivation and taking advantage of time at maximum.

Once finished the teaching activities, a second questionnaire and test will be applied in order to verify if the strategy and activities have improved the English foreign language basic writing skills, and what are the students' attitudes after the intervention.

After the intervention plan, the researcher will analyze the data collected; it will allow her to verify the set goals have been achieved and to draw the conclusions of the intervention program.

Finally, a written report that details all the activities carried out during this action research and intervention plan will be presented for the private and public presentation of this research work.

Tabulation.

The tabulation of data will be done through a logical analysis of the information collected through the questionnaires and tests applied at the beginning and at the end for the intervention plan in the two questionnaires conducted.

Organization.

The researcher will organize the research work with the information received in all the stages applied in order to compare and analyze the impact of the intervention. A report of the intervention will be disseminated with the findings and ideas among the teachers, the partners and the school.

Description.

The description of the collected data and graphics will be described considering the information of the pre and post intervention. The description of each questionnaire's data will be completed to facilitate the interpretation of the information shown; and also do the logical analysis of the data received

Population Sample.

The subjects of this action research are from ninth-grade students of basic education. This group is composed by nineteen, seven girls and twelve boys who are between 12 and 15 years old. Mostly of them come from an urban marginal sector of the city. They are in a low proficiency level of writing skills.

Intervention and observing plan.

Week one.

RESEARCH PROBLEM	<i>How does the Open Mind Diagram as cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group "A" at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza school during the 2014-2015 academic period?</i>
TOPIC	<i>The application of the pretest</i>
LEARNING OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know teacher and students and vice versa. • To apply the pretest to the students.
INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS	<p>Activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get started, as it is the first class, I will do them a warm-up activity in which students have to say her/his name and one truth and two lies, all the students and the teacher have to guess which two of them are truth, all the students and the teacher will participate • With this warm-up activity I will get to know the name and some things about the students. <p>Connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the warm-up activity, I will give some instructions about the test they will take and also I will sit to the students in big spaces between them in order to make students ready for the test. • Once they are sitting I will give them the sheet of paper, and then I will explain each question, students will have one hour to answer the test. <p>Affirming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once they are answering I will monitor all the time. • Students aren't allowed to ask questions during the test. • Once they finish the test, I will collect all the test and if students have some doubts, I will answer them.
CLASSROOM RESOURCES	Visual and audio aids: sheet of paper (Pretest), pens, liquid paper, pencil, pen.
DATA COLLECTION	Data source 1: Observation checklist Data source 2: Students' writing samples, weekly Data collection source: sub-test on writing, bi-weekly
SUPPORT	Coaching and guidance from our university professor.

Adapted from (Rawlinson & Little, 2004) Improving Student Learning through Classroom Action Research. Daytona Beach: Project Central.

(Abbs, Barker, Freebairn, & Wilson, 2008) English Book Level two. New York. Pearson Education, Inc.

Week two.

<p>RESEARCH PROBLEM</p>	<p><i>How does the Open-Mind Diagram as cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?</i></p>
<p>TOPIC</p>	<p><i>Useful expression to approve or disapprove something, and expression to talk about the past</i></p>
<p>LEARNING OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Listening Students will listen to a dialogue that introduce the new unit Students will listen to their teacher the new expression for approve or disapprove something, and the expressions to talk about the past Students will listen to their classmates showing what they wrote on the open mind diagram</p> <p>Speaking Students will read aloud the dialogue that is in their book Students will practice the pronunciation and intonation of each expression in pairs</p> <p>Writing Students will complete the exercises on their notebook Students will write on their open mind diagram Students will write sentences using the expression they learned</p> <p>Key Vocabulary: That’s a great idea, Don’t gossip, That’s not very nice, Excellent idea, yesterday, last night, last week, last month, last year, last Monday, a few minutes ago, three days ago, a week ago, month ago, a year ago</p>
<p>INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS</p>	<p>Activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I am building a lesson based on expression to approve and disapprove something and expression to talk about the past. ❖ I will introduce the learning outcomes using the board and pieces of cardboards that contains the expressions. ❖ To get started, I will have students activate their prior knowledge related to present progressive, I will ask some students to go to the board and write a sentence using action verbs, and they will have to write it in affirmative and positive statements and question. As a whole class, they will have to remember the action verbs that they already learned in previous classes. Then I will do them a writing warm-up activity in

which I will give students a piece of cardboard where they have to use whatever resources they have at hand and write down an appropriate adjective that begins with each letter of their first name. For example: **F**lirtatious, **R**elaxed, **E**xtrovert, **D**esirable, they will decorate the card board and then will go to the front of the class show their card and read what they wrote.

