



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA  
FACULTAD DE LENGUAS**

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The Use of Writing Strategies in a Second Language Acquisition when  
Writing Academic Essays at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of  
Puebla. (LEI)

**A thesis submitted to the School of Languages for the Degree of  
LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS**

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requirement for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is based on the use of writing strategies in a Second Language Acquisition when writing academic essays. This study was carried out at the Faculty of Languages (LEI) at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla which is a public university. The main purpose of this study is to analyze and to find out writing strategies that will help students to improve their academic writing in a second language acquisition mainly based on writing academic essays.

For this research the data was collected through the application of a questionnaire in order to find out the importance and the use of writing strategies when writing academic essays. The participants of this research were ten male students, and ten female students that have finished the English Workshops, and the Target Languages subjects from this BA in ELT.

The research findings revealed that students face difficulties during the writing academic process. Findings also revealed that students are not well prepared to develop an academic essay, students are not used to write academic essays very often, students do not know the variety of strategies that they can use, the same as the different types of academic essays that they can write about. Another finding indicate that some of the subjects taught during the major are not useful for them in order to improve their academic writing skills.

Finally, it was interesting to find out that most of the students think that using t writing strategies is important when writing academic essays, but students do not know how to properly use them. More results, and implications are illustrated within this thesis.

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## **DEDICATIONS**

I dedicate this thesis project to the only person who has been there with me through good and bad moments in my life. I want to thank to my beautiful mother, Blanca Castillo. The only one who has been my inspiration and my strength to overcome and to achieve everything I have always wanted in my life. There are no words to express how lucky I am to have a mother, and a best friend like you, I will be lost without you. Thank you for teaching me how to fight for my dreams, and how to never give up on them. I love you so much mommy, thank you for everything you have done for me.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Rational for topic selection**

Nowadays the writing strategies are becoming a complex issue for students when writing English academic essays in a second language acquisition. “Writing an essay forces you to sort out and organize your ideas and think them through clearly. You will learn to identify just what your ideas are and what support exists to back them up.”(Langan, 1984, p.6) In general terms this is due to the fact that students are acquiring English as a second language, therefore students do not know how to organize their thoughts, feelings, opinions, arguments, and mainly how to apply their writing skills and strategies down on a piece of paper. Consequently, this factor has become a barrier for them, which students need to face and to overcome in order to improve their academic writing process. In addition to become a proficiency English students, when writing academic essays, it is necessary to go deeply into the most important tools that students need to perfectly manage in order to be successful when writing academic essays. Therefore, the importance of writing academic essays will lead students to be capable of expressing themselves properly by using these writing strategies. “Essay writing, in short will give you practice in the process of clear and logical reasoning.” (Langan, 1984, p.6) In this line of argumentation, the use of strategies when writing academic essays is essential and crucial for students, it represents a very helpful tool to work in order to develop the autonomy and the self- confident of the students as they are participants and creators of their learning instead of just spectators.

“Your ability to recognize ideas and to measure their validity will help you make sound decisions, not just in school, and career but in all phases of your everyday life” (Langan, 1984, p.6)



This study aims to contribute to the importance of the writing strategies in a second language acquisition mainly aiming to the fact of writing academic essays at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla, at the Faculty of Languages (LEI). The examination of this specific background information will be important to this research because it will be necessary to identify the participant's strategies that are contributing to the improvement of the students' academic writing skills. This study is quantitative and a descriptive research. The data as stated before was collected through questionnaires and surveys. This instrument application implies a considerable number of participants in order to obtain a valid and reliable research as well as the results. Throughout this process of gathering information, the instruments were applied only to students. All the participants were from the Faculty of Languages from the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla.

### **1.1 Significance of the study**

In the light of the previous discussion, it seems that it is not only important but crucial to find writing strategies that would improve and help students during the writing academic essay process. As it can be seen, it is necessary to study this phenomenon, because the writing strategies represent an important and an essential tool that students will need to manage properly to become better writers, and to improve the way of expressing themselves adequately not only verbally, but writing down on a piece of paper. "Sustaining this role depends upon engaging students as critical collaborators in their own learning and development." (Harris & Graham, 1996, p.9)

However, in order to reach this goal it is necessary to go beyond the tools that students already have, to go even deeper to search for more tools that will help students to improve their learning when writing academic essays.

There are extra details that students need to polish to reach what it is expected to reach. As we all know, we live in a globalized and very competent world, where fully trained students are required to have a competitive growth in the field of education. The study is meant to provide an increased understanding of learner's preferred learning styles and strategies which may serve as a means to better guide students when going through the writing process. As explained above, the study was carried out through an investigation of writing strategies displayed by students within this context. In relation to this, teachers and students must be compromise each other to prepare themselves in order to be successful learners not only in college, but also in their future careers and accomplishments. As a result, by analyzing these arguments it is significant to teach students to learn the elementary steps to write academic essays and to use strategies to make this job even easier. At the end, the aim of this research is to find the strategies that would help students to improve their writing academic process skill.

## **1.2 Theoretical context of the study**

This work is mainly focused and based on the main authors that contributed to this paper. One of the main authors that contributed to this research were Flower & Hayes (1994). These authors established a writing English model, and they described the principal stages of this process. Another important author that contributed to this important research project was Christopher Tribble (1996).

He stated the English writing skills that are essential and useful to the students' academic development. Also it is important to mention to Jane, E and Lindy A. (2004) contributed to the explanation of the different types of English essays. Finally, Carole Turkenik (1995). She stated the different types of English writing strategies for the development of academic essays.

### **1.3 Research setting**

This research mainly takes place at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla, at the Faculty of Languages (LEI). Thus, it is important to briefly set the context of the research. This project primarily focuses on the needs of the students who make an education effort to become proficiency English students. The Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla is a public institution compromised with the students to improve their academic learning development. One of the objectives of the university is to ensure that students are intelligent, creative, researchers and problem solvers with a high potential, who are willing to improve their English academic development every single day. It is this commitment with the students' development that motivates the present research project. All these arguments and features represented are important to this research.

### **1.4 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this survey study will be to find out writing strategies that will help students to improve their academic development when writing essays in a second language acquisition for the students at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla.

Writing academic essays will be defined as the type of English writing process that will help students to improve their English writing strategies.

The use of writing strategies in a second language acquisition will be defined as the English planning process to reach a successful academic writing process.

### **1.5 Research questions**

This research study is based on the following questions:

- a) How writing academic essays can help students to prepare high- intermediate or advance college English language for academic success?
- b) What are the main English writing strategies that are contributing to the student's academic development?

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Importance of writing skills in the acquisition of English as a second language**

Human beings tend to express ourselves in many different ways. At some point in life, it is necessary to express thoughts not only verbally, but writing them down on a piece of paper. “Writing is a way of sharing personal meanings and writing courses emphasize the power of the individual to construct his or her own view of a topic” (Richards, J. 2009, p9). However, when learning English as a second language it requires an extra effort, because learning the English language itself it is already a hard job to accomplish. One of the central and main goals of the field of a second language English writing has been to provide an understanding of (ELS) writers. The need of a second language writing theory considers different elements including the writer, the reader, the text, and the context, the interaction of all these elements are essential for students that are acquiring English as a second language. Consequently, students need to make an extra effort in order to improve their writing skills when writing academic essays. Writing skills are an important tools for students who are acquiring English as a second language, because those skills will help to find many different ways to improve their academic writing essays.

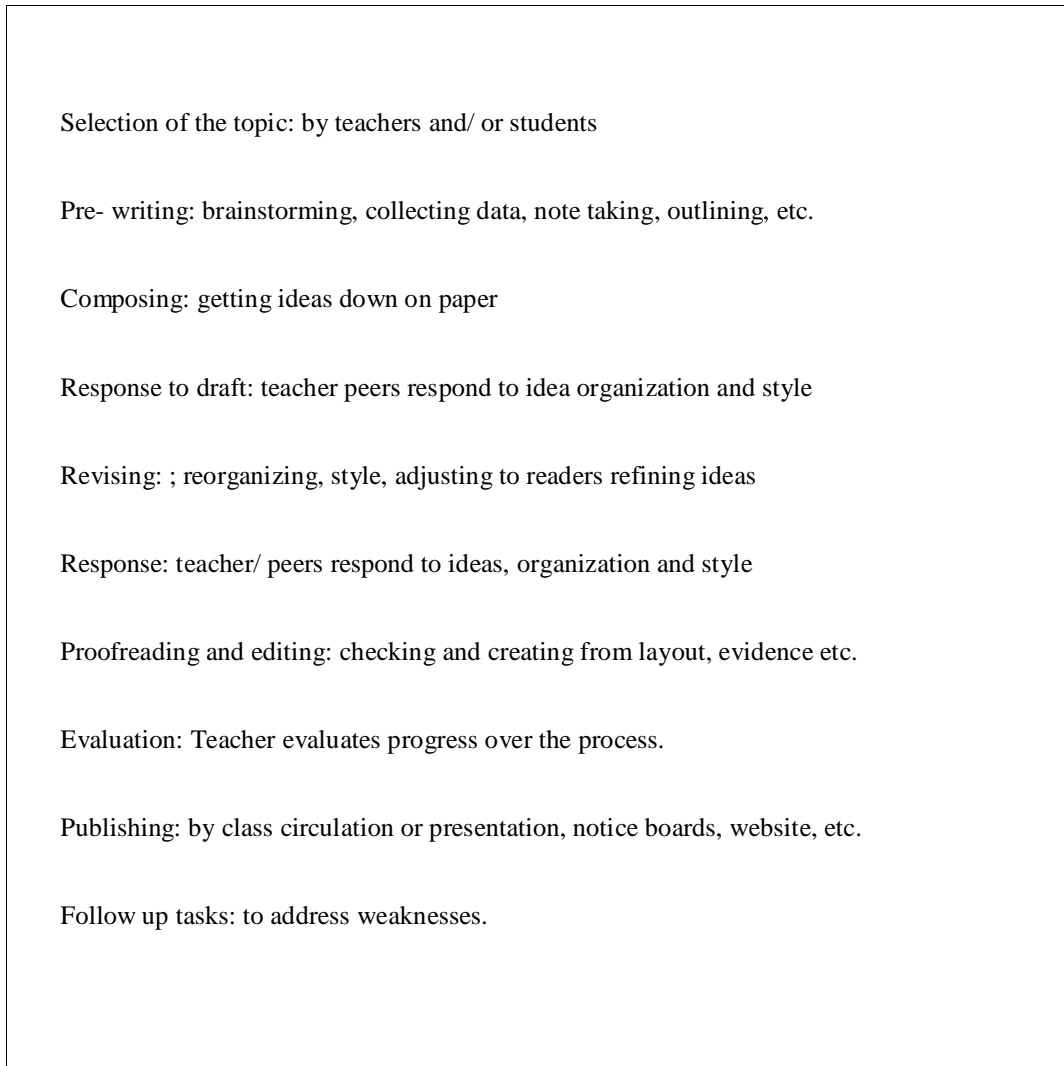
#### **2.1 Writing English process**

Learning to write in a second language acquisition is one of the most important features that students need to improve and polish in order to be successful during the academic development “Writing is among the most important skills that second language students need to develop, and the ability to teach writing is central to the expertise of a well- trained language” (Richards, J. 2009, p.15)

However, students tend to be disorganized, not following structures and the use of any type of format when expressing our ideas down in a piece of paper. Consequently, students should realize that there are certain paths that must be followed in order to be successful during the writing academic process. “One way to look at writing is to see it as marks on a page or a screen, a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences structured according to a system of roles.” (Richards, J. 2009, p.3) The conceptualization of grammar features, linguistic knowledge, syntactic patterns, the acquisition of vocabulary and the cohesion and coherence are important key points when learning how to write in a second language acquisition. “Writing is seen as a product constructed from the writer’s command of grammatical, and lexical knowledge and writing development is considered to be the best result of imitating and manipulating models” (Richard. J, 2000 p.3) As a result, writing is considered as an extension of grammar and structures.

