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Problems, challenges and difficulties of teaching English writing in basic education in public school: a case study.

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Resumen

Este trabajo es un estudio de la enseñanza y el proceso de escritura en inglés dentro del contexto de un aula de sexto grado de una escuela pública en Ecuador. El sector público fue seleccionado por su carácter gratuito, su accesibilidad a una amplia gama de estudiantes, así como su papel como base de la preparación docente. Las escuelas públicas reúnen a profesores experimentados, estudiantes de pedagogía y miembros de la comunidad involucrados en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, representando una muestra de la sociedad sobre las relaciones sociales en la realidad de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje. La investigación está respaldada por una perspectiva cualitativa y adopta el estudio de caso con observación no participante en el aula y entrevistas dirigidas como estrategia metodológica. El estudio informa sobre la experiencia de un profesor de inglés que ha trabajado profesionalmente durante diecisiete años en escuelas públicas y privadas. Pero se enfatiza en el sector público por el propósito del estudio. En última instancia, el objetivo principal es reconocer los desafíos, oportunidades y obstáculos generados por la enseñanza de la escritura con medios restringidos a clases numerosas. Los resultados iniciales revelan el uso rutinario de enfoques tradicionales, retroalimentación formativa inadecuada, falta de tiempo y presiones curriculares. Sin embargo, también se observan las estrategias del profesor para facilitar la participación y la presión ambiental.

Este estudio es útil para futuros docentes, responsables de políticas y reformadores de las tendencias generales del rendimiento académico de los estudiantes. La observación del aula, las entrevistas semiestructuradas y las notas de campo serán los métodos aplicados para recopilar datos sobre las estrategias del profesor, la participación de los estudiantes, así como la relación

entre la acción pedagógica y los propósitos curriculares. Los resultados se analizarán temáticamente, lo que permitirá una exploración matizada de la enseñanza y la práctica de la escritura en este entorno particular.

Palabras clave*: EFL, enseñanza de la escritura en inglés, escuelas públicas, retos pedagógicos, estrategias docentes.*

Abstract

This work is a study of the teaching and writing process in English within the context of a sixth-grade classroom in a public school in Ecuador. The public sector was selected for its free nature, its accessibility to a wide range of students, as well as its role as the foundation for teacher preparation. Public schools bring together experienced teachers, pedagogy students, and community members involved in teaching and learning, representing a sample of society regarding social relationships in the reality of teaching and learning. The research is supported by a qualitative perspective and adopts the case study with non-participant classroom observation and guided interviews as the methodological strategy. The study reports on the experience of an English teacher who has worked professionally for seventeen years in both public and private schools. However, the emphasis is placed on the public sector due to the purpose of the study. Ultimately, the main objective is to recognize the challenges, opportunities, and obstacles generated by teaching writing with limited resources in large classes. Initial results reveal the routine use of traditional approaches, inadequate formative feedback, lack of time, and curricular pressures. However, the teacher's strategies to facilitate participation and cope with environmental pressure are also observed.

This study is useful for future teachers, policymakers, and reformers of general trends in student academic performance. Classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and field notes will be the methods applied to collect data on the teacher's strategies, student participation, as well as the relationship between pedagogical action and curricular purposes. The results will be analyzed thematically, allowing for a nuanced exploration of teaching and writing practice in this particular setting.

Keywords: *EFL, English writing instruction, public schools, pedagogical challenges, teaching strategies.*

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Introduction

Today, English is widely acknowledged as one of the major languages of the world and plays a crucial role in the world's communication, knowledge, and job market. Amidst a globalized world, English ability is a competitive edge and a matter of educational policy. Its popularity notwithstanding, English competency in Ecuador is low. The country also ranks low in proficiency, 82 (out of 116) in the EF English Proficiency Index, which places the country in the low proficiency grouping (Education First, 2024). This illustrates a big shortcoming between the missions of the educational system and the acquired competencies, especially in the public service. As a result, the Ministry of Education of Ecuador has undertaken curriculum changes for the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a balanced way within the parameters of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

Among these competencies, writing is the least developed since its teaching involves process-oriented approaches, ample time, personalized feedback, and the capacity to organize and to communicate meaning beyond mere grammatical knowledge (Barre-Parrales & Villafuerte-Holguín, 2021).

In the Ecuadorian context, and particularly in public educational institutions, the application of this ideology confronts structural obstacles. Most classes are 35-40 students, which makes it challenging to give students individual attention or effectively implement communicative techniques. Besides, the absence of didactic materials, the low number of class hours, and the poor teacher training accentuate the situation (Monzón, 2021). Given this, to appreciate matters of how writing is introduced in English, one would need to investigate teachers' teaching practice in its authentic setting. The study recommends a qualitative case study of a sixth-grade English class in a public school taught by a 17-year experienced teacher in public and private schools. The research also seeks to understand in situ classroom strategies and challenges, and the potential for improving writing teaching in Ecuadorian schools.

As a result, the teaching of writing in the English classroom needs to draw on a situated and contextual account to respond to the actual workings of the classroom, not what is outlined in the curriculum. In this context, this research aims to offer empirical data on how teachers can face this task in real settings, emphasizing both the structural constraints and the pedagogical devices that emerge in a high-reliability situation. With the selective attention to a sixth-grade public school classroom, the research intends to be a contribution to thinking about teacher education, curriculum practices, along the general enhancement of writing instruction in EFL settings in Ecuador.

Problem identification.



One of the many problems affecting public education in Ecuador today is classroom overcrowding. This problem is due to a combination of limited educational resources, a lack of trained instructors, and ineffective organization and distribution of students across different schools. In these circumstances, teachers often find themselves in difficult situations for which they are unprepared. However, in large classes, it is almost impossible to give each student as much attention as they need. We all know that every student is different, with their own strengths, areas for improvement, learning preferences, and challenges. But the pace can be overwhelming for teachers who are unable to offer individualized attention or immediate feedback to students in a class of several dozen or more. Students may then feel "abandoned," unmotivated, and unable to progress in their learning. This lack of individual support is especially problematic for writing, which needs to be closely tutored and critiqued. Therefore, overcrowded classes seem to act as a significant "intermediary" between the objectives of the English as a foreign language curriculum and student learning and achievement.

Importance of the study

In Ecuador, English is perceived as a powerful tool that opens the doors to global communication and provides new opportunities for personal, academic, and professional growth. Of the four language skills, writing is one of the most important. It is one of the most important skills to develop and master as part of English language learning objectives. Furthermore, according to Bora (2023), writing encourages students to improve their thinking and imagination, as it allows them to put their thoughts into writing, record their ideas, and reflect on previous

experiences. Unlike oral expression, when writing, students can express and then review their thoughts and language, as well as structure information in a clear and meaningful way, which helps productive vocabulary to be remembered more easily.

However, here in Ecuadorian public education, we face numerous problems that lead to deficiencies in writing skills. When classrooms are overcrowded, resources are insufficient, and teacher training is inadequate, it is difficult for teachers to comply with the curriculum. This research is important because it offers a reality-based perspective on how these problems affect the teaching of writing in English classrooms. Its findings can guide curriculum developers, teacher training institutions, and policymakers in identifying where the gap currently lies between what the curriculum demands and what is practical in public schools. Finally, by addressing certain aspects of the English curriculum, this study offers a contribution to all English teachers in Ecuador at the university level, with the aim of identifying areas that require urgent attention and assistance.

Main Research Question: ¿How do teachers cope with the problems, challenges, and difficulties that they face when they teach writing in a large class in basic education in public schools?

Sub-questions:

What are the problems that teachers face when they teach writing in a large class in basic education in public schools?

What are the challenges and difficulties that teachers face when they teach writing in a large class in basic education in public schools?