- ❖ With this warm up activity I will remember the name of each student.

Connection

- ❖ After the warm-up activity, I will bring all the new expression wrote on a piece of cardboard, I will post them on the board, and I will explain what each one express.
- ❖ As students are learning the new vocabulary, they individually have to take notes about the new expressions.
- ❖ After students have finished recording their notes for each new expression, they have to form a small group (three to five) I will choose the groups at random, and each group will get a poster paper that I will give them. Each student in the group will have different colored markers. Students will draw a shape of a head on the poster paper, and write words, quotes from the topic, or any questions that they have from the topic that they have learned.
- ❖ While they are sharing and writing, I will monitor them to check if they are right or wrong and if everybody is contributing in the group work. If they are wrong, I will help them to get the correct information.
- ❖ Once they finished their group work, they have to go back to their own seats.

Affirming

- ❖ Once they finished their work, the group will pass to the front of the class and show and explain to the rest of their classmates what they did. The rest of the student are allowed to ask questions and give suggestions about the presentation their classmates did.
- ❖ I will be observing my students during the activity to provide information either about the instructions or

	<p>about the content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Once all the groups already present their works, I will assess the whole class by a game, I will post all the expressions on the board, students have to form two groups and each group will have to put in columns, I will say a expression and the two first of each column have run and touch the word, the first who touch have to repeat the pronounciation of the expression, and will be the winner. ❖ As homework, students have to look at the calendar, I will give then a specific day of the calendar (for example, today is April 7th), and next of each time expression they will have to write the date (for example; yesterday: 6th, last week: March 30- April 6th) ❖ To finish the lesson, we will review again the learning outcomes.
CLASSROOM RESOURCES	<p>Open-Mind diagram template Visual and audio aids: Cardboards with the expressions, cardboards for the students, board, markers. Student's notebook Student's textbook</p>
DATA COLLECTION	<p>Data source 1: Observation checklist Data source 2: Students' writing samples, weekly Data collection source: sub-test on writing, bi-weekly</p>
SUPPORT	<p>Coaching and guidance from our university professor.</p>

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Week three.

<p>RESEARCH PROBLEM</p>	<p><i>How does the Open-Mind Diagram as cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?</i></p>
<p>TOPIC</p>	<p><i>Knowing about regular verbs in the present and past tense</i></p>
<p>LEARNING OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Listening Students will listen to their teacher the pronunciation of the regulars in the present and past form Students will listen to their classmates showing what they wrote on the open mind diagram</p> <p>Speaking Students will pronounce the regular verbs in present and past tense Teacher will point the word and students have to say the correct pronunciation of the verb.</p> <p>Writing Students will complete the exercises on their notebook Students will write on their open mind diagram Students will write sentences using the verbs they learned</p> <p>Key Vocabulary: Talk, smile, stop, cry, base, ask, play, try, worry, enjoy, suggest, agree, plan, love, add.</p>
<p>INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS</p>	<p>Activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I am building a lesson based on describing action in the past. ❖ I will introduce the learning outcomes using the board and pieces of paper that contains the verbs ❖ To get started, I will have students activate their prior knowledge related to expression that people use to approve and disapprove something and expression to talk about the past, I will ask students when we use those expressions and also I will ask them tell me some expressions, also go to the board and write them. As a whole class, they will have to remember all the new expression they already learned in previous classes. Then I will do them a listening and pronunciation warm-up activity in which I will divide the class in to groups, I will think in a sentence or phrase and I will whisper it to each member that is located first in the column. Those students will then whisper what they heard to the

next person. Each student can only say, "Can you please repeat that?" one time. Then when the message reaches the end of the chain the last student must run to the board and write it. The team who has more words that contain the real sentence will be the winner.

- ❖ With this warm up activity I will get student to get relax before start the class.

Connection

- ❖ After the warm-up activity, I will introduce the new content by posting on the board all the cards that contain the verbs, then I will write the past tense next to each verb. Also, I will explain to students the rules of pronunciation of the regular verbs in the past tense, students have to listen and repeat it.
- ❖ As students are learning the new vocabulary and the rules of pronunciation, they individually have to take notes on their notebook.
- ❖ After students have finished recording their notes for each new regular verb, they have to form a small group (three to five) I will choose the groups at random, and each group will get a poster paper that I will give them. Each student in the group will have different colored markers. Students will draw a shape of a head on the poster paper, and write words, quotes from the topic, or any questions that they have from the topic that they have learned.
- ❖ While they are sharing and writing, I will monitor them to check if they are right or wrong and if everybody is contributing in the group work. If they are wrong, I will help them to get the correct information.
- ❖ Once they finished their group work, they have to go back to their own seats.