One of the most essential writing processes models that have been widely accepted by the (L2) writing process is the one established by Flower & Hayes. This model of writing has been elaborated to further description what goes on at each stage of the process and to integrate cognitive with social factor more centrally (Flower, 1994 p.19)

This model presented by Flower & Hayes involves eight stages. The stages are: selection of the topic, pre- writing, composing, response, revising, evaluation and publishing.



**Figure 1 Taken from the Process Model of Writing Instruction (Flower and Hayes, 1981 p.19)**

In addition, the writing process is crucial for the students when acquiring English as a second language acquisition. “Writing will provide the whole pictures either theoretically or pedagogically. Forces outside the individual that help guide the writer to define problems, frame solutions, and shape the text need to be considered” ( Bizzell, 1992, Faigley, 1986, p 19)

### **2.1.1 Writing sub- processes**

Since the whole writing process is wide extent of information, it demands to be broken down into specific sub- processes.

Academic writers must focus their attention to all aspects of writing process without neglecting the other that may be left out.

“In writing attention devoted to one sub- process is known to decrease the sources available for the other sub- processes” ( Baddley, Bourding & Fayol,1996 p.20). Therefore, according to Chenoweth & Hayes established four major sub- processes in the writing process; conceptualizing, formulating, revising, and reading.

The first sub- process is conceptualizing, basically it involves generating and organizing ideas that will be useful when structuring the text, therefore planning the text is a key word of conceptualizing. Planning is one of the first stages to write a text. This specific kind of conceptualizing requires considerable cognitive maturity.

The second sub- process is formulating. When talking about formulating, basically the idea is that students have structures into their minds and then they become sentences. This process includes both the conversation of thought into language and the conversation into either handwritten or computer- written form. This second sub- process requires that the L2 writers put more effort and time consuming, due to the fact that students are acquiring English as a second language. “Thus, L2 writers tend to become so absorbed in their struggles with language that they have little attention left to concentrate on the context or structure of the text” (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001, p. 21) Consequently, one of the main problems would be the lack of language when accessing it.

The third sub- process is revising. For students it is crucial to revise the whole process when doing an academic writing. It is important to mention that when students revise their whole texts they are able to correct their mistakes, learn from them and the most important to improve them.



Revision can be made at any stage during the writing process; therefore it is essential to revise the text for global meaning, and not just for local problems, as authentic academic assignments. When students are writing in their L2 tend to be worried in some other aspects besides the importance of the text content, consequently students lack themselves from expressing what they really want to communicate when writing their academic text.

The fourth writing sub- process is reading. Most of the time, teachers tend to teach skill by skill individually. However, it is important to realize that skills are connected, in this particular case knowing how to read will definitely improve our skills of knowing how to write. “In the classroom, reading and writing instruction have tended to be treated as skills to be taught separately” (Kroll, 1993, p.22)

There are certain factors that students do not take into consideration. First of all, academic writing involves considerable reading. The first step that students must do is read instructions at the beginning of any assignment. A good reader reread the instructions more than twice to make sure they are following the instructions correctly. Another problem is that most of the students do not have reading skills and strategies that will make them to understand and read an academic assignment. It is essential for second language readers to have strategies and skills that will help them to give meaning to the whole text, not by been decoding every word. “Second language readers may be particularly focused on the words- They concentrate on understanding the individual words and miss the global meaning (Horiba, 1996, p. 22) Lastly, a good writer must read the academic text to evaluate the content, and as a final thought students should print out their texts before, then reread it and revise it.

“Writers are less likely to detect problems in their texts if they do not print them out to reread them” (Schwartz, 1992, p. 117).

According to Barbara Jo Kriger, Paul G. Saint Amand, and Robert W. Emery, there are three reading disciplines that a writer must take into account when improving reading: The Reader, The Text and The Context. “A text is given life only through the energies brought to it by readers who construct, interpret, and question its possible meanings.” (Jo, Kriger, B. Saint-Amand G, P. & Emery W, R. 1996, p.117).

The reader is basically the most important key point, because the reader is the one who owns some specific life experiences, assumptions and values. The reader has many different points of seeing life, and different points of view. Therefore, the reader has different interpretations of a text. Consequently, the reader takes the discussion as an essential tool to dialogue, and find out a general meaning or even to a specific meaning, even though some other times the reader may disagree about the meaning of a text.

The text is the second step through all the process by looking for key points such as; the general ideas, the broad shape of writer’s discussion, and the feeling and tone of the world that the writer depicts. It is useless and a waste of time if the writer goes over the whole text detail by detail the first time you read it, to the contrary, it is important to just only get a general idea, and a general understanding out of the text content. The reader has the possibility to always go back to the reading for a close look at the important details that give a piece of writing sharp definition.

In the context, it is important to mention that a text is a piece of a writing content that goes along with the writer’s life experiences.

Therefore, it is essential to know about the writer’s background and the context in which the text was written, it will help you to understand the content of the text.

Also, it is important to research deeply into the place and period in which a text was written, to search for some background information in encyclopedias, history books and some other resource materials. This extra background information will help the reader to familiarize with the context and interpreting the text.

### **2.1.2 Writing skills**

Writing academic assignments when acquiring English as a second language is a complex job to accomplish, therefore it is crucial for students to learn how does the writing skills work in order to make them to succeed during their academic development. Strong writing skills come along with a lot of practice and determination from students to improve them. To be become an excellent writer in English language it takes a lot of time, effort and practice. Writing academic essays can be challenging, especially when you have a lot of tasks, and multiple assignments to organize. Consequently, it is important to establish the writing skills that will help you through this whole process. First of all, it is important to have the essay question, and the thesis statement already established broken into small pieces to make the writing process easier. Later on, students must plan the essay by developing the argument that the student would like to describe. The following will be the writing process, where the essay is divided into introduction, body and conclusion.

The introduction is the first paragraph of the essay, and it explains the topic with the general idea or thesis statement. The body is composed by a couple of paragraphs that explain and support the thesis statement, and come between the introduction and the conclusion. It is important to have more than one body paragraph to support the thesis statement in an academic essay. The conclusion is the last paragraph of an essay. It summarizes and restates the thesis statement or the author's point of view, by making the final comment about the essay's main

idea. Finally, the editing process, which basically means to reread the essay more than once, correct the mistakes, and make sure the format and the structure are well done.

According to Christopher Tribble there are five important writing skills in order to have a successful academic writing: prewriting, composing and drafting, reader response, revising and editing, and finally the conclusion. (Tribble, C, 1996, p. 103)

The first writing skill is prewriting. As students must be aware that the writing process has to follow a certain organization in order to make a successful academic writing. Prewriting involves the writer to consider two important questions “What is the purpose of this piece of writing?” [and] ... “Who am I writing this for?” (Hedge, 1988 p.103) It is essential to understand this first part because students should make a connection between the context and the content of the text. To use a sheet of paper, start brainstorming the topic, and later on write all the different ideas that come from the mind. For the prewriting skill it is not really important how disorganized the work can be, because it is about writing down all the ideas and thoughts about your topic. On the prewriting stage, it is important to write thoughts, opinions, some examples, any facts or explanations. When having a better understanding about some thoughts start by writing some complete sentences about the introduction, body or conclusion on a separate piece of paper. It is essential not to focus too much on this part, because as soon as starting writing the essay there will be more ideas to add later on.

The second writing skill is writing the first draft. This is one of the most important skills because as long as you have your prewriting about the topic it will be easier because, now it is necessary to join everything together on a whole. “There is some point in which the writer begins to ‘translate plans and ideas into provisional text’ (Harris, 1993, p. 112)

First of all, take out your brainstorm, and then start to write the essay. The key during this writing skill is to write down full sentences and complete thoughts in order to make them as clear as possible.

This is called variously ‘composing (Hedge 1988 p. 112), ‘Drafting’ (White & Arndt 1991 p. 112), or ‘creating and developing’ (Harris 1993 p. 112). It is important to take into account what could happen when running out of ideas, it is possible to start brainstorming again that way there will be more ideas. Also, when writing the first draft it is necessary to leave a double space in order to have more space if it is necessary to add more information later. The first draft does not have to be perfect, but readable. As soon as it is finished the first draft, it is crucial to read it out loud, that way it will be easier to start correcting some mistakes that you may be finding during this writing process.

The third writing skill is revising and editing. This writing skill is essential to all students when writing an academic essay, because it is the part where revising and correcting our essays will be crucial to make a successful academic writing process.

It is important to reread the whole essay in order to make the necessary correction, clarity expression and grammatical accuracy; if it is necessary to read it out loud do it. Revising your draft involves correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

The fourth writing skill is editing, it involves making the changes that will improve the academic text. It is important to let someone else to read it, to make a judgment about your work. It is necessary to ask someone else to read your work, that way the reader may have another perspective about your work, and it will help you to improve it.

According to Hedge, there are several editing checklists that writers should ask themselves during and after the composition.