How do large classes influence teachers' strategies and student engagement in writing classes?

Objectives:

To understand how teachers cope with the problems, challenges, and difficulties that they face when they teach writing in a large class in basic education in public schools

Specific

To identify the problems that teachers face when they teach writing in a large class in basic education in public schools

To identify the challenges and difficulties that teachers face when they teach writing in a large class in basic education in public schools

To analyze how large classes influence teachers' strategies and students' engagement in writing classes in basic education in public schools

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Studies

To obtain a more detailed view of the problems, challenges, and difficulties faced in teaching writing in large classes of English as a foreign language. A problem refers to the

systematic, structural, or outside condition that hinders educational goals, such as lack or limited resources, poor teaching training, and unrealistic curriculum goals (Chappell & Voykhansky, 2022). A challenge, in contrast, is a task that tests our abilities and requires adaptations, or innovative strategies to overcome, such as motivating students or meeting curricular standards (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). Finally, a difficulty is a practical obstacle that is difficult to understand for us and impedes the development of a class, such as limited individualization or providing feedback (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). This would help us to differentiate the following studies, which were selected for their contextual relevance and thematic compatibility with the present study. Priority has been given to the study by Sevy-Biloon, Recino, & Muñoz (2020), as it closely resembles the Ecuadorian educational context and is therefore highly informative about the effects of class size on the implementation of the national English as a foreign language curriculum. This local perspective is essential for understanding the broader issue, considering national policy, and teachers' experiences. Next, Jokhio et al. (2020) provide a comparative perspective from Pakistan, expanding on the argument that the challenges faced by Ecuadorian teachers are not specific to Ecuador but are part of a broader global situation. Although it is another country and university, it highlights some of the common problems of classroom control, lack of feedback, and adaptation to overcrowded classrooms. Finally, Ogunyemi's (2022) quantitative research provides empirical data from Nigeria demonstrating the impact of class size on the quality of student writing and feedback. By applying a qualitative perspective to the empirical findings, this study offers new evidence to support the argument that large class sizes are an obstacle to writing development. These studies form a continuum—from a national policy perspective to a broader, international, evidence-based view—showing that the

pattern of difficulties tends to resemble the reality described in Ecuadorian public schools. This triangulated perspective not only legitimizes the approach of the present study but also underscores the global importance of the problem, thus providing a solid justification for examining how writing instruction is addressed in sixth-grade classrooms in Ecuador.

Specifically addressing teachers' challenges to implement the national curriculum, Sevy-Biloon et al. (2020) studied some of the factors that influence EFL instruction in Ecuador. Using classroom observation and round-table discussion as its main instruments, public school EFL teachers were the participants of the study. The discussions were transcribed and analyzed with the MAXQDA software; the software gave the possibility to code and find potential categories. Teaching, learning, and managerial staff by class size (other multipliers). The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of class size, among others, on the teaching and learning activities. Most teachers said that having larger class sizes led to reduced quality of instruction and student performance.

This study is relevant to our present research because it highlights the overcrowded settings that most Ecuadorian teachers face. An issue that affects the quality of learning English, especially in writing. While Sevy-Biloon et al. (2020) explored the broad impact of class size on instruction, this study builds on their findings, narrowing the focus to the writing skill considered important in terms of scaffolding, feedback, and process-oriented approach. Thus, the insights of this research provide an understanding of how systemic factors such as class size exacerbate the challenges that teachers face in implementing the writing thread of the national curriculum in Ecuador.

Jokhio, Raza, Younus, and Soomro (2020) is a qualitative study on the theme of writing skills in large classes at the university level in Pakistan. The purpose of this was to explore the common problems and coping strategies used by teachers of EFL in handling their ESL students. There were nine university instructors recruited in this study who participated in in-depth interviews, and they came from public and private universities. Analysis of the data indicated that a 'big' class in the Pakistani context may be one with 30-35 pupils. The issues included a loss of classroom management, difficulty keeping noise volume down in class, and interruptions in giving feedback on assignments and grading students. In response to these problems, some staff employed tactics such as peer assessment and peer feedback, as they were perceived as realistic ways to lighten the marking load and promote student involvement. Tasks related were recommended as an activity for reducing noise levels and increasing engagement. Teachers also noted the need to monitor student behavior and pare down their instruction to reflect the needs of children who may be mixed ability.

Even though the research was carried out in another country and at a higher level of education, the results are equally applicable to the EFL scenario in Ecuador. Some of the same challenges—especially not having enough time and space to give feedback in big classes—also impede the teaching of writing in Ecuadorian public schools. This investigation confirms that the number of students per class directly affects the teaching and learning of writing skills, which supports the present inquiry that seeks to know when and in which way those problems become evident in a primary school class in Ecuador.

Ogunyemi (2022) examined the quantitative influence of class size on student performance in writing in the Nigerian context. This study, which focused on essays written by secondary school students, analyzed the difference between small and large classes from an educational perspective. As a result, the difference in writing grades between small and large classes was investigated. It was found that students in smaller classes performed better on tests and had higher-quality written expression than students in larger classes. The increase was due to the greater quantity and quality of feedback that teachers were able to provide in smaller classes. So, it reflects the problems present in the Ecuadorian public school system, where overcrowded classrooms prevent teachers from providing personalized writing instruction. Ogunyemi's reflections highlighted the importance of class size and student participation in the different stages of writing, not just in revision and receiving feedback. The study shows how overcrowded classrooms, which are impossible to manage, invariably hinder solid writing instruction in primary and secondary schools.

These findings have direct implications for the present study because they provide strong evidence on the detrimental impact of large class size on writing instruction with respect to teacher feedback and student development. Even when the study was done in a separate region, the research adds evidence to the claim that the crammed classrooms - the situation a basic education student in Ecuador is facing- have a lot of obstacles for the development of writing proficiency in EFL contexts.

Theoretical Framework for Teaching Writing in Large EFL Classrooms

Teaching writing in large EFL classrooms, particularly in Ecuadorian public schools, presents a set of pedagogical, cognitive, and logistical challenges. To understand and address these factors, this study is grounded in four interrelated perspectives that are: the Ecuadorian EFL curriculum, teaching writing in the EFL context, writing theories, and challenges, problems, and difficulties in implementing writing in large EFL classrooms. These frameworks state how writing is taught, acquired, supported, and learned in environments where the size of the class, the limited periods of time, and poor training for teachers create obstacles to effective instruction. Each theory or article provides a scope of the real demands of writing as both a cognitive activity and a social process, emphasizing the importance of scaffolding, feedback, and student-centered strategies. All form a comprehensive understanding of the disconnection between Ecuador's curriculum outcomes and the realities that most public teachers face in overcrowded classrooms. Aligned directly with the focus of this study.

The Ecuadorian EFL Curriculum

The Ecuadorian EFL curriculum is the official framework provided and used by the Ministry of Education that defines what students are expected to learn in English as a foreign language at each grade in the national education system. The curriculum is organized into five main language skills threads: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and language through the arts, presented in terms of language use and vocabulary (Ministerio de Educación 2016). Each thread is organized to ensure a balanced development of communicative skills where students are expected to integrate receptive and productive abilities. For instance, the listening thread

emphasizes understanding oral input in different contexts; the speaking thread focuses on oral production and interaction; the reading thread highlights comprehension of texts and vocabulary construction; the writing thread promotes the expression of ideas and the organization of thoughts through written language; and the language through the arts thread that integrates cultural awareness into learning. As one, these threads aim to provide a comprehensive foundation of English acquisition in the company of the CEFR.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR**)**, an international standard used to describe language proficiency through a scale that reflects the level of English. The CEFR includes six levels, ranging from A1 (beginner) to C2 (mastery). In our country, the CEFR has an increasing contribution to enhancing the curriculum process as well as the progress of sixth graders in Educación General Básica Media, which is our focus and objective, so students are expected to attain a level of A1. As stated in the national curriculum, *"the English language curriculum for Educación General Básica and Bachillerato is based on the CEFR standards, and by the end of 7th grade, students are expected to reach A1 level"* (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016, p. 13).