Affirming

- ❖ Once they finished their work, the group will pass to the front of the class and show and explain to the rest of their classmates what they did. The rest of the student are allowed to ask questions and give suggestions about the presentation their classmates did.
- ❖ I will be observing my students during the activity to provide information either about the instructions or

	<p>about the content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Once all the groups already present their works, I will assess the whole class by giving each one a card that contains a verb, I will ask each one to tell the present and past pronunciation of the word they have. ❖ As homework, students have to bring a list of fifteen regular verbs in the present and past tense. ❖ To finish the lesson, we will review again the learning outcomes.
CLASSROOM RESOURCES	<p>Open-Mind diagram template Visual and audio aids: Cards with the regular verbs, board, markers, list of verbs. Student's notebook Student's textbook</p>
DATA COLLECTION	<p>Data source 1: Observation checklist Data source 2: Students' writing samples, weekly Data collection source: sub-test on writing, bi-weekly</p>
SUPPORT	<p>Coaching and guidance from our university professor.</p>

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Week four.

<p>RESEARCH PROBLEM</p>	<p><i>How does the Open-Mind Diagram as cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?</i></p>
<p>TOPIC</p>	<p><i>Describing actions that people did in the past</i></p>
<p>LEARNING OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Listening Students will listen to their teacher how to say an action that I did in the past using regular verbs. Students will listen to their classmates sentences using regular verbs in the past tense Students will listen to their partners what they wrote on their Open-Mind diagram</p> <p>Speaking Students will read aloud the sentences they have in their book Each student will listen to their classmates a sentence using regular verbs in the past tense Students will practice the pronunciation of the verbs</p> <p>Writing Students will fill the exercises on their book Students will take notes of the sentences on their notebooks Students will write on their open mind diagram Students will write sentences using regular verbs in the past</p> <p>Key Vocabulary: I, you, he, she, it, we, they, talked, played, asked, agreed, allowed, borrowed, brushed, called, changed, cleaned, created, cried, danced, divided, enjoyed</p>
<p>INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS</p>	<p>Activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I am building a lesson based on how students can talk about the thing they did in the past. ❖ I will introduce the new content using the board ❖ To get started, I will have students activate their prior knowledge related to regular verbs in the present and past tense, I will post the verbs on the board, and I will ask to each student to go to the board, I will tell his/her a verb, he/she will have to point it and say the present and the past tense of each verb. Then I will do them a warm-up activity in which all the students have to form a circle, I will put

a box in the middle of the class that contains verbs, each student will pick up a paper and have to act the verb that pick, the rest of the students have to guess the word.

- ❖ With this warm-up activity I will get to know if the students are able to remember all the verbs they already learned.

Connection

- ❖ After the warm-up activity, I will introduce the new content by asking students tell me what they did yesterday, and I will show them how they can say that sentence in English.
- ❖ Then I will use the board to write sentences that students tell me about what they did yesterday.
- ❖ As students are learning the new content, they individually have to take notes on their notebooks.
- ❖ Students will work in pairs and have to practice the sentences the teacher wrote on the board.
- ❖ After students have finished recording their notes, they have to form a small group (three to five) I will choose the groups at random, and each group will get a poster paper that I will give them. Each student in the group will have different colored markers. Students will draw a shape of a head on the poster paper, and write words, quotes from the topic, or any questions that they have from the topic that they have learned.
- ❖ While they are sharing and writing, I will monitor them to check if they are right or wrong and if everybody is contributing in the group work. If they are wrong, I will help them to get the correct information.
- ❖ Once they finished their group work, they have to go back to their own seats.

Affirming

- ❖ Once they finished their work, the group will pass to the front of the class and show and explain to the rest of their classmates what they did. The rest of the student are allowed to ask questions and give suggestions about the presentation their classmates did.
- ❖ I will be observing my students during the activity to provide information either about the instructions or

	<p>about the content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Once all the groups already present their works, I will assess the whole class by asking students tell me a sentence in the simple past using a regular verb, also the students have to write it on the board. ❖ As homework, students have to write fifteen sentences using the verbs they learned in the simple past. ❖ To finish the lesson, we will review again the learning outcomes.
CLASSROOM RESOURCES	<p>Open-Mind diagram template Visual and audio aids: Cards with the verbs, box, board, markers, list of verbs Student's notebook Student's textbook</p>
DATA COLLECTION	<p>Data source 1: Observation checklist Data source 2: Students' writing samples, weekly Data collection source: sub-test on writing, bi-weekly</p>
SUPPORT	<p>Coaching and guidance from our university professor.</p>

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Week five.