- a) Am I sharing my impression clearly enough with my reader?
- b) Have I missed out any important points of information?
- c) Are there any points in the writing where my reader has to make a 'jump' because I've omitted a line of argument or I've forgotten to explain something?
- d) Does the vocabulary need to be made stronger at any point?
- e) Are there any sentences which don't say much or which are too repetitive and could be missed out?
- f) Can I rearrange any sets of sentences to make the writing clearer or more interesting?
- g) Do I need to rearrange any paragraphs?
- h) Are the links between sections clear? Do they guide my reader through the writing?

*(Hedge, 1988, p. 115)*

## **2.2 Importance of academic essays to learn**

A turning point during the student's academic learning is to develop the necessary skills and tools to face the competitive world in which we all live nowadays.

As students, they need to realize the importance of all the skills, and the strategies that are very useful when acquiring English as a second language. The world in which all live nowadays are always requiring students that should be well prepared to face and overcome different situations around. Majors and jobs are always requiring strong writing skills and strategies due to the fact that as professionals and well educated people need to carry out all the writing knowledge in order to have a better communication and interaction with the environment. "You can decide what you want to write, when you want to write it, and even were you want to write.

Writing offers the opportunity to earn recognition" (Henson, K. 1999 p. 3). Therefore, writing academic essays will led us grow in all academic aspects, and outside the job field.

### **2.2.1 Facility to communicate**

Acquiring English as a second language brings the opportunity to learn the four English skills that would improve academic development. Therefore, writing skill play an important role when writing academic essays due to the fact that writing essays would improve the way we perceive the world, and the way to understand it. “When you write, you invent; and then you share your creation with as many others as possible” (Henson, K. 1999 p. 3). Furthermore writing academic essays will help us to improve and comprehend the process of expressing our points of view, feelings and thoughts when facing a situation not only verbally but writing them down on a piece of paper.

During the process of writing, students realize that they express their ideas to the world, that the main point of writing an essay would be that someone else will read it and understand it, and also that will be interested on your thoughts at that specific moment.

“Writers say that writing stimulates them mentally while relaxing them emotionally. Writing is good therapy; it lets you express yourself.” (Henson, K. 1999, p. 11). As students need to take into account that when expressing ideas down in a paper, it is crucial to understand that someone else will read it, that someone else may agree or disagreed about our points of view, there must be a goal or a purpose when writing down ideas in a piece of paper. “Students write for real audiences and real purposes” (Harris. K & Graham. S, 1996, p. 9).

### **2.2.2 Become a better writer**

When students get involve in writing academic essays, their reasoning and writing abilities start to emerge and work, due to the fact that students learn how to capture and organize clearly their ideas down on a paper.

Students began to give specific and clear details; later on, they start to support their ideas nor their point of view and the way of perceiving life during the everyday life situations. Since students are able to support their ideas, supporting their points of view, their thoughts, the way of perceiving life, and giving specific details, the process of writing fluently goes along with some other grammatical factors such as; adding more vocabulary, cohesion and coherence on the writing, following a format, no grammatical errors and the appropriate use of the language.

“By taking time to develop sharp skills and by taking time to revise, improve, and polish your manuscripts, you can dramatically increase your odds of succeeding” (Henson, K. 1999, p. 9). In summary, all these powerful features will help students to have a better academic development, and to improve them adequately.

### **2.2.3 Become a better reader**

It is important to mention that when talking about English academic writing the student’s ability to write depends on their strong ability to read and vice versa. Effective reading is essential to students during the process of academic writing because this skill is considered one of the “outside sources” due to the fact that college writers rarely have the opportunity to choose the topics that they would like to be discussed. Consequently, students will start to improve some other skills in order to be successful down in their papers.

Students will start to research and to use some outside sources to help them to write their essays such as; scholarly books, magazines, newspapers, journals, lecture notes, textbooks, encyclopedias, reserve readings, and some other sources of additional information. “Students who read well know where to locate and how to identify the most relevant content in the source texts, and that information is then transferred to their writing”(Hiverla, A, 2004, p. 1)



As a result students will have to become a skilled reader as well as an accomplished writer in order to really comprehend what they are reading. In addition, students will become skilled and active readers. Students will start to make connections of all the texts information that they have read before, and constructing it to the prior schoolwork knowledge and personal experiences, this means that students will improve this reading skill and students will be capable to use this powerful skill not only inside the classroom, but outside when facing the competitive world where critical readers and analyzers are required. “There are many reasons for reading, and as many ways to read, and you undoubtedly have made several of them a regular part of your life.” (Brunk, T, 1997, p. 15)

#### **2.2.4 Become a better speaker**

Throughout this process of English academic writing, it is essential to state that most of the effective writing classrooms are the ones in which students are actively engaged with their classmates and their task assignments.

The importance in which the oral and written language interact during the second language acquisition is crucial, even though most of the time written assignments are accomplished by individual students writers by working and research on their own it leads to an important key point to establish a social phenomenon that is called the dialogue of social interaction. As a result, this social interaction will lead students to start conversations, dialogues and to exchange points of view among others, and what is most important, is that students will start to believe in themselves by acquiring self-esteem, and self-confidence when giving supportive arguments. “The speaker’s ability to provide information, to develop a topic, to shape a message to meet the expectation of a particular audience- all of these are aspects of

conversation that transfers later into expository and persuasive writing.” (Weissber, R, 2006, p.10). Furthermore, communicative approach to writing always involves a meaningful speech in which at least two active interlocutors have something important to talk about.

Consequently, the turning point of bringing speaking into a writing assignment will help student’s writers to develop a strong sense of audience. In addition, once students are skilled writers, it will be an easier way to start talking due to the fact that students have already enough specific background information, grammatical tools, vocabulary, personal experiences, supportive arguments, organization and coherence.

To conclude, students will take a lot of advantage of these two skills combined due to the fact that it is essential to interact among others, to express the way you perceive life, the way you feel, and by giving supportive arguments it will open more doors for opportunities not only academically but for the student’s future accomplishments.

### **2.3 Academic writing essays**

It is essential for the students to know that when writing academic essays, there are certain patterns that they must follow in order to succeed during this process of writing. “Learning to write is not just a question of developing a set of mechanical ‘orthographic’ skills; it also involves learning a new set of cognitive and social relations.”

(Tribble, C, 1996, p.12). Academic essays will help students to improve their writing skills and to become a self- confident person, when expressing their points of view down in a paper. To make students succeed during this process, it is necessary to give them the necessary tools to start. The structure of the academic essays will help students to follow a specific format that will fulfill certain requirements. The steps in essay writing will help them to organize their ideas and thoughts step by step.

Finally, it is crucial to mention the types of essays because students will make sure which type of essay they will like to write about, and why, by giving meaningful arguments to their thesis statement.

### **2.3.1 Structure of academic essays**

An academic essay has its specific structure to follow in order to have cohesion and coherence during the whole process of writing.

An essay “it is a composition of slightly over five hundred words that consists of a one-paragraph introduction, a three- paragraph body, and a one- paragraph conclusion”. (Langan, 1984, p.7) An essay is a group of paragraphs written about a single topic and a central main idea. There must be a purpose to develop an essay and that is what we called a thesis statement.

The thesis statement is basically the sentence that tells the main idea of the whole essay. It usually comes at or near the introductory paragraph, and the supporting of the thesis statement appears in the paragraphs that follow.

The supporting paragraphs give a full detail of the reasons that back up the thesis statement, and finally the conclusion paragraph that reinforce the statement given at the beginning of the essay. The introductory paragraph on an essay must need to start with several sentences that will catch the reader’s attention. The thesis statement should be developed and the major points of the thesis should be listed in the order in which they will appear in the essay. The supporting paragraphs are the ones who are going to support the thesis statement already established. Each of the supporting paragraphs should have a topic sentence that states the point of each paragraph. Finally, the concluding paragraph on an essay often presents the final thought of the writer and summarizes the whole essay.

### **2.3.2 Steps in essay writing**

Every written paper must fulfill certain characteristics in order to complete all the requirements to make it successful. There are four basic steps that must be taken into account when writing academic essays. According to Langan, the basic four steps to write an essay are: begin with a point or thesis, support the thesis with specific evidence, organize the specific evidence and finally clear, error-free sentences. (Langan, J, 1984, p. 54)

Writing a good thesis statement should be the most important step to start working during the process of the academic writing. It is crucial for the students to have this point at the beginning of the writing process, due to the fact that students must know what would be the point that they would like to write about, and give meaningful reasons why.

Formulating the thesis statement will help you to a clear and workable job, and the thesis statement will be the guide while students are working in their essays.

Support the thesis with specific evidence to ensure the information students want to write about, it is necessary to have the necessary arguments to support the thesis statement. It is important to start by making an outline. The outline will be very helpful because it is an easy way to start describing the arguments that students are going to discuss during their essay.

Organizing and connecting the specific evidence it is essential that when students have already their arguments well established, they start thinking about ways to organize and connect those specific details. All these arguments should be stick together with coherence.

Write clear, error-free sentences it is crucial that students should revise the final draft at the end of the process of writing.

Students need to make sure that rereading the final draft will help them to make some changes if they may need them, also students need to make sure that their grammatical features

are complete such as; complete sentences, the use of verbs correctly, the use of capital letters, punctuation, apostrophe, quotations, marks, semicolon, comma, parentheses, the correct essay format, spelling errors, and among others.

### **2.3.3 Types of writing essays**

There are different types of writing an academic essay. First of all, it is essential to start by mentioning and examining them. According to Jane, E & Lindy A. (2004) there are seven types of academic essays: the narrative essay, the process essay, the classification essay, the comparison/ contrast essay, the cause and effect essay, the persuasion essay and lastly the definition essay (Jane, E & Lindy A, 2004, p 51).

It is crucial for the students to know what are the types of academic essays, that way students will have the option to choose the one in which they will feel more comfortable and confident when writing about it.

A narrative essay tells a story about a meaningful experience in the writer's life. It basically describes the different events that are related to any experience. When writing this type of essay, the writer shows a dominant impression and it is full of specific details when describing the experience. The format of a narrative essay is composed by an introductory paragraph in which the writer leads to the thesis statement and identifies the feelings about the experience. Later on, it has body paragraphs that give specific examples, and show how the experience has caused an impact to the writer, and finally it has a concluding paragraph where the writer re takes and summarizes the previous experience already explained.

A classification essay takes a primary category and then this topic it is divided into three or more sub- topics, these sub-topics must be related to the primary category.

In this particular essay each sub- topic should be well described. The format of a classification essay is composed by a body paragraph for each type of sub-topic, and it must have clear transitions between each paragraph. Finally, this type of essay re takes and summarizes the subtopics back to the primary category.