At this stage, the curriculum aims to develop the four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing in an integrated manner. As stated in the national document, *"the development of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) must be approached in an integrated way"* (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016, p. 15). Listening is developed through exposure to comprehensible, adaptive audio and conversations for the target level, allowing students to grasp vocabulary and simple expressions. Speaking is encouraged through

role plays, pair work, and guided interactions designed to build confidence in oral production and different real situations. Reading focuses on helping students to recognize and understand short written texts with visual aids, promoting vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. Writing, on the other hand, is a complex skill that focuses on the production of simple sentences used to describe routines or emotions, identifying the correct and appropriate vocabulary.

Although all these skills are important and must be integrated into the class, writing deserves more attention in terms of complexity. Writing is not only a means of communication but also a tool for reinforcing grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. Since, as Flower and Hayes (1981) argue, “Writing processes have a hierarchical, highly embedded organization, any process can be embedded in another” (p. 366), highlighting how writing involves a complex, recursive orchestration of planning, translating, and revising rather than a simple linear sequence. For that reason, writing is considered important and relevant for this study, which is focused on our context.

Teaching Writing in the EFL Ecuadorian Context

In Ecuador, teaching writing must be guided and aligned with the objectives that the Ministry of Education promotes. These objectives are related to the CEFR and each level of education. At the primary level, students should achieve the A1 level, which includes the ability to write short and simple texts, personal descriptions, daily routines, and short messages (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). These abilities are obtained through different approaches stated in the curriculum, such as communicative and integrated skills, encouraging teachers to develop

writing skills alongside speaking, reading, and listening.

However, the reality is that the writing teaching process remains a product-oriented approach, focusing on grammatical accuracy and sentence organization rather than the process of imagination, idea generation, drafting, and planning (Abata, Chicaiza, & Parra, 2019). Several factors contributed to this mismatch between the reality of the classrooms with the perspective of the curriculum. Large class sizes, limited resources, and time constraints frequently prevent teachers from applying process-oriented writing strategies, such as peer feedback, collaborative writing, or multiple drafting stages (Sevy-Biloon, Recino, & Muñoz, 2020). Indeed, teachers start feeling stressed and overwhelmed due to the absence of capacitation or insufficient training in innovative writing pedagogies, leading them to rely on traditional methods that prioritize correctness over creativity and communication (Vásquez, 2022). For that reason, teachers as well find it difficult when they have one or more students who require special attention or a student with special needs.

The Challenge of Inclusive Education in Overcrowded Classrooms

Teachers in public schools are often required to cover all the necessities of each student, especially those students who require academic adaptations in a vulnerable context. Teachers should guarantee the inclusion of students and the recognition of their diverse needs. In this sense, inclusive education frameworks and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) emphasize the obligation for teachers and parents to create and adapt activities that help them to learn in their own way and pace CAST, n.d).

These ethical challenges become more common in class, where vulnerability is more present with limited resources and overcrowded classrooms. For instance, a study by Padmore and Ali (2022) highlights that facilitators in overcrowded classrooms struggle to implement differentiated instruction due to factors such as large class sizes, lack of resources, and insufficient support from educational authorities. So, this reinforces the idea of how students with different needs are not considered as much as teachers want. This is because of the time constraints, the pressure to cover all the class, and maintain engagement with the other students.

Writing Theories

When we are teaching writing, we can have theories that are present in the process of writing, such as the cognitive process theory of writing, the process-oriented approach, and the product approach to writing. These theories are employed to fit the necessities of students and adapted to enhance the process of writing.

Cognitive Process Theory of Writing

The Cognitive Process of Writing, a theory proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981), states the importance of writing as a complex process involving three main activities: planning, translating, and reviewing. In the planning stage, the writer brainstorms different ideas that they want to communicate, organizes them in a clear and coherent way, and establishes clear writing goals that help to understand and produce written texts. In the translating stage, they convert all the ideas behind into a coherent written language. And finally, the reviewing part, writers evaluate their own work looking for possible mistakes that could appear, if the text is coherent

and has a relation between the main idea and necessary revisions to improve.

These processes do not occur in a linear way. Instead, writers move back and forward between them as they develop their texts. These three components are guided by what Flower and Hayes called the monitor, a cognitive mechanism that helps maintain the order between the previous phases: planning, translating, and reviewing. This role helps writers to maintain their focus, reflecting on their own work and making decisions during the writing process.

In the Ecuadorian context, the cognitive process theory is perfectly aligned with the aspirations of the curriculum, which sees writing as a recursive process involving planning, drafting, and revising in practice (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Nevertheless, in practice, many teachers struggle to engage students throughout these stages, due to the limited class time and large class size (Sevy-Biloon et al., 2020). For instance, sixth-grade learners are expected to produce short, coherent texts by planning their ideas, expressing them in simple sentences, and finally revising for clarity. However, teachers find it difficult to provide individualized feedback to each student and guide them through all the phases, especially in the reviewing parts, which is crucial to check mistakes and coherence due to the high number of students per classroom. As Yang (2021) highlights, large EFL writing classes make it particularly challenging for teachers to deliver timely and detailed feedback, which limits students' opportunities to improve their drafts effectively. As a result, instructions tend to be more superficial and not deeper into the cognitive aspects of writing, such as the development of ideas and coherence, which Flower and Hayes (1981) emphasized as central to effective writing. This gap from the theory to the classroom reality shows the necessity of adapting process-oriented strategies to address the main concerns

of the Ecuadorian public education.

The Process-Oriented Approach to Writing

In contrast, the process approach to writing holds that writing is an iterative, multi-step process that includes pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Raimes, 1983; Badger & White, 2000). Unlike traditional models that emphasize accuracy and repetition, this approach encourages learns to explore more options, such as employing their creativity, exploring different ways of organizing them, and gradually refining their texts through multiple drafts. Reflection during the pre-writing and revising stages allows students to connect their ideas with the language structures that they want to express, enhancing critical thinking as well as linguistic accuracy. Moreover, this approach is beneficial for sixth-grade learners who are starting to write independently and require conjugating the language, structures, and vocabulary to produce longer texts and build confidence in them. However, in the case of large classes, applying this method is difficult. Some teachers simply do not have the time or resources to guide students through the revision process or provide them with meaningful feedback at different stages. As Nia & Fithriani (2023) point out, “challenges in teaching large writing classes include individual assessment, class management, lack of experience, and lack of space, facilities, and resources,” which makes it difficult for teachers to support students throughout all phases of the writing process.

This viewpoint is especially pertinent for the setting of sixth-grade pupils in this study. Students are still developing the cognitive abilities required for writing assignments at this stage

of development. Especially when classroom circumstances, such as large class sizes and limited individualized help, limit opportunities for feedback, many battle with organizing ideas, keeping coherence, and successfully revising. Recognizing writing as a cognitive process emphasizes the need to give systematic direction that helps students manage the several demands of writing, even in difficult academic environments.

The Product Approach to Writing (Traditional Perspective)

This traditional model, as described by Nunan (1989), highlights the importance of creating written texts that are accurate in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and structure. Indeed, the teacher provides model paragraphs or sentences with the intention that students can reply in the same way, imitating the vocabulary, the format, the connotation, the organization, and style. Writing is considered a linear process, where the aim is to produce a final, polished product that conforms to established lingual standards. Due to its repetition, this model is considered traditional and aligned with the behaviorist theories of learning, which regard knowledge as something transmitted directly from teacher to student. The role of the student in this approach is passive in the ability to replicate the teacher's model rather than to generate ideas. While this method may help to internalize and fossilize structures, it often neglects the development of creativity, critical thinking in the nature of writing.