<p>RESEARCH PROBLEM</p>	<p><i>How does the Open-Mind Diagram as cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?</i></p>
<p>TOPIC</p>	<p><i>Describing actions about what people didn’t do in the past</i></p>
<p>LEARNING OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Listening Students will listen to their teacher how to describe actions about people didn’t do in the past Students will listen to their classmates negative sentences using regular verbs in the past tense Students will listen to their partners what they wrote on their Open-Mind diagram</p> <p>Speaking Students will read aloud the sentences they have in their book Each student will listen to their classmates a sentence using regular verbs in the past tense Students will practice the pronunciation of the verbs</p> <p>Writing Students will fill the exercises on their book Students will take notes of the sentences on their notebooks Students will write on their open mind diagram Students will write negative sentences using regular verbs in the past</p> <p>Key Vocabulary: I, you, he, she, it, we, they, did not, didn’t, explained, guessed, hated, helped, hoped, identified, interrupted, jumped, killed, kissed, liked.</p>
<p>INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS</p>	<p>Activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I am building a lesson based on how students can talk about things they didn’t in the past. ❖ I will introduce the new content using the board ❖ To get started, I will have students activate their prior knowledge related to describe action they did in the past, I will ask each student tell me a sentence about what they did yesterday, and then they have to go to the board and write the sentence they already tell me. Then I will do them a listening warm-up activity in which I will read a short story called “The princes of Merrylandia”, while I’m reading, students

have to listen carefully; when a student hears a regular verb in the past tense in the story, he/she will shout out “VERB” and quickly performs (pantomimes) the verb heard.

- ❖ With this warm-up activity I will get to know if the students are able to identify the regular verbs.

Connection

- ❖ After the warm-up activity, I will introduce the new content by asking students tell me what they did yesterday, and I will show them how they can say that sentence in a negative way.
- ❖ Then I will use the board to write sentences that students tell me about what they did yesterday, in a negative way
- ❖ As students are learning the new content, they individually have to take notes on their notebooks.
- ❖ Students will work in pairs and have to practice the sentences the teacher wrote on the board.
- ❖ After students have finished recording their notes, they have to form a small group (three to five) I will choose the groups at random, and each group will get a poster paper that I will give them. Each student in the group will have different colored markers. Students will draw a shape of a head on the poster paper, and write words, quotes from the topic, or any questions that they have from the topic that they have learned.
- ❖ While they are sharing and writing, I will monitor them to check if they are right or wrong and if everybody is contributing in the group work. If they are wrong, I will help them to get the correct information.
- ❖ Once they finished their group work, they have to go back to their own seats.

Affirming

- ❖ Once they finished their work, the group will pass to the front of the class and show and explain to the rest of their classmates what they did. The rest of the student are allowed to ask questions and give suggestions about the presentation their classmates did.
- ❖ I will be observing my students during the activity to provide information either about the instructions or

	<p>about the content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Once all the groups already present their works, I will assess the whole class by asking students tell me a sentence in the simple past using a regular verb, they have to tell me this sentence in affirmative and negative way, also the students have to write it on the board. ❖ As homework, students have to write fifteen negative sentences using the verbs they learned in the simple past. ❖ To finish the lesson, we will review again the learning outcomes.
CLASSROOM RESOURCES	<p>Open-Mind diagram template Visual and audio aids: Cards with the verbs, piece of paper with the short story, board, markers. List of verbs Student's notebook Student's textbook</p>
DATA COLLECTION	<p>Data source 1: Observation checklist Data source 2: Students' writing samples, weekly Data collection source: sub-test on writing, bi-weekly</p>
SUPPORT	<p>Coaching and guidance from our university professor.</p>

Adapted from (Rawlinson & Little, 2004) Improving Student Learning through Classroom Action Research. Daytona Beach: Project Central.

(Abbs, Barker, Freebairn, & Wilson, 2008) English Book Level two. New York. Pearson Education, Inc.

<http://www.speak-read-write.com/elementaryreadertwo.html>

Week six.