A comparison/contrast essay shows essential similarities (comparison) and differences (contrast) between two items or situations with a basic relationship. It is important to mention that these types of essays must have specific details about the items mentioned previously.

A comparison essay expresses the differences between two items or situations, but that at some point have a common relation each other. Unlike, a contrast essay expresses the similarities between two items or situations, but that somehow those similarities are quite different. The formats of these types of essays are composed by an introductory paragraph that describes the relationship among the items that will be discussed later on. These types of essays should have a thesis statement whether the writer will talk about similarities or about differences. Later on, the body paragraphs will describe the similarities and differences through specific details. Finally, in the concluding paragraph, the writer restates the thesis statement and brings back the topics.

The cause and effect essay shows the relationship between two items or concepts. First of all, it discusses the different effects of one common cause. This type of essay should have a lot of concrete and convincing examples to support the statement, and show the direct relationship between specific causes and their one effect. The format of this type of essay is composed by an introductory paragraph that states the thesis statement and makes a direct link between the cause and effect stated previously. The body paragraphs must describe and discuss all the effects and the causes.

Each one of the body paragraphs must be one to the cause and another individual for the effect. Finally, in the concluding paragraph the writer re takes and summarizes the statement and the relationship between the cause and the effect features.

The persuasion essay focuses mainly in an opinion or a belief. It usually discusses a controversial issue based on logical arguments that must be supported by meaningful reasons. The main characteristic of this type of essay is that it tries to convince the reader to agree and accept a different point of view of a certain situation. The format of this type of essay is composed by a thesis statement which expresses the opinion expressed by the writer and it must be clearly stated in the introductory paragraph. Each body paragraph should describe the specific details that will support the opinion along with the thesis statement. Finally, the concluding paragraph is a restatement of the writer's arguments.

The definition essay basically shows what an idea or word means, it talks about new words or concepts to be discussed or defined. Primarily, it focuses on the discussion of a word that may have more than one meaning. The format of this type of essay takes the thesis statement by indicating the idea, or word that will be defined in the introductory paragraph. The body paragraphs describe the different uses and the meaning of a word can have. Finally, the concluding paragraph summarizes the thesis statement, and the definitions of the words.

## **2.4 Writing strategies for academic essays**

When writing English academic assignments it is important to make sure that students have the correct strategies that will help them to go through this whole process of writing academic essays. Planning strategies are a key point to students, due to the fact that students sometimes do not know how to start organizing their ideas in a correct manner.

Writing strategies will definitely help students to organize their ideas in a correct manner, consequently the construction of an essay will be way easy for them.

According to Carole Turkenik (1995) there are different strategies that will be very useful for students when writing academic essays such as; brainstorming, listing, outlining, free-writing, clustering wh- questions, and finally getting more ideas through discussion.

### **2.4.1 Brainstorming**

The first strategy that will help students during the academic writing process is brainstorming. It is essential to realize that besides the organization, the structure, the format and the content of an essay there are strategies that can help to improve and succeed when writing an academic essay. One of the most common strategies is brainstorming, because students come up with as many ideas as they may have on their mind. “By letting your thoughts run free, you can discover new ideas that you never realized you had; you can open your mind to different ways of looking at a subject” (Turkenik, C.1995, p. 10)

Brainstorming is one of the first steps during the writing process, because it is when students begin to explore and write down their points of view down in a paper. Brainstorming basically means to get as many ideas as you may have about the thesis statement the student is going to write about. This strategy is really helpful for students who are not really sure about what are they going to support or talk about on their essay. Students tend to have a lot of ideas that they do not know how to organize all of them, consequently it is impossible to access to their ideas and information spontaneously.



### **2.4.2 Listing**

The second important strategy that will help students during the writing process is listing. Listing basically is to write down each idea on separate lines. It is essential to mention that when students are listing, it is not necessary to write down full or complete sentences to the contrary; short sentences are fine at the beginning of this writing process.

When making a list, students spend from five to ten minutes to write as many sentences as possible. It is important when listing to have in mind what the purpose of the thesis statement will be, and the audience who is going to read the essay later on. Finally, when students have finished their listing, they can actually go back, and reread their sentences in order to add something else, or to remove some other ideas.

### **2.4.3 Outlining**

The third important strategy that will help academic writers is outlining. This outlining strategy goes along with the fact of writing down free thoughts and as many ideas as the students may have. It is important to consider that outlining basically means to make a list of the ideas that cross into the student's mind according to the specific time and chronological order in which students will discuss the topic in the essay. It has to follow an organization according to the writer's needs, and thanks to this, it will be helpful to the writer to remember what the student would like to discuss.

#### **2.4.4 Clustering**

The fourth strategy to take into account during the writing academic process is clustering. Clustering ideas basically means to take out a sheet of paper and write in the middle of it the name of the thesis statement you want to explore and analyze, and circle it.

After having circled it, it is necessary to write sub-ideas that will be linked and will be supporting the ideas, also by circling those words too. The sub- ideas must be related or familiar to the main topic in order to establish a relationship among the ideas. Finally, when students are creating their cluster, do not focus too much on grammatical or spelling error, clustering is just an easy way to generate as many ideas down on a paper as possible.

#### **2.4.5 Free- writing**

The fifth strategy for getting ideas down in a paper before starting the academic writing essay is free-writing. In this type of strategy the students are allow to write sentences, and the sentences follow one after another.

It is necessary to know that in this type of strategy the grammatical correctness is not really important. Nor it is necessary to require the format and organization of the paragraphs neither. The important key in this type of strategy is to make students to write as many ideas as they come to their mind; the order does not really matter. The main purpose is to gather a lot of ideas then start constructing the sentences, and to begin writing them down on a paper.

#### **2.4.6 Asking wh – questions**

The last but not the least strategy is asking the Wh- Questions. The purpose of asking the wh- questions is that students should ask themselves as many questions as they need according to the thesis statement they want to develop.

Therefore, the wh- questions that will help students to develop their ideas are questions that begin with or include; what, which, why, where, when, how and who.

And then make students to answer them according to their needs, with the use of these questions the students go way beyond and they narrow even more their topic. Since this strategy is a way to get more ideas, it is not necessary to organize the questions chronologically, nor grammatical structure or complete sentences.

#### **2.4.7 Getting ideas through discussion**

Finally, another important strategy that will be very helpful for students, will be getting ideas through discussion. As the name of the strategy says, discussing the topic with some other people around our environment, will help students to generate more ideas, thoughts, more experiences, and share different point of views. As discussing the topic with classmates, it is crucial to write down all your classmate's ideas, just as important to take notes.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Research design**

This research study is based on the quantitative method; therefore questionnaires were applied to the students since it is a practical method to obtain reliable results. It has been stated that the purpose of this research is to find out writing strategies that will help students to improve their academic development when writing essays. Consequently this chapter outlines the research methodology of this paper study starting by providing the specific information about the participants, setting, instruments, research design and the institution involved.

### **3.1 Participants**

During the process of this research study it was considerate a group of specific people that fulfill certain academic requirements of the major of the Faculty of Languages at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla (BUAP). The requirements of this specific group of people were to already have finished the English workshops I, II, III, VI, and V the same as the Target languages subjects I, II, III, IV, and V this is due to the fact that according to the plan of the institution at that stage of the major, students are capable to write academic essays without struggling. For this study there were 10 female students and 10 male students that were around 20 years old and 25 years old, all of them attend to a public institution, and of course all of them are students at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla.

### **3.2 Setting**

This research study was situated at the faculty of Languages at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) that was founded on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1578 at the city of

Puebla, Puebla. This is a public institution started just as a building, but later on after some decades it became one of the most important universities of the country. One of the majors that the faculty of Languages offers is the bachelor to become an English teacher in a four year plan or either on a six year plan. This institution has established a University Model called “Minerva” (MUM) to be followed during the whole career. The Minerva model is the result of a broad and a wide diverse community consultation of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla that aims to define the most important strategies and actions that can ensure the quality of the programs, and to consolidate the bonding of the institution, and to participate effectively in the regional development. As a result, the main purpose of the program is to make students active learners by creating their own learning by themselves, and seeing the teacher as a “guide” to help them through the path to reach their goals.

### **3.3 Instruments**

In this part of the research paper, the instrument plays an important role, therefore this section is based on the description of the instrument that was applied to the participants, in order to gather reliable and validate data that will lead us to obtain the adequate results for the purpose of this research.

During this research paper, the instrument that was applied was a questionnaire that contains, a several number of closed questions that students had to answer according to what better describes their academic situation, and to the way students feel about the use of writing strategies in a second language acquisition when writing academic essays.

The questionnaire applied during this process of gathering information consisted of 15 close questions. Questions 1 and 2 are related to which skill does the students consider are the

best in general terms. Question 3 and 4 are related to what are their opinions and their thoughts towards the academic essays. Questions 5 and 6 are related to the fact if students do know what a writing strategy is. Questions 7, 8 and 9 are related to the fact if writing strategies have ever been essential for students when starting writing an academic essay. Questions 10 and 11 are related to what are the writing strategies that students have used when writing an academic essay, and in which type of essay students have applied those strategies. Questions 12 and 13 are related to how useful have been some specific subjects that the plan of the institution offers where it is teaching the basics of the English grammatical structures and skills, and the development of those. Finally, questions 14 and 15 are related to what are the advantages of knowing how to write an academic essay, and how prepare students feel at this stage of the major to develop an academic essay. As it is shown above, every single question has its own purpose in order to obtain reliable and validate results when analyzing the data information.

### **3.4 Procedure**

In the process of gathering the specific information needed, the instrument had certain characteristics that the participants should know about in order to answer the questionnaire. During the process of answering the questionnaire students were told that they must have finished the subjects such as; Target Languages I, II, III, VI, and V and the Workshop III, due to the fact that these subjects are the platform for students to be prepared and capable to dominate all the English skills, and mainly the use of the writing strategies in a second language acquisition when writing academic essays. According to the program of the university, students are supposed to handle all these academic aspects.