In Ecuadorian public schools, where time is scarce and classes are big, the product method remains popular even though there have been changes in the curriculum that support more interactive and process-focused approaches. According to Abata, Chicaiza, and Parra

(2019), many EFL teachers in Ecuador continue to rely on the product approach due to its familiarity and practicality, particularly when dealing with large class sizes and time constraints. This reinforces the idea of how teachers still use a traditional approach to teach writing in big classes.

Challenges, problems, and difficulties in teaching writing in large EFL classrooms

Overcrowded Classrooms and Limited Individualization

One of the most significant challenges of Ecuadorian public schools is dealing with more than 30 or even 40 students. This overcrowding limits the teacher's ability to offer personalized feedback and help to each student. According to a study conducted by the National University of Education (UNAE), the optimal student-teacher ratio is 15 to 20 students per teacher, which allows for more effective attention and higher educational quality (UNAE, 2020). Nevertheless, many schools surpass this number, making it difficult for teachers to implement effective strategies and meet the needs of each student in class.

In practice, large class size forces teachers to rely on just a comment for the class or generalized comments instead of tailoring feedback to each student. This absence of individualized feedback can hinder their progress in terms of accuracy and fluency, as they receive few opportunities for corrections and scaffolding. Moreover, limited individualization affects students who need special attention or different capabilities, but they are overlooked in an overcrowded classroom due to time constraints (Wang et al., 2023).

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Motivating Students in Writing Tasks

Motivation plays a critical role in overcrowded settings due to the facility of students can get distracted and disengaged from the class. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), learners are more engaged and likely to be part of the activities when they experience autonomy, competency, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the EFL context, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) employs an important help with the use of real-world task that allow students to choose how to work, providing clear goals and outcomes that they can achieve completing the activity, and enable interaction and collaboration with their classmates that capture each student with tasks that are more related with their daily basis fostering intrinsic motivation while students are engaged. Ellis, R. (2003).

In our context, research has discovered that most of the time tasks fail to engage and motivate student's environment due to the repetition of the tasks. For instance, Bora (2023) notes that students get bored with the activities that are not related to their preferences or just focuses on applying the same grammar structures without new changes or things. As well as Soto, Espinosa Cevallos, and Rojas Encalada (2025) states that motivation in primary and secondary EFL education has not been researched or there are no records of motivation specially in overcrowded settings. So that reinforces the idea of how teacher should try to adapt materials that the government does not provide and adapt for students in order that they can get engaged with the activity, and appropriate for their level.

Time Constraints and Curriculum Pressure Demands

Another major problem in implementing the writing component of the EFL is the lack of sufficient instructional time. Teachers report that the pressure to cover all units and outcomes from the curriculum forces them to just cover the surface and not go deeper into it. According to Villafuerte et al. (2020), Ecuadorian teachers often struggle to balance mandated curricular content with the realities of the classroom, resulting in shortened or skipped stages of the writing process. So, this means that the outcomes of the curriculum that need to be completed with stages of pre-writing, revision, or peer-feedback are skipped due to the time constraint. As a result, students struggle with these constraints, leading them to not get exposed to the language and not achieve the instructional goals from the curriculum.

In the Ecuadorian context, this issue starts to become more evident in public education, where teachers do their best to accomplish curricular demands and, at the same time, manage overcrowded classrooms. In fact, a recent mixed-methods study involving 113 primary school EFL teachers across Ecuador found that teachers perceived the curriculum as an innovative guideline with structured objectives and outcomes, but they encountered substantial barriers during the implementation. These obstacles such as Overcrowded classrooms, low-quality technological tools, limited teacher experience, and insufficient pedagogical material. All these factors hinder the development of process-oriented approaches, especially with writing (Álvarez et al., 2025).

Insufficient Training and Support

A difficulty that teachers face when they are teaching writing is the lack of training and

professional support by part of the government. In overcrowded settings, teachers not only need to manage students' behavior, but they also need to apply and adapt different methodologies such as process writing, scaffolding, and personalized feedback. As Hyland (2019) points out, effective writing instructions need to be complemented with specialized pedagogical knowledge, including strategies that can help students go through the writing steps. Without this training, teachers tend to leave behind with traditional approach that suggests complete books or grammar drills due to the huge number of students and the limited time for teaching.

In the Ecuadorian context, the curriculum provides a set of guidelines that teachers follow; however, these difficulties are compounded by gaps in pre-service and in-service training for EFL teachers. Villafuerte et al. (2020) indicate that many Ecuadorian teachers do not receive sufficient methodological preparation to address these types of problems that public education confronts. In addition, Sevy-Biloon et al. (2020) stand out that many Ecuadorian teachers have inadequate training specifically in writing pedagogy, and institutions tend to get short with support. As a result, even though the curriculum promotes the integration of new approaches, methodologies, or activities that can help teachers to achieve the level that we want in our students, teachers are alone when it comes to training themselves or suggesting adjustments that could help not only them, but also other teachers who may be suffering the same situation in their classroom.

Parental influence/interference in EFL classrooms

Another difficulty that teachers face when they are applying their class is how parents

interfere in the EFL context, which can range from well-intentioned support to unhelpful intervention, leading to discord between parents and teachers. For instance, Ahmed (2021) found that in rural schools in Pakistan, teachers often perceive parents as reluctant to collaborate, and sometimes they blame parents for their collaboration in the process of learning in their kids. This creates a conflict between parents and teachers because they are not focused on the learning progress of their kids.

In our context, parental pressure may restrict teachers from making decisions in their progress of learning or adapting instructional content in benefit of their students. Although investigations are scarce on this phenomenon, Ahmed's (2021) findings are instructive to have an overview of what is happening: teachers may feel constrained or scrutinized by parents who insist that learning stick strictly to the textbook. This reduces your expectations and introduces new materials for your students: *"Parents say, 'It wasn't even in the book… why did I add other verbs that weren't even in the book?'".* Thus, parental interference emerges as an external pressure in which teachers cannot employ new tasks or extra materials for them due to parental pressure. This, with other factors like overcrowded classrooms, limits teachers from employing new tasks.

Teacher overload in EFL public education

Another difficulty that teachers face is the exhaustion that teachers experience when teaching overcrowded classes can lead to high levels of stress, lack of motivation, and a reduction of hours of rest. A study by Majeed et al (2025) identified key difficulties faced by

teachers in overcrowded classrooms, including limited mobility, reduced student engagement, and excessive workload for the teachers. So, this emphasizes how teachers are exposed to high levels of stress and workload, with other problems that directly affect the quality of instruction.

In the Ecuadorian context, teachers must sacrifice their mental health to meet the demands of institutions. A study conducted in Santo Domingo revealed that teachers in public institutions are exposed to chronic stress due to the huge number of students per class, inadequate materials or absence, and constant pressure to accomplish administrative tasks (García Lino, 2020). Teachers are going through these difficulties that affect their way of instruction, pushed to their limits to provide a quality education without considering the consequences for themselves. Moreover, the lack of institutional support and poor working conditions lead to the achievement of student outcomes provided by the government.

METHODOLOGY

Research paradigm

This study is based on the interpretivist research paradigm, which seeks to understand how individuals see, feel, and interpret their social realities. Interpretivism, unlike positivism, focuses on the subjective nature of individual experiences and how these experiences are perceived, as well as the context in which individuals give meaning to their lives. This interpretive framework is well-suited to exploring the experiences of teachers in a public elementary school, as it allows the researcher to bring out the complexity and depth of the participants' worldviews and individual experiences. Healy and Perry (2000) state that interpretivism will seek to discover how the people being researched make sense of their world,

which will be appropriate for the thematic focus of this study: the challenges and coping strategies of teachers in teaching writing in large classes.