<p>RESEARCH PROBLEM</p>	<p><i>How does the Open-Mind Diagram as cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?</i></p>
<p>TOPIC</p>	<p><i>Asking people what they did in the past, using regular verbs with short answers</i></p>
<p>LEARNING OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Listening Students will listen to their teacher how to ask people about what they did in the past Students will listen to their classmates questions and short answers in the past tense using regular verbs Students will listen to the teacher how to answer questions in the past using short answers Students will listen to their partners what they wrote on their Open-Mind diagram</p> <p>Speaking Students will read aloud the questions and answers they have in their book Each student will listen to their classmates questions using regular verbs in the past tense, and the short answers of it Students will practice the pronunciation of the verbs</p> <p>Writing Students will fill the exercises on their book Students will take notes of the sentences on their notebooks Students will write on their open mind diagram Students will write questions using regular verbs and short answers in the past tense</p> <p>Key Vocabulary: I, you, he, she, it, we, they, did; Yes, I did; No, I didn’t, listen, love, marry, move, need, open, play, print, punish, relax, remember, return, select.</p>
<p>INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS</p>	<p>Activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I am building a lesson based on how students can ask and answer questions about what people did in the past tense ❖ I will introduce the new content using the board ❖ To get started, I will have students activate their prior knowledge related to describe actions they didn’t do in the past, I will ask each student tell me a sentence about what they did yesterday, and then

they have to go to the board and write the sentence they already tell me. Then I will do them a warm-up activity in which I will give to each student a piece of paper that contains a verb, the students have to write a sentence using the verb and read the sentence to the whole class, if the student give an incorrect sentence, he/she have to pay a garment, and do what their classmates say.

- ❖ With this warm-up activity I will get to know if the students are able to remember all the verbs they already learned.

Connection

- ❖ After the warm-up activity, I will introduce the new content by asking students tell me a sentence they learned from the previous class, I will teach them how they can transform it into a sentence and how they can answer it in a short manner.
- ❖ Then I will use the board to write questions and answers using regular verbs
- ❖ As students are learning the new content, they individually have to take notes on their notebooks.
- ❖ Students will work in pairs and have to practice by asking questions, each students will have a turn to ask and answer the questions.
- ❖ After students have finished recording their notes, they have to form a small group (three to five) I will choose the groups at random, and each group will get a poster paper that I will give them. Each student in the group will have different colored markers. Students will draw a shape of a head on the poster paper, and write words, quotes from the topic, or any questions that they have from the topic that they have learned.
- ❖ While they are sharing and writing, I will monitor them to check if they are right or wrong and if everybody is contributing in the group work. If they are wrong, I will help them to get the correct information.
- ❖ Once they finished their group work, they have to go back to their own seats.

Affirming

- ❖ Once they finished their work, the group will pass to the front of the class and show and explain to the rest of their classmates what they did. The rest of the

	<p>studentst are allowed to ask questions and give suggestions about the presentation their classmates did.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I will be observing my students during the activity to provide information either about the instructions or about the content. ❖ Once all the groups already present their works, I will assess the whole class, I will ask students to work in pairs, each pair will come to the board, first one students will ask a question and the other have to answer it, and then they will change roles. ❖ As homework, students have to write ten questions, and each one with their respective answer ❖ To finish the lesson, we will review again the learning outcomes.
CLASSROOM RESOURCES	<p>Open-Mind diagram template Visual and audio aids: Cards with the verbs, board, markers. Student’s notebook Student’s textbook List of verbs</p>
DATA COLLECTION	<p>Data source 1: Observation checklist Data source 2: Students’ writing samples, weekly Data collection source: sub-test on writing, bi-weekly</p>
SUPPORT	<p>Coaching and guidance from our university professor.</p>

Adapted from (Rawlinson & Little, 2004) Improving Student Learning through Classroom Action Research. Daytona Beach: Project Central.

(Abbs, Barker, Freebairn, & Wilson, 2008) English Book Level two. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.

Week seven.

<p>RESEARCH PROBLEM</p>	<p><i>How does the Open-Mind Diagram as cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?</i></p>
<p>TOPIC</p>	<p><i>Asking people what they did in the past, using regular verbs with long answers</i></p>
<p>LEARNING OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Listening Students will listen to their teacher how to ask people about what they did in the past Students will listen to their classmates questions and long answers in the past tense using regular verbs Students will listen to the teacher how to answer questions in the past using long answers Students will listen to their partners what they wrote on their Open-Mind diagram</p> <p>Speaking Students will read aloud the questions and answers they have in their book Each student will listen to their classmates questions using regular verbs in the past tense, and the long answers of it Students will practice the pronunciation of the verbs</p> <p>Writing Students will fill the exercises on their book Students will take notes of the sentences on their notebooks Students will write on their open mind diagram Students will write questions using regular verbs and long answers in the past tense</p> <p>Key Vocabulary: I, you, he, she, it, we, they, did; Who, when, what time, why, start, study, talk, travel, use, visit, wait, walk, want, worry, stop, smoke, return, push.</p>
<p>INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS</p>	<p>Activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I am building a lesson based on how students can ask and answer in a long way questions about what people did in the past tense ❖ I will introduce the new content using the board ❖ To get started, I will have students activate their prior knowledge related to ask and answer questions in a short way. I will ask some questions to students and they have to answer them. Then I will do them a