The instrument took two days in a row to be applied, because it was hard to find students that fulfill all the characteristics already mentioned. The intention of requiring all these characteristics was to gather the most reliable results that would improve the purpose of this research paper. After the application of the questionnaire, and when the gathering of information took place, as well as the results, these data turned into graphs in order to demonstrate the respective findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

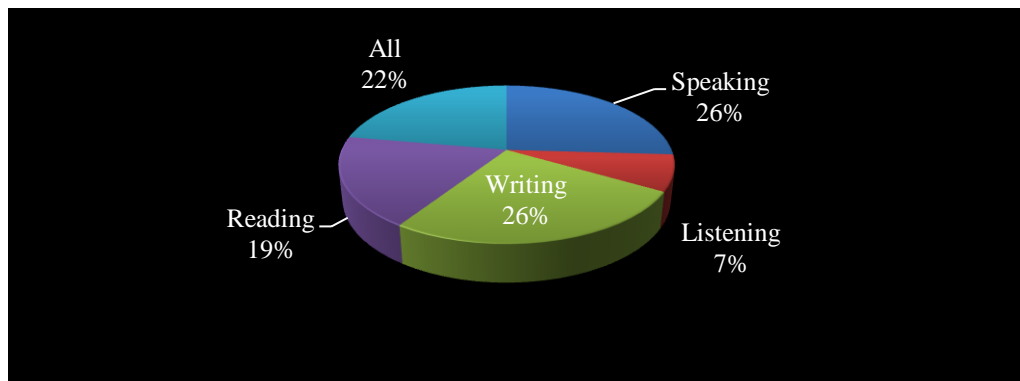
### 4.0 Analysis of the questionnaire

During this chapter, data was obtained based on a questionnaire that was applied to the students of LEI at BUAP that will be presented into graphs that describe the findings of the questionnaires. Once the data was collected, the next step throughout this process was to analyze all the meaningful information that the students provide during answering the questionnaires in order to find the importance of the writing strategies when writing academic essays. During the analysis of the instrument, every single question of the questionnaire will be described and analyzed into graphs and percentages.

### 4.1 English writing skills

The first question from the questionnaire applied was this one: Which one do you consider is your best English skill. All the results are shown in the graph described below.

**Graph 1. Which one do you consider is your best English skill? Mark all that apply.**



The results of the question number one as it is shown above reflects that there is an equal amount of the 26% of students who consider that their best English skill is speaking and writing,



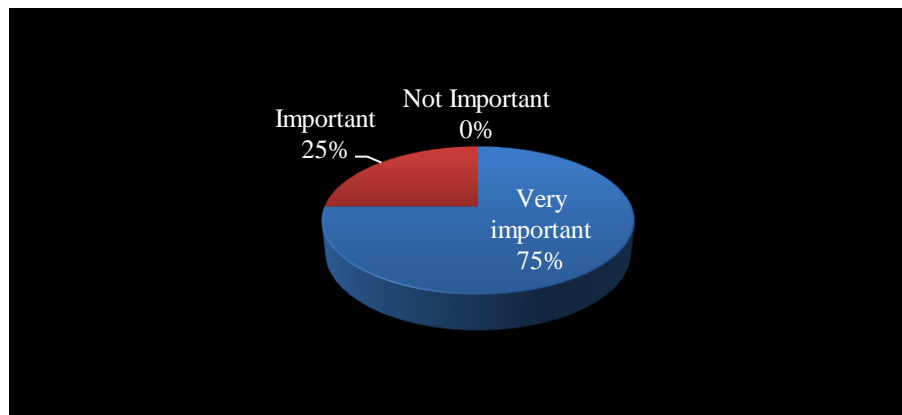
then it is shown that the 22% out of the total of the students consider that they are good at all the English skills, also there is 19% of the students who consider writing skill is their best English skill, and finally only 7% of the students out of the total which consider that listening is their best English skill. Consequently, according to this result, it can be pointed out that most of students are better writers because it can be assumed that during the whole major the only skill that is really shaped is writing, due to the fact that most of the subjects taught at the faculty are involving the writing skill most of the time. Even though, sometimes students forget what the writing skill is really about such as; punctuation coherence or even grammar rules. Although this result inquires to the fact that if students are good writers, they are supposed to be good readers since these two skills are related to each other.

The second option chosen by the students illustrates that students are better speakers than better listeners in this case it happens the same as the writing and reading skill, both of them are supposed to be related to each other because if you are a good speaker, you are listener, due to the fact that students feel the necessity to talk, and to express themselves rather than be developing the listening part. Finally the graph above reflects that only 22% out of the total of the students are good at all of the English skills. This result, is really important to light out because at this stage of the career, after all the basic and essential subjects already taken, students are supposed to be good at all of the English skills.

As a result of this first graph it is important to mention that most of the students consider that they are better writers and listeners, and only few students answered that they are good at all of them.

The second question presented in the questionnaire inquires the opinion of the participants about how important do they consider writing skill is? The results obtained in this question are shown in the graph below.

**Graph 2. How important do you consider writing skill is?**



The result gathered in the second question of the questionnaire indicates that 75% out of the total of the students consider that writing skill is very important. This result is important throughout the process of this research paper, because it reflects that students have a clear understanding of what is the importance of the writing skill. This also represents that students consider that out of the five English skills, the writing skill also represents significance for them.

On the other hand, the results of the second graph also reflects that some other students do not consider that writing skill is important for them, this can be due to the fact that students are not quite interested in this skill, and also they do not think it is useful for them academically. Finally, it is important to pointed out that none of the students thought this skill was not important, which it demonstrates that all of the students are aware that this English writing skill is important.

#### 4.1.2 English academic essays

The third question applied from the questionnaire implies to introduce one of the most important topics of the research paper that is about essays; therefore the question was this one: How difficult is for them to write an English academic essay? The results obtained in this question are described in the graph below.



**Graph 3. Is it difficult for you to write an English academic essay**

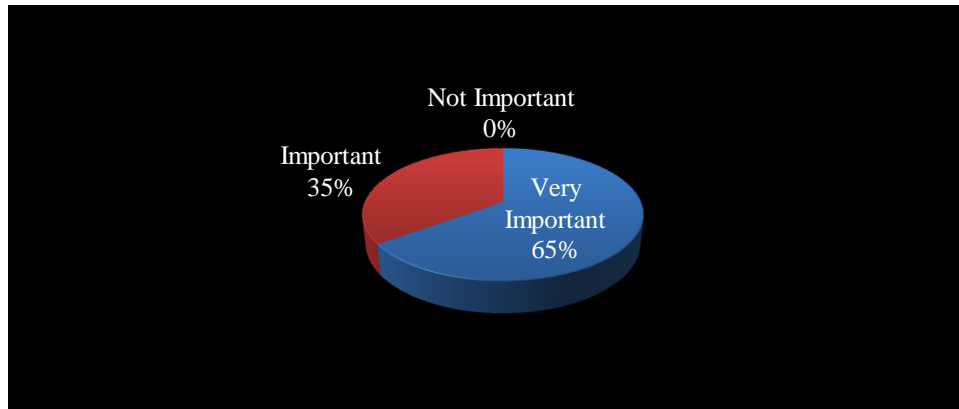
The result obtained from this third question reflects that the majority of the students consider that is difficult for them to write an English academic essay.

This is important to consider because in the first bar shown before students answered that one of the best English skills that they are good at was writing, and now in this graph it is shown that writing English academic essays represent a struggle for them.

In the second place the graph illustrates that only 5% out of the whole total of the students consider that it is very difficult for them to write an English essay, and the other 5% of the students consider it is easy. This third question has the purpose to identify how difficult is for them to write an English academic essay before continuing with the specific questions later on.

The fourth question applied on the questionnaire was related to: How important do students consider an academic essay is? The results obtained in this question are shown in the graph below.

**Graph 4. How important do you consider an academic essay is?**



The result obtained in this question indicates that most of the students 65% out of the total consider that an academic essay has its own significance.

This result is meaningful to the research paper, because in one of the previous graphs results, students mentioned that writing skill was one of the skills that they are good at, and also students stated that they find it difficult to write an academic essay, and now the results shown in the graph above illustrates that students consider an academic essay important.

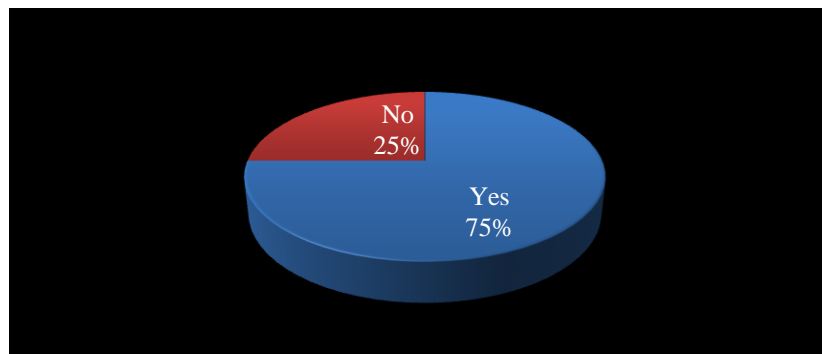
These results of the data gathered reflect that students are probably well at common writing, but not at writing academic documents such as essays, this assumed that students are

probably good at writing short passages, or some other basic writing assignments than academic writing.

#### 4.1.3 English writing strategies

The fifth question applied to the students is related to find out if students do know what a writing strategy is? The results obtained in this question are described in the graph below.

**Graph 5. Do you know what a writing strategy is?**

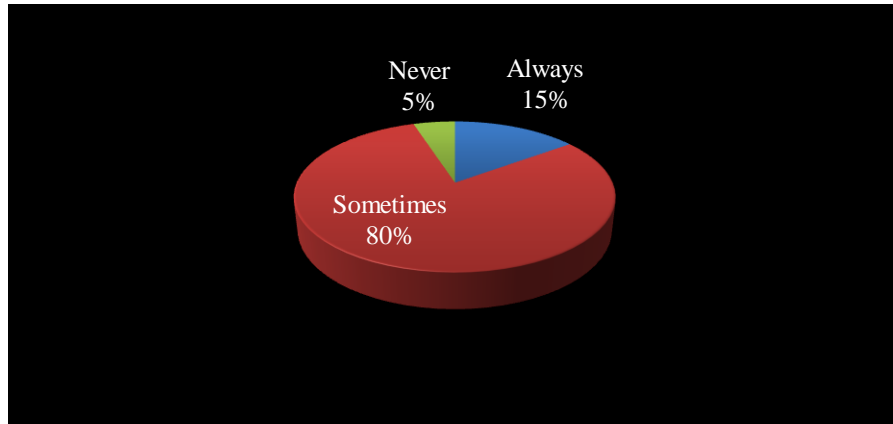


On the graph shown above, there are two answers that students mentioned. The majority of them answered that they do know what a writing strategy is. This result represents an essential key point, because it illustrates that students know what a writing strategy is, or probably they have heard of them.

On the other side, only the 25% out of the total answered that they do not know what a writing strategy is, which is probably why students find it difficult to write an academic essay. This result has also an important view due to the fact that if students find it difficult to write in English is because they probably never use writing strategies as a tool that will help them throughout the process.