According to Nasrin Pervin and Mahani Mokhtar (2022) strong point of the interpretivist paradigm is that researchers can apply their various perspectives on events, objects, or individuals to not only describe them but also to gain a deep understanding of them within their social and cultural settings. This is based on their belief that they share common systems of belief within their community. At the same time, these paradigms showcase how individuals interpret the world from their own perspective, depending on their experiences, social setting, and background. Therefore, reality is not universal; it is subjectively influenced by the individual's background and socially constructed, molded by individuals' interactions and personal experiences.

Many theorists and scholars criticized the interpretivist paradigm for its subjective notions, beliefs, and perspectives of participants. Yanow (2006) discusses that the belief in their own context is so convincing for interpretivists that sometimes they overlook how individual perceptions are powerful and how they can be biased when they interpret their subjective ideas. Regardless of whether these interpretivists accept as true with that facts cannot be accrued or eliminated from context, and as such, the knowledge is rebuilt and regenerated (Denzin et al, 2014).

One of the advantages that the interpretivist paradigm offers is that scholars can use their diverse perspectives on phenomena to not just portray objects, people, or events, but to gain an understanding of them in their sociocultural contexts because they have a shared belief system in

the society they are living in (Tuli, 2010). We hope to obtain information from the reality of public education, reflecting the interpretivist belief that understanding is constructed through shared meaning and observation.

Lastly, the interpretivist paradigm is the best choice for this research as it supports the research focus by exploring an individual's experience and own frame of angle, with this interpretation we hope to understand the phenomena of problems, challenges, and difficulties of teaching writing in a large classroom size basic education with an ethical and empathetic consideration of the study as well as to provide valuable insight of the data collected. By adopting this paradigm, the study provides a comprehensive account of the realities faced by a public-school teacher in Ecuador. The interpretivist paradigm chosen enhances the qualitative nature of our study and provides a robust framework for exploring the teacher's perspective within her specific context.

Type of Research

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach considering that this type of research has a major focus on the participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior. Nonetheless, it answers the how or why of a phenomenon, searching for in-depth and complex answers as opposed to technical numerical answers such as how many or how much.

Qualitative research is humanistic According to (Zireva, 2013) the human aspect is preserved by presenting data in the participant's own words. Expressing data in words is referred to as their perspective on a piece of writing or verbatim which becomes a clear proof of participants' views. It emphasizes the perspectives of all the involved participants which are

directly quoted for integrity purposes. It is apparent that qualitative research is humanistic and its focus is the discovery of theories from collected data. (p15)

A qualitative descriptive case study aims to provide a rich and contextualized understanding of participants' experiences, based on what they perceive and experience. Therefore, this study collects data on the phenomena in their natural settings focusing on collecting, evaluating, and describing non-numerical data. 'It is a phenomenological inquiry which uses a naturalistic approach"(Shava et al.,2019).

Research method

A case study is a methodological research approach used to gain an in-depth understanding of a contemporary issue or phenomenon in a bounded system. Case study research requires in-depth investigation conducted into an individual, group, or event to gain an understanding of a real-life phenomenon (Coombs, H. 2022). The case study centers on grasping all the reality and background of the topic of investigation. This gathers this information via interviews observations and documents; the focus is to gather insights and a deep comprehension understanding of the situation as well as provide further knowledge and theory in that field of study. As mentioned, the study is centered around one case event and situation directed toward one individual being and phenomenon in other words a bounded system.

A qualitative perspective is used to investigate, analyze, and confirm information about a specific phenomenon in Ecuador. The choice of a single case study to focus on the experiences and perceptions of a single teacher. "The researcher must consider what type of case study will best answer the research" (Patnaik & Pandey, 2019, p. 166).

In case studies, we have two different types of case studies that help to researcher according to the nature of the investigation. Therefore, we need to analyze and examine the possibilities and main factors that can affect our investigation and the purpose of our investigation. As this research explores the experience and perception of a single teacher, the most appropriate single case study was selected for this research; in particular, a descriptive case study design was adopted because it attempts to present a complete description of a phenomenon within its context as it takes place.

In-depth interviews are our basis to get a closer understanding of what the teacher wants to transmit regarding their experience and knowledge. According to Legard et al (2003) “In-depth, interviews are the importance of talking to people to grasp their point of view, and personal accounts are seen as having central importance in social research”. Depth, interviews are considered a normal conversation but with a unique purpose and a clear objective.

Techniques and instruments for data collection

Data collection employed observation, field notes, and in-depth interviews to enrich our investigation and to gather more data from the class. Field notes were taken to capture teaching strategies for writing, challenges in the classroom, and students' interest when they produce writing over a period of five weeks. Observations were conducted during one complete class per week, focusing on the dynamics of teaching practices in real-time, the teacher instructions, students’ engagement, and how teacher provides feedback. Finally, in depth- interviews with the teacher help us to gather personal insights concerning his experiences, problems, and techniques related to teaching writing in a large class setting. These interviews were semi structured and open ended to gather more data from the teacher. The methods used in this study gave very rich

qualitative data that helped paint a rather thick description of the classroom setting and its associated practices.

Participants

Participants in this study include one single public-school teacher and a total of 32 students from a classroom in Gualaceo, Ecuador. The teacher was selected through purposive sampling based on their experience in teaching English writing in large classrooms in public field as well as in private institutions, while the students' participation was observed to gather insights into classroom dynamics. The permission with the director of the school was obtained prior to the study to allow observations and interviews, ensuring ethical compliance. It was explicitly stated that the information collected would only be used for this research and that all participants would remain anonymous to protect their identities.

Parental consent was obtained for the observations and our presence in the class, ensuring that the data collected were used for research purposes only. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing the identities of the students, and all data were securely stored. By combining non-participant observation with in-depth interviews, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the problems, challenges, and difficulties that teachers face in crowded classrooms teaching writing. Five weeks of observation ensured consistency in the results, while interviews with the teacher provided a deeper understanding of their strategies and experiences. This approach is in line with the research objectives of examining how teacher copes with the problems, challenges, and difficulties of teaching writing in an overcrowded classroom.

Research Steps

Three interviews lasting between one and two hours were conducted with the participant at the end of each class; these helped us to connect with our observations in the class when the teacher teaches writing, as well as with our field notes, to have a wide background of what we have observed. The objective of these interviews were to gather and connect the insights of the teacher from the class with our field notes to ensure the credibility of the information and avoid bias perception from us, these methods help us to corroborate with the teacher what we have observed when students start doing writing task, as well teacher provide us her perception about the class and factors that appear, and how she cannot have the control of those variables. These interviews were audio-recorded and translated with the consent of the teacher.

Data Analysis Results

Once all the interviews were ready, we started the coding process, assigning each info to its respective theme. Observation notes and interview transcripts were reviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. Data segments were assigned codes based on recurring themes, such as problems, challenges, and difficulties. Then, the teacher strategies that the teacher employs in class. These codes were grouped into broader themes to answer the research questions, such as “managing large classrooms” and “teachers’ coping mechanisms.” The themes were analyzed in conjunction with the theoretical framework and local context to gain meaningful information.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present the results of the interviews with the teacher through the process of coding. Indeed, based in our main purpose is to understand how teachers cope with the problems, challenges, and difficulties that they face when they teach writing in a large class in public basic education. Since this study is focusing on a single case study, the teacher plays an important role in sharing their insights and experience facing these situations in their classes.