warm-up activity in which I will divide students into two teams. I will write two lists of unit words on the board (one for each member of each team). Each team will have to form a line leading to the board. When I give the signal, the first student on each team will go up to the board, points at the first word in the team's column, and reads aloud that word. If the student reads the word correctly, he or she erases that word. The student then will move to the back of his or her team's line. The first team to erase all the words on their list wins.

- ❖ With this warm-up activity I will get to know if the students are able to remember all the verbs they already learned.

Connection

- ❖ After the warm-up activity, I will introduce the new content by telling students asking me any question they want, and I will answer it in a long way.
- ❖ Then I will use the board to write questions and answers using regular verbs.
- ❖ As students are learning the new content, they individually have to take notes on their notebooks.
- ❖ Students will work in pairs and have to practice by asking questions, each students will have a turn to ask and answer the questions.
- ❖ After students have finished recording their notes, they have to form a small group (three to five) I will choose the groups at random, and each group will get a poster paper that I will give them. Each student in the group will have different colored markers. Students will draw a shape of a head on the poster paper, and write words, quotes from the topic, or any questions that they have from the topic that they have learned.
- ❖ While they are sharing and writing, I will monitor them to check if they are right or wrong and if everybody is contributing in the group work. If they are wrong, I will help them to get the correct information.
- ❖ Once they finished their group work, they have to go back to their own seats.

Affirming

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Once they finished their work, the group will pass to the front of the class and show and explain to the rest of their classmates what they did. The rest of the student are allowed to ask questions and give suggestions about the presentation their classmates did. ❖ I will be observing my students during the activity to provide information either about the instructions or about the content. ❖ Once all the groups already present their works, I will assess the whole class, I will ask students to work in pairs, each pair will come to the board, first one student will ask a question and the other have to answer it, and then they will change roles. ❖ As homework, students have to ask to their family what they did yesterday, they have to write at least ten answers. ❖ To finish the lesson, we will review again the learning outcomes.
CLASSROOM RESOURCES	<p>Open-Mind diagram template</p> <p>Visual and audio aids: Cards with the verbs, board, markers.</p> <p>Student's notebook</p> <p>Student's textbook</p> <p>List of verbs</p>
DATA COLLECTION	<p>Data source 1: Observation checklist</p> <p>Data source 2: Students' writing samples, weekly</p> <p>Data collection source: sub-test on writing, bi-weekly</p>
SUPPORT	<p>Coaching and guidance from our university professor.</p>

Adapted from (Rawlinson & Little, 2004) Improving Student Learning through Classroom Action Research. Daytona Beach: Project Central.
(Abbs, Barker, Freebairn, & Wilson, 2008) English Book Level two. New York. Pearson Education, Inc.

Week eight.

RESEARCH PROBLEM	<i>How does the Open Mind Diagram as cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza school during the 2014-2015 academic period?</i>
TOPIC	<i>The application of the posttest</i>
LEARNING OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To know if the researcher succeed with the objectives of the present action research • To apply the posttest to the students.
INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS	<p>Activation To get started, as it is the final class, I will do them a warm-up activity in which students will get fun; first, teacher have to pair up the students and sit them down, with legs flat (on the carpet) and spread out. Then the teacher will give the pairs numbers 1,2,3 and so on to the students. Teacher will call a number and that pair will jump up and run round the whole of their team and sit down. The first one to sit back in place is the winner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With this warm-up activity I will get students fun the final class. <p>Connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the warm-up activity, I will give some instructions about the test they will take and also I will sit to the students in big spaces between them in order to make students ready for the test. • Once they are sitting I will give them the sheet of paper, and then I will explain each question, students will have one hour to answer the test. <p>Affirming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once they are answering I will monitor all the time. • Students aren’t allowed to ask questions during the test. • Once they finsh the test, I will collect all the test and if students have some doubt, I will asnwer them. <p>As the final class, I will thank all of them to helping me with the action research.</p>
CLASSROOM RESOURCES	Visual and audio aids: sheet of paper (Posttest), pens, liquid paper, pencil, pen.
DATA COLLECTION	Data source 1: Observation checklist Data source 2: Students’ writing samples, weekly Data collection source: sub-test on writing, bi-weekly
SUPPORT	Coaching and guidance from our university professor.