For the question number six, students were asked to mention how often they use writing strategies when writing an academic essay? The results are shown in the graph below.

**Graph 6. How often do you use writing strategies when writing an essay?**

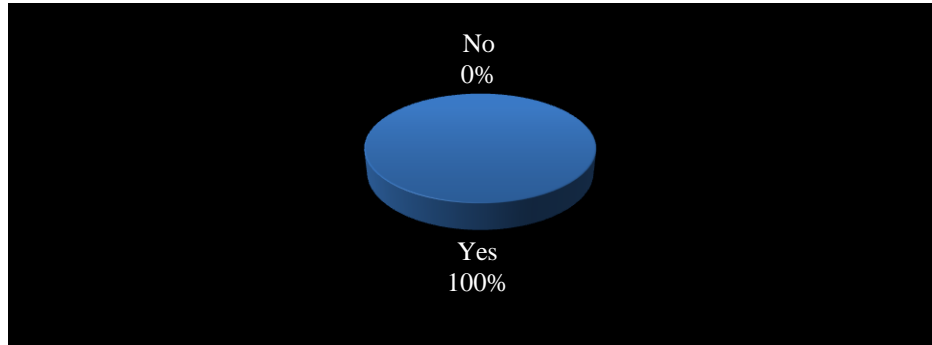


As it is observed in the graph above, it illustrates that only the 15% out of the total of the students use writing strategies when writing an academic essay. This result is important owing to that it has a relation to the one of the previous graph that showed that most of the students find it difficult to write and academic essay, probably because some students do not know how to start writing those types of academic documents. It is also important to mention that the 80% out of the total of the students answered that sometimes they use writing strategies, this basically means that this not always happens, which reflects that probably when students have a struggle they use them, or probably as they stated before, some of them did not even know what a writing strategy is.

Finally, there are another factor to analyze, there is only a 5% out of the total of the students who do not use any of the writing strategies at all, this result can be related to the graph in which students do not know how to write an academic essay.

For the question number seven students were asked the following: Do you consider that the use of writing strategies is essential for you to start writing an essay? The results are described in the graph below.

**Graph 7. Do you consider that the use of writing strategies is essential for you to start writing an essay?**

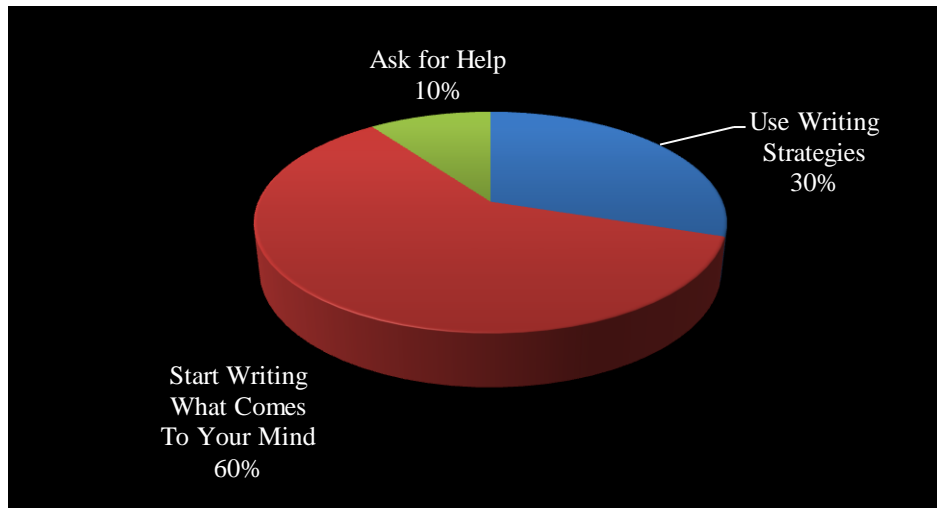


As the graph shows above, the information obtained from the students was really clear. All of them find essential and crucial the use of the writing strategies when starting writing an essay. This result is important because it demonstrates that students are aware of how important is to first plan and organize their ideas before start developing the whole process of writing an essay. Even though, some students do not know what a writing strategy is, or they find it difficult to write an academic essay such as has been stated before.

To summarize, students keep in mind that it is essential to use them as a way of helping to organize their ideas in a better.

In the question number eight of the questionnaire, it is related of what is the first thing they do when developing an academic essay? The results are shown in the graph number eight shown below.

**Graph 8. What is the first step you do when developing an essay?**



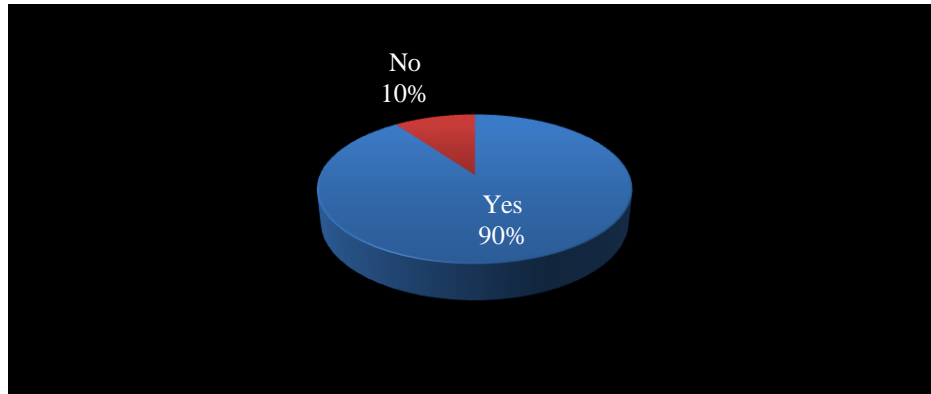
For this question, according to the average of the students questioned, the result indicates that 60% out of the total of the students answered that the first thing they do when start developing an essay is writing what comes to their mind. This data result demonstrates that most of the students do not even plan what they are going to write about, they just start writing whatever comes into their mind, consequently as a result in the previous graphs shown some students find it difficult to write in English because they do not use any type of strategy to organize and collect their ideas before starting writing. Nevertheless there are 30% of the students that do use writing strategies when developing an essay.

Finally, on the graph is also shown that there are some other students that prefer to ask for help when they do not know how to start writing an essay which is somehow a disadvantage for them, because at least students should know how to start writing an academic essay by using a writing strategy to start developing their ideas.



For the question number nine students were asked to mention if: The use of writing skills has ever helped them to organize better their ideas? The results are shown below on the following graph.

**Graph 9. The use of writing strategies has ever helped you to organize better your ideas?**



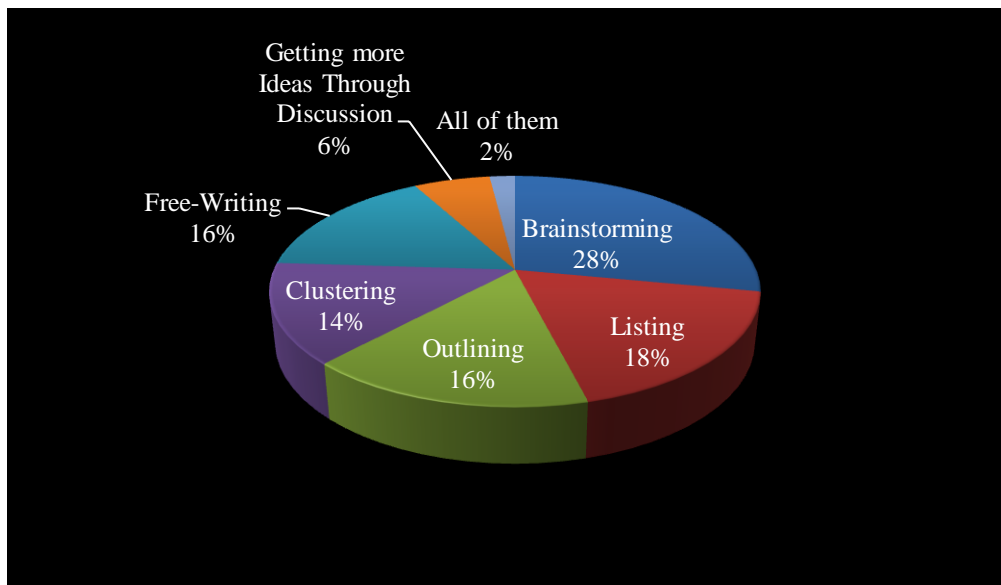
For this question, the graph illustrates that the 90% out of the total of the students answered that the use of writing strategies have ever help them to organize their ideas. This results inquire that most of the students had had better results when using strategies because it had helped them to organize their opinions, points of view, ideas and thoughts, and to make the process way easier. On the other hand, there is a 10% out of the total of the students that answered that the use of strategies had never help them to organize their ideas, this can be the result of not having enough knowledge of all the strategies that are available for them, and also they will probably need more information about some other strategies in order to make students feel even more comfortable when starting developing and organizing their ideas.

#### 4.1.4 Strategies and essays used by the participants

The following question in this questionnaire has to do with the question that is related to the strategies used by students, but this time is based on the strategies they use while they are developing assignments. The results are described in the graph number ten shown below.

**Graph 10. Do you use any of these strategies to plan an academic essay? Mark all**

**that  
apply.**



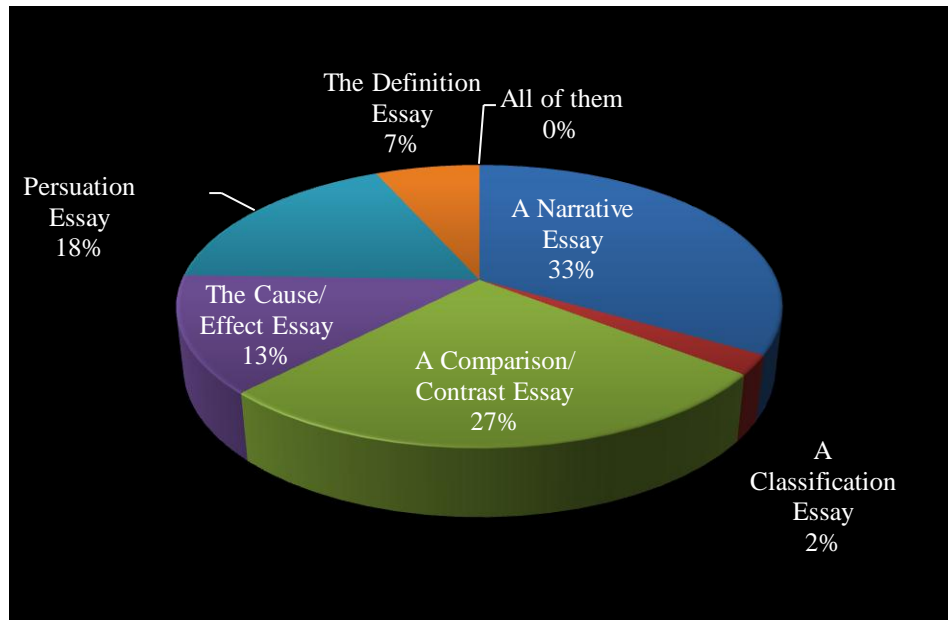
The result indicates that the 28% out of the total most of students basically focus on the brainstorming strategy. This result inquires that most of the students prefer to use the brainstorming strategy because is one of the most common strategy, and it is one of the easiest one to use when starting organizing ideas.