To analyze the information that we have collected through the observations and the field notes of the class. The observations were conducted by both of us, analyzing when students were practicing writing and how other factors affect the development of writing. With that information, we can rely on what we have observed and what the teacher mentioned in the interviews, which will enrich and verify whether the information that we gather is true and valid. Then, we used the MAXQDA software, which helped us to codify into three main categories that would help us to understand our main goal: problems, challenges, and difficulties. Moreover, we want to analyze how teacher deals with large class sizes now of applying strategies to teach writing. Due to our study is focused on an interpretative paradigm, the teacher here is essential to help us understand this situation with their experience and observations will enrich our investigation, giving more direction and verifying the data gathered from the class and teacher.

The results are organized into the main themes that we wanted to address as well as the strategies that teacher applies to enhance teaching writing in class. Each theme is supported by the quote of the teacher, with the help of a visual mind map that will show the information

provided by the teacher, and finally, a reflection that connects the information shared by the teacher with the main theories presented before

Figure 1

Problems that the teacher faced while teaching writing instruction to a large sixth-grade class in a public school.

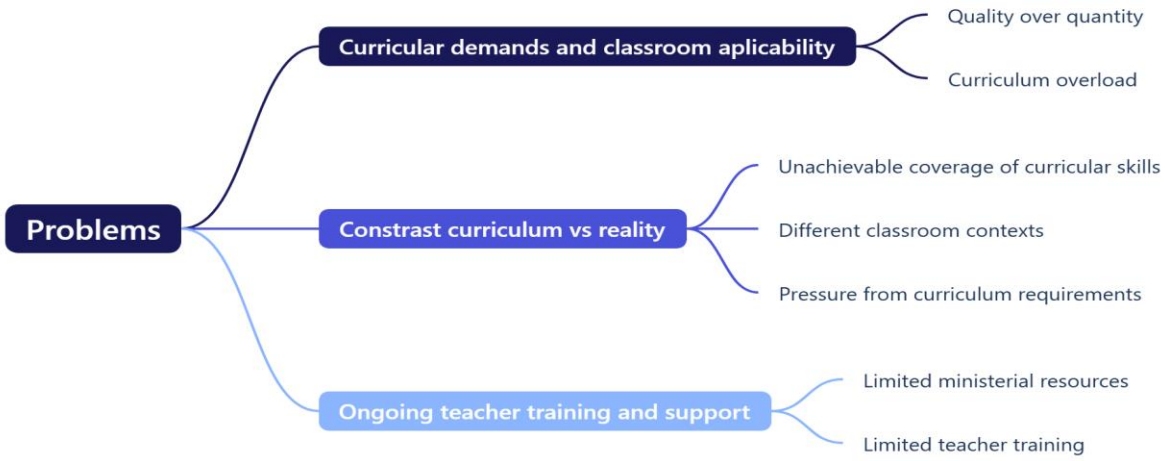


Figure 1 highlights the problems that the teacher faces when teaching writing in a large class in basic education in public schools. As mentioned, in the research and for the sake of the study, the definition used for the coding of the problems is defined as issues that the teacher finds outside the class and do not have a solution, as it is in a large-scale context that goes beyond the

teacher and institution.

The information provided by the teacher is divided into 3 subthemes, with each corresponding to a category. The following are: curricular demands and classroom applicability, contrast curriculum vs reality, and ongoing teacher training and support.

The first category is curricular demands and classroom applicability. The teacher expressed the problems in contrasting what the curriculum demands with a real-life classroom setting. In other words, the teacher's concern is to cover all the main curricular demands in the writing area in a short period, such as a variety of skills that have to be achieved; therefore, Teachers must provide a lot of content instead of focusing on one at a time and helping students master one skill before moving to the next one. These external factors intervene in the teaching process. The second subtheme contrasts the curriculum vs reality. The teacher here expresses some concerns about how the reality of teaching English in public institutions with overcrowded classrooms differs from what the curricular outcomes and levels are expected to be inside the classroom. Finally, ongoing teacher training and support by the government, the teacher acknowledges how preparation and continuous learning are necessary to improve as teachers and learn about students; however, this situation is nearly impossible when teachers are not ready with the correct training that would help them deal with diverse problems occurring in public institutions. As mentioned in Figure 1, there is training handed freely by the Ministry of Education; however, it is not ongoing, nor is it for a continuous learning journey. The materials provided are only the curriculum; tools used by teachers are at their own cost and interest. To finalize these categories, all mention what is outside of a teacher's decision because these are

created beforehand by entities above a teacher's power, therefore, as unchangeable.

The teacher explained the difficulty of covering all these skills provided by the government in a limited time *"If the curriculum said, well, out of, let's say, the 40 skills that we present for middle basic, fulfill 20, but well, well, addressing a change in the curriculum, for me, I think it would be more quality than quantity. I think that if we joined about four skills into one and we focused on fulfilling those, it would be the best.".* This excerpt shows how the curriculum emphasizes breadth over depth, expecting numerous skills without considering the classroom's realities. The second excerpt addresses the gap between curricular expectations and classroom realities. *"We continue with the standardized system of the ministry that takes us through four moments. The four moments, then, sincerely, we do two. But already when it's time for the observation classes, then we make miracles to meet those standards. But generally, the reality is very different. The reality is different.* This excerpt reflects the discrepancy between policy and practice. Another example is how the poor support and training by the government are not present in teachers. *"The government itself, of providing us with tools like that, to train us, there isn't. Self-training, yes, that yes, even the government, I say it, in its courses they train me, they give those opportunities. But itself, of giving us continuous workshops, no, but there is a lot to self-train, yes, there is a lot."* Here, the teacher confirms the sporadic training opportunities, but exposes the absence of sustained, practical professional development aligned with classroom realities. Together, these excerpts reaffirm how an overloaded curriculum, a mismatch between policy and reality, and insufficient training compound the problems.

The academic literature reinforces the idea and connection with Abata et al. (2019). The

teacher claims that the large number of skills that the curriculum states is not possible to cover. As teachers, we have to cover all of them in just 3 hours per week is not possible. Thus, found that overloaded curricular demands often push teachers to rely on traditional methods towards product-oriented writing practices, where the focus is on accuracy rather than the process of idea generation and revision. Similarly, the teacher explained how the curriculum encourages teachers to divide the class into phases that they need to cover. However, the time that they have per class is not possible. Sevy-Biloon et al. (2020) emphasize how overcrowded classrooms limit teachers' ability to apply the national curriculum, resulting in reduced instructional quality and student performance. Finally, the lack of training programs by the government is something that hinders the progress of teachers. Vásquez (2022) argues that the absence of programs in which teachers can get trained and form themselves leads them to get overwhelmed and reliant on traditional methods, which obscures the innovation.