Adapted from (Rawlinson & Little, 2004) Improving Student Learning through Classroom Action Research. Daytona Beach: Project Central.
(Abbs, Barker, Freebairn, & Wilson, 2008) English Book Level two. New York. Pearson Education, Inc

h. BUDGET AND FINANCING

Resources

Human.

- ✓ The students from ninth-grade, group “A” of basic education
- ✓ The English teacher
- ✓ The researcher

Material.

- ✓ Open-Mind diagram templates
- ✓ Teacher’s book
- ✓ Students’ nook
- ✓ Students’ notebook
- ✓ Posters
- ✓ Board
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Flashcards
- ✓ Pieces of papers

Technical.

- ✓ Computer
- ✓ Printer
- ✓ Scanner
- ✓ Internet

Budget

ITEM	UNIT VALUE
Mobilization	\$ 30,00
Internet	\$ 120, 00
Materials	\$ 40, 00
Print of the project	\$ 30, 00
TOTAL	\$220, 00

Financing

All expenses related to the present research will be assumed entirely by the researcher conducting the investigation.

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j. ANNEXES

Annex 1. Observation sheet



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE LOJA

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CAREER

Área de la Educación, el Arte y la Comunicación

DATA COLLECTION SOURCE: OBSERVATION SHEET

Observation #:.....	Date/Time:.....	Location:
Topic:
.....	Class size:	Duration of the observation: Start: End:
Objective of the session:	Participants:	Observer involvement: Participant () Non participant ()
.....		

Dependent Variable: Basic Writing skills

Descriptors		Observations
Purpose/Task		
Organization		
Vocabulary		
Structure/Conventions		

Independent Variable: The Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy

Rating scale: 4=always 3=usually 2=sometimes 1=rarely 0= not observed					
Descriptors	4	3	2	1	0
All students clearly understand which groups they belong to for the open-mind diagram					
All students have opportunities to learn with and from their peers					
All students take advantage of the given time to make or prepare their responses/report for the groups					
Students ask their teacher/classmates for clarification to assist their peers during the performance of the academic activities					
Students listen to one another					
Students question to one to another					
Students assume personal responsibility being involved I the group					
Students disagree politely					
Shy pupils contribute to group work					
All the students finished the group work					
Students were motivated at the moment to work in groups					

Annex 2. Pre and posttest



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE LOJA

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CAREER

Área de la Educación, el Arte y la Comunicación

DATA COLLECTION SOURCE: PRE TEST / POST TEST

Student's code: _____

Date: _____

Instructions:

Write a brief paragraph about what did you do yesterday. Answer yourself the following questions to include in your paragraph: Where were you yesterday? What did you do in the morning?, What did you do in the afternoon? What did you do in the evening?. Use past time expressions and as many regular verbs as possible.

Duration of the task: 30 minutes

Length of the paragraph: 6 – 10 lines

WHAT I DID YESTERDAY?

RUBRIC FOR THE PRE - POST TEST

Student's code: _____

Date: _____

Dimension		1 = Weak	2 = Moderately Weak	3 = Average	4 = Strong	Total
Purpose/ Task		Accomplishes the task; includes few details, some of which may be only loosely connected to the task. There are many irrelevancies.	Accomplishes the task; includes few details, some of which may be only loosely connected to the task. There are many irrelevancies.	Accomplishes the task; includes some details that are generally connected to the development of the task, but there may be some irrelevancies.	Accomplishes the task; includes many details that are clearly connected to the development of the task, but there may be minor irrelevancies.	
Organization		The topic is not introduced in an expected way.	Introduce the topic in a non-clear way.	Introduce the topic in a fairly way.	Introduce the topic in a clear and interesting way.	
Vocabulary		Includes limited vocabulary and /or most vocabulary is inaccurate or unrelated to the topic.	Includes basic vocabulary; some vocabulary may be inaccurate or unrelated to the topic.	Includes a variety of vocabulary related to the topic.	Includes a wide variety of vocabulary that expands the topic but there may be minor inaccuracies.	
Structure/Conventions	Tense	Verbs do not agree with one another and there is little to no fluidity within writing because of verb tense confusion.	Little to no verb agreement. Fluidity of writing is affected by verb tenses.	Some verb tenses agree and fluidity is slightly affected by verb tenses.	No verb disagreement. Fluidity of writing is not affected by verb tenses.	
	Word Order	The sentences don't make sense at all.	Few sentences follow the logical and word sequential order	Some sentences do not follow a logical word order.	The facts are presented in a sequential word order	
	Punctuation	The paragraph is not clear, and very difficult to understand, not punctuation is presented.	The paragraph is not clear, sometimes difficult to understand, only with few punctuation.	The paragraph is somewhat neatly handwriting. With some punctuation.	The paragraph is neatly handwriting, with most of the appropriate punctuation	
TOTAL SCORE						