The second strategy selected by the students with the 18% out of the total was listing, this result is important as well because students prefer to make a list of their ideas before start writing. The third and four strategies that illustrate the 16% each one chosen by students were outlining and free writing.

This result reflects that students prefer to write freely than following a pattern. Finally, the last two strategies chosen by the students were clustering and getting more ideas through discussion. This two last results were not really chosen by the students, not because they are difficult it is more about because students did not even know that there are some other strategies to use besides just “brainstorming.” In brief, students should have more knowledge about some other strategies that are available for them, in order to be successful while starting developing their essays.

In the question number ten of the questionnaire, students were asked to mention: What types of essays have they ever written about. The results are shown below on the following graph.

**Graph 11. What types of essays have you ever written about? Mark all that apply.**

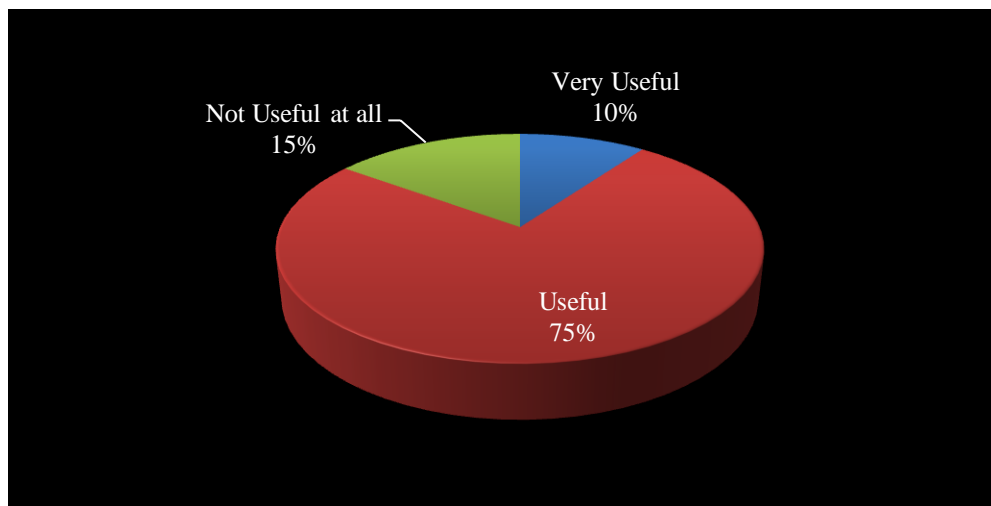


For this question 33% out of the total of the students answered that the majority of them have written a narrative essay. This result demonstrates that students are commonly taught and ask during most of the major at the faculty to write this type of essay. The second essay chosen by the students was the comparison/contrast essay. This result is somehow related to the previous one in which these are probably the only types of essays that students know how to write about, and how to develop by just taking into account two different situations and describe them. The third and fourth strategy chosen by the students were persuasion and the cause/effect essay. This result reflects that students are not asked to work on some other types of essays, and to take a real challenge to write using these types of essays. Finally, the last result showed that none of the students have ever written all the types of essays shown above, therefore at this stage of the major, and after all of the English subjects already taken, they are not capable to write using all of them

#### 4.1.5 Improvement subjects through the process of writing

For the question number twelve students were asked to mention: How useful have been the Target Languages I, II, III, IV, and V for them to improve the way they write an academic essay? The results are shown below on the following graph.

**Graph 12. How useful have been the Target Languages I, II, III, IV, and V for you to improve the way you write an academic essay?**

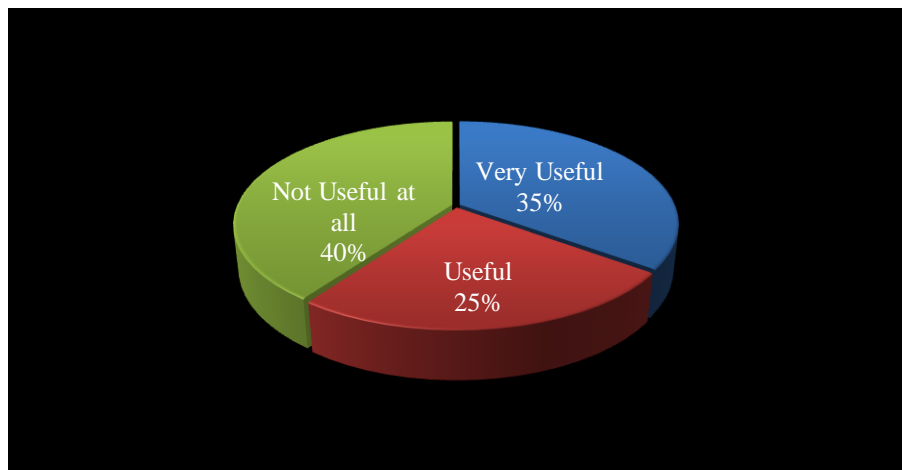


As the graph shown above only the 10% out of the total of the students answered that the Target Languages have been very useful for them to improve the way they write an academic essay. However, it is important to light out that all these subjects are the platform for the students when learning English academic skills. For the second chosen option more than half of the total number of students mentioned that the Target Languages have been useful subjects to improve the way they write academic essays. This result illustrate that some other students had during the major the tools and the basics to improve the way the write in order to become proficient when developing essays.

On the other hand, there is a 15% of the students that do not find these Target Languages subjects useful at all, this represent an issue because it reflects that students struggling when writing academic essay, and when trying to express themselves in some other types of writings.

In the question number thirteen, students were asked to mention: How useful have been the workshop III for them to improve and organize their academic writing strategies. The results are shown below.

**Graph 13. How useful have been the Workshop III, for you to improve and organize your academic writing strategies?**



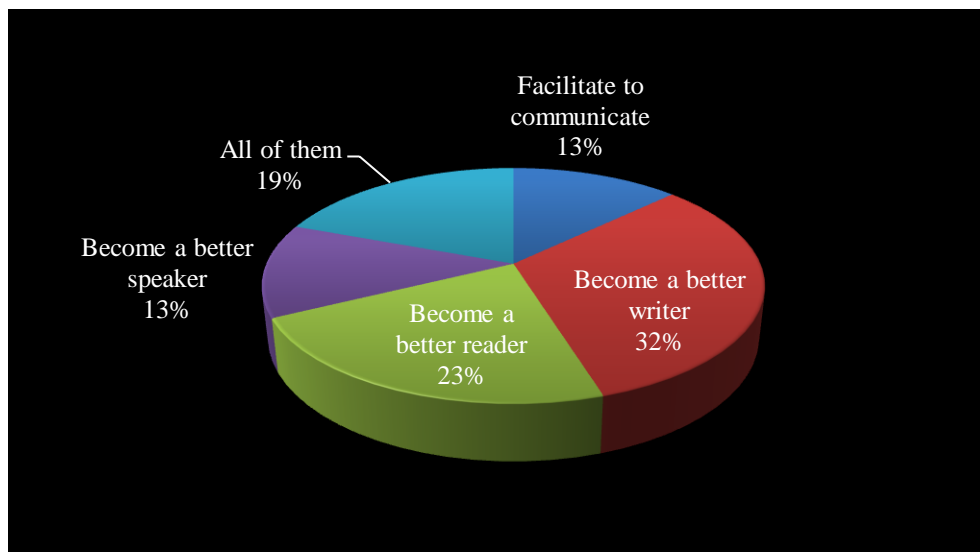
For this question 40% of the total of the students the majority mentioned that the workshop III has not been useful for them to improve and organize their academic strategies. This result implies that this subject that is supposed to be one of the most important of the major because the aim of taking this subject is to develop their writing skill as much as they can by learning how to write correctly, following patterns, grammar structures, develop their writing skills, to write any type of document, and of course how to use the academic writing skill, as a result, this is one of the few subjects that are really into a specific skill.

To the other hand the graph also shows that 35% of the total of the students mentioned that they find it very useful, that the subject help them through all this process of developing an essay. Finally, the last option chosen was that the workshops were useful which illustrates that some students did really take advantage of what teachers have been taught to them.

#### 4.1.6 Opinions towards the academic writing skill

The following presented question in the questionnaire has to do more with the fact of: What do they consider is the best advantage of learning how to write an academic essay. The results are shown below.

**Graph 14. Which one do you consider is the best advantage of learning how to write an academic essay? Mark all that apply**

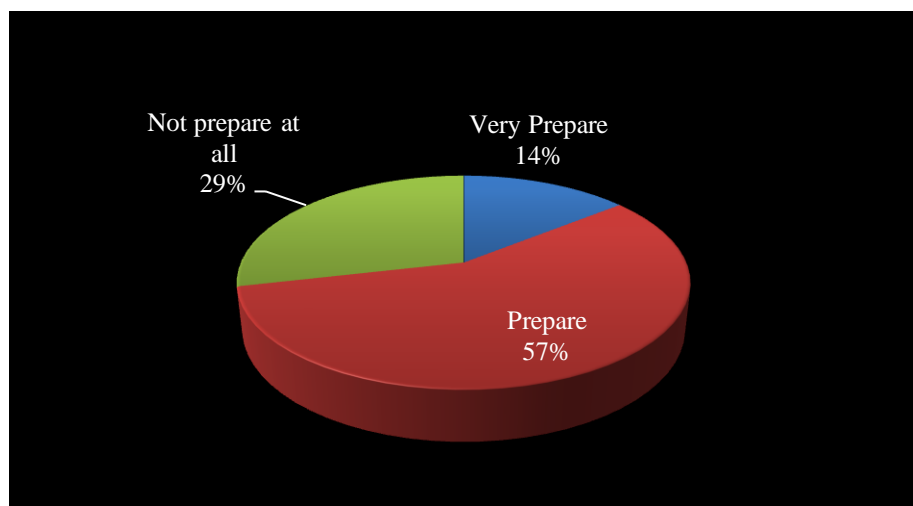


As it is observed in the graph 32% out of the total of the students mentioned that one of the best advantages of learning how to write an academic essay is the advantage of becoming a better writer. This result is due to the fact that for some students represent common sense since this question refers more to the developing of the writing skill.