Figure 2

Challenges that the teacher faced while teaching writing instruction to a large sixth-grade class in a public school

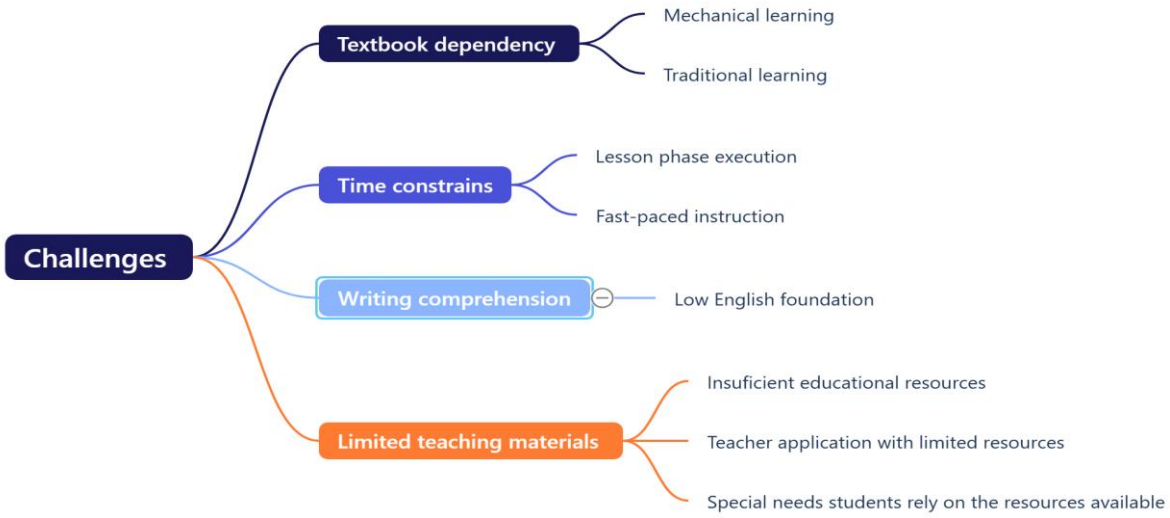


Figure 2 highlights the main challenges that the teacher faces when she wants to teach writing in a large class in basic education in public schools. As mentioned, for the sake of the study, the definition used for the coding of the challenges is defined as struggles that require extra effort and have opportunities to create progress in the classroom.

The information provided by the teacher is divided into five subthemes, with each corresponding category. The following are: Textbook dependency, time constraints, writing comprehension, and limited teaching material. These challenges were coded in response to the teacher interviews, and they present obstacles that are not only circumstantial but are rooted in the teaching of writing instruction. Every challenge also represents an aspect of classroom life.

One of the first subthemes, which is textbook dependency, refers to how students learn and process information structured in the school's textbook. The book’s content is too rigid in the lessons; therefore, students learn in a repetitive and mechanical structure, not thinking outside of

the box. As a result, any modification of the content produces confusion for them. At the same time, constraints mention how time shortage in teaching limits instruction, the teacher can barely cover all the lesson stages without leaving tasks behind, and adding them to future lessons or for homework. Due to this limitation, topics are revised briefly just by glance, reducing the opportunities to understand the content. At the same time, writing comprehension shows the struggles in writing due to students' poor background knowledge, as the grade does not match the English level of the EFL curriculum expectations. Finally, the last challenging aspect is the limited teaching materials, the school and parents offer the possibilities and resources they have; therefore, inclusive lessons are difficult to achieve, as well as creative methodologies. Taken together, these codes illustrate the challenges of writing instruction in a large class.

The teacher mentioned how students rely just on the book, but when they see another format of task, they get confused. *"I only gave them the adjectives here, but I also used images. I didn't make it that easy, like just writing 'hat' or what it says here in gray. That's where they start to fail. That's where they start to fail, because they don't know how to associate. They are used to everything being very easy. So, if they are given options, they get confused. They get confused. As soon as they try a little, they get lost again. So yes, the texts we have are a bit mechanical. And I think most of them are like that."* Students are accustomed to the textbooks, but when the teacher applies a new format of the same task, they struggle. The other concern is how the ministry asks for stages and phases in a short period of time. *"The Ministry, for example, asks us to follow four moments. It asks for exploration, reflection, conceptualization, and finally application. Four moments that are supposed to happen in just one class. How far do we really get? Sometimes I*

only reach the warmer, which I make very simple; the warmers I do every day. So, it's just a song, and that's it. A song. Then comes the reflection, where we analyze. The previous knowledge. The conceptualization is where the actual teaching begins. Sometimes I get that far, but I can't go further. The application often has to be left for the next day, or it becomes homework. So, the process gets complicated, let's say. The process that is supposed to happen ends up being blocked." As mentioned by the teacher, the time to cover all the phases is reduced, and the time runs out before all the stages are completed. Even though the time is a difficulty, students are not motivated. The teacher said, *". Ok, you can do that. Ok, it's wrong, yes, it's wrong, but you can do better. So, we keep working with motivation. We try to manage motivation. Of course, there are students who not even without motivation, will not do the work. They just don't. I have one, a sixth grader. I try to motivate him, I really do, but he's just not interested. He's not interested. He's not interested. He only writes the topic, does the classwork, and that's it. That's all." As the teacher mentioned, despite her efforts to engage students and motivate them, they still disengaged. When the teacher mentioned that she mentioned. "We work with fill-in-the-blanks or something like that, something simple. Not paragraphs yet, no paragraphs. I mean, if they are asked, for example, to describe themselves, maybe they just say: My name is… and that's all. But they don't manage fluent dialogue, nor do they have a wide vocabulary to form sentences. It's very limited. Even though we've tried, for example, right now we are working on a topic, let's say, with what I like and I don't like.".* The teacher observes that the production of sentences, vocabulary, and cohesion is limited, showing difficulty in producing real sentences. As well, she states how sometimes she doesn't have enough materials, so she just leaves with other activities, as she mentions. *"There are many websites I use for support, where teachers can get material. I can also ask another teacher*

for material, depending on what I want. Sometimes I want the student busy all day, but sometimes we don't move forward, sometimes, honestly, time just slips away, or there has been so much going on that I say: Well, today I didn't bring material. So, what do I do? I give them a mandala to color. I'm sorry, but I can't just throw any paper on the desk and have them color it until the end. So that's how we go, improvising.". Admitting how sometimes teachers as well get exhausted viewing how they cannot get engaged with our students, so she relies on activities that can keep them entertained instead of writing practices or so on.

Recent investigation supports how the books can shape the way of learning for a student learns. If a book shows multiple tasks that would enhance the quality of learning, it will help students to get more contextualized with the language and with new activities that will catch their attention. However, if a book just establishes simple activities of repetition and simple sentences, it would be a problem for students. This observation aligns with Abata et al. (2019), who found that Ecuadorian teachers often default to the product approach because of the rigid structure of textbooks and limited time for adaptation. So, mainly writing seems like the reproduction of model text rather than a process of creativity and critical thinking. As well, it is essential to mention how time management is more than crucial in these classes, and how teachers must complete all the phases that are imposed by the government in a short period of time. This reflects Vásquez (2022), who reported that public-school EFL teachers in Ecuador struggle with overloaded curricula and insufficient instructional time. Likewise, Sevy-Biloon et al. (2020) identified time pressure as a key barrier to implementing the national curriculum effectively. So, considering that writing is a process that involves stages, which certain times, most of the time are skipped or not used due to

the lack of time, restricting their development. Indeed, if our students are not engaged with our activities and materials, they will start to struggle and get bored. So, considering that in an overcrowded classroom this fact starts gaining more terrain due to the facility of getting distracted. This aligns with Chen and You (2022), who observed that large classes contribute to student disengagement and affective barriers. In addition, Bora (2023) claims the importance of having interactive materials and activities that are aligned with their preferences. So, teachers look for multiple tasks that can fit with the students' preferences. Nevertheless, if we encounter a large class, it is going to be difficult to engage everyone.