Annex 3. Pre and post questionnaire



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE LOJA

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CAREER

Área de la Educación, el Arte y la Comunicación

DATA COLLECTION SOURCE: QUESTIONNAIRE

As student of the English Language Career of the Universidad Nacional de Loja, I would be very grateful if you can answer the following questionnaire in a clear and honest way. The information obtained will be used for the development of the research work.

Student's Code: _____

Date: _____

1. English class activities are developed in groups and pairs.

- 4. Always ()
- 3. Often ()
- 2. Sometimes ()
- 1. Rarely ()

2. How important is it to you to complete activities during English class?

- | | | |
|----------------|-----|----------------------|
| Work in groups | () | 4 Very Important |
| Work in pairs | () | 3 Important |
| Work alone | () | 2 Somewhat Important |
| Work together | () | 1 No Important |

3. The group or pair activities are conducted in a positive and respectful environment.

- 4. Always ()
- 3. Often ()
- 2. Sometimes ()
- 1. Rarely ()

4. Having good relationships and positive interactions are essential for groupwork.

- 4. Strongly Agree ()
- 3. Agree ()
- 2. Neither agree nor disagree ()
- 1. Disagree ()

5. How satisfying is it for you to work in groups?

- 4. Very satisfactory ()
- 3. Satisfactory ()
- 2. Somewhat satisfactory ()
- 1. Unsatisfactory ()

6. In group activities, all members contribute to the development of collective work.

- 4. Always ()
- 3. Often ()
- 2. Sometimes ()
- 1. Rarely ()

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Annex 4. Research Matrix

Theme: The Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy to develop the English as foreign language basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school, 2014-2015 academic period.

Problem	Objectives	Theoretical frame	Methodological design (Action Research)	Techniques and instruments
<p>General How does the Open-Mind Diagram as a cooperative learning strategy improve the writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period?</p> <p>Specific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What theoretical and methodological references about the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy are adequate for improving the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period? • What are the issues that limit the development of the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period? • What are the phases of the intervention plan that help the current issues to achieve a satisfactory outcome on developing the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period? • Which Open-Mind diagram techniques as a cooperative learning strategy are implemented to improve EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period? • How does the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy reduce the difficulty to develop the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period? 	<p>General To improve the English Foreign language basic writing skills through the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period.</p> <p>Specific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To research the theoretical and methodological references about the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy and its application on the EFL basic writing skills. • To diagnose the issues that limit the development of the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period. • To design an intervention plan based on the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy in order to improve the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period. • To apply the most suitable techniques of the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy in order to improve the EFL basic writing skills amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period. • To reflect upon the effectiveness that the Open-Mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy had amongst ninth-grade students, group “A” at Profesor. Julio Ordoñez Espinoza high school during the 2014-2015 academic period. 	<p>Basic writing skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of writing • Writing in English foreign language. • Writing skills • The stages of the learning process of English foreign language writing • Techniques to help students develop a good writing. <p>The open- mind diagram as a cooperative learning strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantages of cooperative learning • Five basic elements of cooperative learning • Current strategies of cooperative learning. 	<p>Preliminary investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing the English classes • Stating the background of the problem • Describing current situation • Locating and reviewing the literature • Creating a methodological framework for research • Design an intervention plan <p>Intervention and observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administering tests and questionnaires • Observing and monitoring students’ performance according to the intervention plan <p>Presentation of the research findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting, analyzing and answering the proposed inquiries • Organizing the final report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation sheet (Participant and Nonparticipant observation) • Pre and Posttest • Pre and Post questionnaires

Annex 2. National Grading Scale

Quantitative Score Range	English approximation to the National Grading System
100	Above the expected level
90	Between the expected level
70-80	At the expected level
50-60	Below the expected level
40	Under the expected level

Quantitative Score Range	English approximation to the National Grading System
10	Superior
9	Excellent
7-8	Average
5-6	Below average
4	Failing

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