On the other hand, the second advantage chosen by the student is related to become a better reader; it demonstrates how these two skills are related to each other as it has been stated previously. The other 13% of the students mentioned that some other advantages of learning how to write an academic essay are to facilitate to communicate and to become a better speaker. These answers are related to each one because both of them are about the way of communicating and expressing themselves. Finally, the 19% of the students mentioned that all of them are advantages for them when learning how to write an academic essay.

The last question is based in: How prepared students feel at this stage of the career to write an academic essay. The results are shown below on the following graph.

**Graph 15. At this point of the major how prepared are you to write an academic essay?**



The results revealed above in the graph number fifteen illustrates that 29% out of the total of the students do not feel prepared at all to write an academic essay. This result is important because as it has been previously stated most of the students do not even know how to plan an academic essay by first of all starting organizing their ideas.



On the other hand 14% of the students feel very prepared which reflects that these students are the ones who do know most of the writing skills, or probably they believe they are prepared since they never start step by step to organize their ideas and thoughts. Finally, the last option chosen by the students was that the 57% of the students feel just prepare to write an academic essay.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.0 Conclusion**

In the light of the previous discussion, it seems that writing strategies when acquiring English as a second language represent a difficult task for students to develop, due to the fact that students never focused directly on using them when starting developing an academic essay. It is also important to mention that these findings illustrate how teaching writing is not a simple task to teach, and to accomplish during the developing of the language learning process throughout the major. Consequently, students need some other extra tools in order to be successful during this academic writing process.

For this entire research, one of the most important conclusions that were obtained from this research is that the majority of BA in ELT students are not well prepared to develop an academic essay. This result was clearly reflected on the findings collected during the research. It is important to take into account that most of the students actually know what a writing strategy is, and the importance of using them when developing an academic essay, but what it is really interesting is why students do not consider important to use them when starting writing an essay; this is due to many reasons such as; students are not used to do it, or simple because students do not know that there are many others writing strategies that they could use, besides, the ones that they already know. However, the key point of these results is that students must know some other different writing strategies that encourage them to develop these types of academic writings.

The questionnaire presented during this whole research was an important tool for gathering the data throughout this research about how the use of writing strategies has been for students when developing an academic essay.

It is important to start by clarifying that students at this stage of the career should be able to be good at the four English skills that are speaking, listening, writing and reading. Therefore, one of those English skills that students should be good at is writing. However the findings illustrated that most of the students consider difficult to write in English.

Furthermore, I conclude that for BA in ELT students, it represents a difficult task to write an English academic essay by starting the process of using the writing strategies. Nevertheless; writing is an important and useful skill that students have to learn to develop in order to put into practice every time needed.

During the elaboration of this questionnaire, in the first part it was inferred the questions about the English skills in which students are good at. The following part inferred to the questions about the importance and the useful of the writing strategies. The third part of the questionnaire inferred more deeply to the questions about what are the writing strategies and the English essays that they are more familiar with. Finally, the last part inferred to the questions of how satisfied students feel with their academic performance throughout the career. All of these questions had it is own purpose for the research, therefore all of them were included as options in the questionnaire.

During the findings shown on the graphs, in the first part most of students consider themselves good at the writing skill, and also they consider this skill important.

According to these results it can be assumed that students clearly understand the importance of the writing skill during their career development.

To the next part of the questionnaire the findings reflected that even when they consider themselves good at the writing skill, they still consider difficult to write an academic essay, even though students consider it is important as well.

In the third part of the questionnaire the findings illustrate that students only used two of the writing strategies the most such as brainstorming, and listing. These results reflects that most of the students have been used these types of strategies, because some students did not know what were the other options about. However, the other options that not all the students choose are also as useful as the other ones. Also, it is important to mention what are the essays that students have written the most, because according to the essays that students have ever written about, it can be analyzed why students have picked certain writing strategies.

The findings shown on the graph illustrate that most of the students during the major have been asked to write the narrative essay, the comparison/ contrast essay and the cause/effect essay the most. Students only picked three out of the six options that they have, which means that students are just taught the basics academic essays, as the same as the basic strategies when developing one.

Another important part of the questionnaire applied shown some really interesting results about of how useful have been certain subjects that students have to take during the career such as; the Target Languages I, II, III, IV, and V that is related to the grammatical manners, and the Workshop I which is directly involved with the writing skill. These two questions are crucial because these two subjects are the main platform for students when acquiring English as a

second language. During gathering the data, the graphs illustrate that most of the students consider useful all the Target Languages taken during the major, which means that talking about grammatical issues there is no problem at all.

On the other hand, the findings illustrate that most of the students consider that the workshop was not useful at all. This finding show that the subjects that is supposed to help students to develop their writing skill is not useful at all, this answer can be directly connected to the fact that students previously answered that they find difficult to write in English which it is directly involved to the fact that students do not even use the strategies when developing an academic essay.

In the last part of the questionnaire applied inferred students to provide information about what are the advantages acquired when learning how to write an academic essay, and most of them just answer that the only advantage is to become a better writer and a better reader, without noticing that another important advantage is that it helps them to communicate due to the fact that students acquire confidence when expressing to others, also students acquire more vocabulary, as a result, students acquire more coherence when talking to other. Consequently this advantage is clearly related to the advantage of becoming a better speaker.

To conclude, writing is such important as the other three skills that students develop during the learning process. This active skills should be taken into account as the other by the teachers. Nevertheless, all this process not only has to do with the teacher performance, because students play the most important role, and they have to be involved even more into this learning process in order to make it meaningful.

## **5.1 Limitations**

The present research analyses the use of writing strategies when developing an English academic essay assignment. This is in order to find out the elements that students need to improve on their writing strategies skill.

For this purpose only one tool was implemented. However, this study took just a small community of out of the total of the students that attend to the English bachelor major.

Another limitation in this research is seen into the questionnaire in which it was consider that some questions may be more specific.

It is important to mention that as soon as you get the results of a questionnaire, more and more thoughts come to your mind which means that you would like to add even more questions to make the questionnaire and the results even more reliable, unfortunately this cannot be done at all, due to the fact that the time to do the whole research is not quite enough.

## **5.2 Contributions to teaching**

Through the process of learning a foreign language, students have to express in different ways therefore, writing is such an important skill such as the other three. In the previous statement it is important to restate that sometimes teachers do not encourage students to write any type of assignments nor essays. This is the best justification for students when expressing that writing in English represents a difficult task, and also how students do not even consider important the use of the English writing strategies when developing an academic essay. As a conclusion, students will be more prepared if teachers were even more compromised with the students when developing the English skills more deeply.

### **5.3 Further research**

It is important to mention that writing is an important skill that has to be taught from the beginning of the major to the end of the same. Also, it is essential to mention that most of the students are requesting and requiring for a better workshop that will definitely help them to develop accurately their writing skill. Also, it is important to relate these findings to the teachers. Professors at the university need to put an extra effort during the workshop, since workshops represent an important and an essential platform for students when acquiring English as a second language.

Professors should teach to the students some of other ways to help them to express better, in this case some other strategies besides the basic ones, and some other types of essays to the students in order to help students to pick the best strategy that they may feel comfortable with. In the first instance, it is important to mention that professors should promote the use of writing strategies when developing an essay with the purpose of help students to organize their ideas, and have a better understanding about the task they are going to develop later on. Also, professors should keep in mind that they should ask students for a challenge when writing an essay, the purpose of this will be that students will find that writing is not a difficult task at all when they know how to work well, also this will be an inspiration for them when trying to make things better. Therefore, the main purpose will be to work harder in order to polish English skills, not only the writing skill but all of them.

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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Male/ Female

Age

Semester

#### Instructions

Fill out the questionnaire below about the use of writing strategies in a second language acquisition when writing academic essays at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. Surveys help us to plan, to organize and to find out results that would make an improvement. Be sure to spend plenty of time to answer the questions as best as you can. Be as detailed as possible. Do not worry about your information, it will be completely anonymous. Please feel comfortable while answering it.

#### Questions

1. Which one do you consider is your best English skill? Mark all that apply.
  - a. Speaking
  - b. Listening
  - c. Writing
  - d. Reading
  - e. All
2. How important do you consider writing skill is?
  - a. Very important
  - b. Important
  - c. Not Important
3. Is it difficult for you to write an English academic essay?
  - a. Very difficult
  - b. Difficult
  - c. Easy
5. How important do you consider an academic essay is?
  - a. Very important
  - b. Important
  - c. Not Important
6. Do you know what a writing strategy is?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. How often do you use writing strategies when writing an essay?
  - a. Always
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Never
8. Do you consider that the use of writing strategies is essential for you to start writing an essay?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
9. What is the first step you do when developing an essay?
  - a. Use writing strategies
  - b. Start writing what pops on your mind

- c. Ask for help
  - d. Some other \_\_\_\_\_
9. The use of writing strategies has ever helped you to organize better your ideas?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
10. Do you use any of these strategies to plan an academic essay? Mark all that apply.
- a. Brainstorming
  - b. Listing
  - c. Outlining
  - d. Clustering
  - e. Free-writing
  - f. Asking Wh- Questions
  - g. Getting more Idea Through Discussion
  - h. All of them
11. What types of essay have you ever written about? Mark all that apply
- a. A Narrative Essay
  - b. A Classification Essay
  - c. A Comparison/ Contrast Essay
  - d. The Cause/ Effect Essay
  - e. Persuasion Essay
  - f. The Definition Essay
  - g. All of them
12. How useful have been the Target Languages I, II, III, IV, and V for you to improve the way you write an academic essay?
- a. Very useful
  - b. Useful
  - c. Not useful at all
13. How useful have been the Workshop III, for you to improve and organize your academic essay writing strategies?
- a. Very useful
  - b. Useful
  - c. Not useful at all
14. Which one do you consider is the best advantage of learning how to write an academic essay?
- a. Facilitate to communicate
  - b. Become a better writer
  - c. Become a better reader
  - d. Become a better speaker
  - e. All of them
15. At this stage of the major how prepared are you to write an academic essay?
- a. Very prepare
  - b. Prepare
  - c. Not prepare at all.