Figure 3

Difficulties that the teacher faced while teaching writing instruction to a large sixth-grade class in a public school

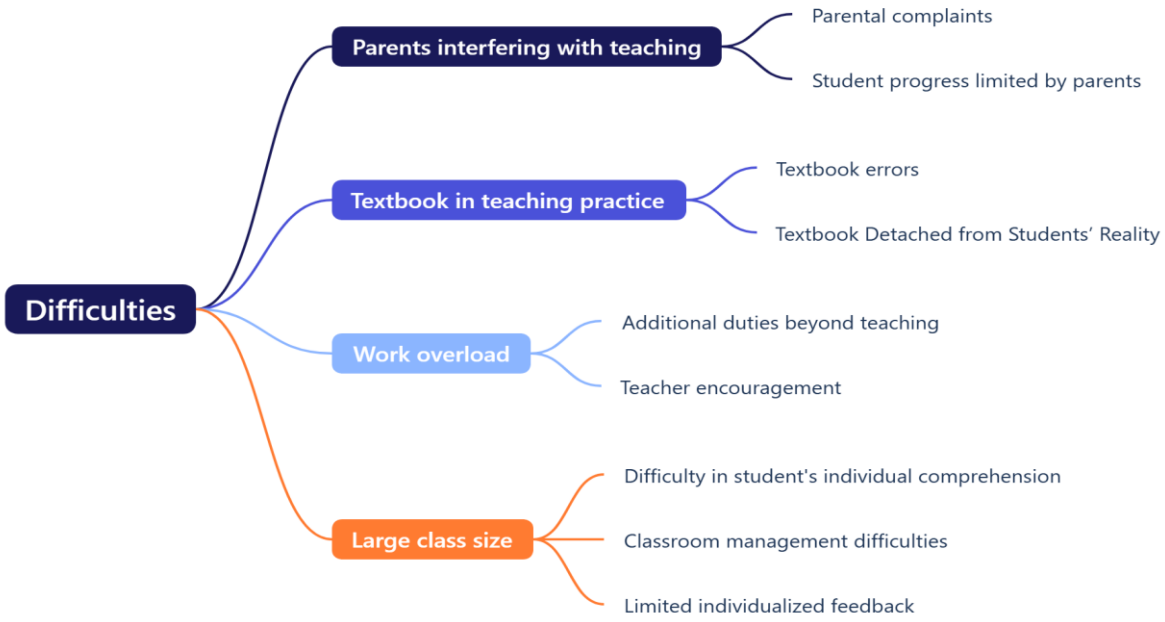


Figure 3 highlights the major difficulties that the teacher faces while teaching writing in a large class in basic education in public schools. As mentioned before, for the sake of the study, the definition used for the coding of the Difficulties is defined as struggles in the class that are not easy to bring a solution to in a small-scale context, such as a school.

The information provided by the teacher is divided into four subthemes, with each corresponding to a category. The following are: Parents interfering with teaching, textbook and teaching practice, work overload, and large class size. These difficulties were coded in response to the teacher interviews, and they represent the issues that emerged in the school mentioned as different institutional factors while teaching writing instruction. Each of the branches in the graphic represents the aspects observed in school that obstruct teaching. An important difficulty exhibited in Figure 2, subtitled " parents interfering with learning, shows how parents' complaints restrict the teacher's liberty to modify the class content and help students progress in

writing. In addition, the textbook in teachers' practice mentions that the text is filled with grammatical errors, as it is a book students can afford, just as the content is not relatable to the students, due to their different backgrounds. Therefore, their understanding comes from another perspective; students cannot connect with what is unknown for them. Equally important, work overload is an interference with teaching responsibilities because they must finish a significant number of designated duties, such as administrative assignments and cleaning their own workspace. Therefore, the extra assignments and amount of extra work placed onto the teachers do not correspond to working hours, which takes away valuable time from students, as their learning is placed on hold. Finally, the large class size is a factor complicating the lessons as the number of learners is considerably large, leading to some students focused while others wander in their own thoughts, copy in class, and or get lost in the learning process. When the class explanation is given as well as the tasks, students who are in need of help or feedback are given in a general way with the class together. This demonstrates how individual feedback is a complicated task to fulfill. Taken together, these four difficulties emphasize how extra workload, number of students, parents' control placed on teachers, textbooks with grammatical errors, and contextual barriers interact, limit both the flexibility of teachers and the active engagement of students.

So, according to what the teacher mentioned. *"Parents worry about what their kids' study, so they say things like, 'No, for example, here it says this wasn't in the book. But if I added something extra to the book, then some student or some parent who isn't happy with what I gave their child would come and say, "Excuse me, where did you get this from? It wasn't even in the*

book."' It happened to me last term—I added distractors, extra verbs as distractors, and the ones they really had to work with were in the book. Later, I thought, 'Why did I add other verbs that weren't even in the book?' Those are the little things you run into when you're working in a physical institution.". This reinforces the idea that sometimes the difficulties are caused by the government, institutions, or maybe students, which is caused by parents who are outside the class. Indeed, the cultural relevance of some books is not aligned or even related to our context. That is why the teacher said, *"For example, 'Ecuadorian Celebration, Party, Games'—these are things they don't actually experience. In Ecuadorian Celebrations, yes, they do experience popular traditions. But with 'Birthdays,' some kids don't even know. Some of them have never had a birthday party. Ever. One time, we were talking about vacations, and the students said, 'Oh no, teacher, I have to go to the mountain.' Every vacation, they're in the hills taking care of cows. So, if the content is too advanced, or not adapted, it just doesn't apply to their reality." Indeed, "The books are also poorly written, poorly designed. And now we're told to use the cheapest book available."* Giving us the concern that the books are not related to our context, even though public institutions celebrate most of the principal celebrations of our country, the books reflect the opposite of this. Even though teachers do their best to cover all the classes and tasks that are assigned inside the institution, sometimes they need to take time from the classes to complete forms and documents related to administrative duties. *"That's what creates conflict. The coordination, always mixing the same thing—administrative with academic. The academic side, I think, will never really feel like a burden; it's always been part of the job. But the administrative side—that's what really clashes with us.".* Teachers are forced to complete this task even though they are not related to those duties. Finally, the large class size that is

considered normal, most students are not engaged, and that is something that as teacher affect to us. *"And then there's the thirty-five students. It's very difficult—super difficult—to manage the classroom so that everyone is paying attention, silent, and learning. They're all there physically, but their minds are somewhere else. The ones who learn are usually those in the front row, then some in the middle, and the rest…the rest are lost, even though, of course, they matter to us. But the reality is, most of them are just lost."*

Our literature review explores how parents are present in class and affects the progress of our students restricting the application of activities, tasks, or materials that would help in their development (Ahmed, 2021). Teacher explained how difficult is for her try to introduce new things that are aside from the book due to the restrictions that they parents may say, this limits the teacher's job and reduce the power of the teacher into the process of learning in students. Moreover, teacher must follow what the book says, and sometimes the book is not aligned with the cultural relevance of our own country and students can get confused. As Soto et al (2021), highlights how the activities materials and content are not aligned with the realities of the students. They note that apart that is rigid, is not related with our own cultures and traditions, these claims the importance that books should be related with cultures and traditions from our context. Nevertheless, is important to mention how teachers are required as much as the system wants. Majeed and Kareem (2025) explains how overcrowded classrooms affects teachers' mental health with excessive workloads, reduce student engagement, and the pressure to maintain academic standards despite the reality of the classrooms. Moreover, García Lino (2020) aligns with what the teacher states of doing tasks that are not related to their competence, these

additional works intensify the workload and reduce the time available for lesson planning and even for rest. Finally overcrowded classroom is one of the main factors that teacher believes is the trigger of the others. As Jokhio et al. (2020) explained at the beginning, large class size can affect the quality of instruction because the teacher must keep an eye on each student's behavior while she is providing materials or tasks. In line with these, UNAE (2020) states the number of students per classroom that should be between 15 to 20 students. Therefore, contrasting what the teacher mention classes with 35 to 40 students is important to control the number of students per class to facilitate teacher methodologies and be aligned with the expectations and outcomes that the curriculum wants in Ecuadorian students. Despite these overwhelming problems, challenges and difficulties, the teacher employed strategies to engage and facilitate teacher instruction.

Figure 4

Strategies that the teacher used to engage a large sixth-grade class while implementing writing instruction in a public school.

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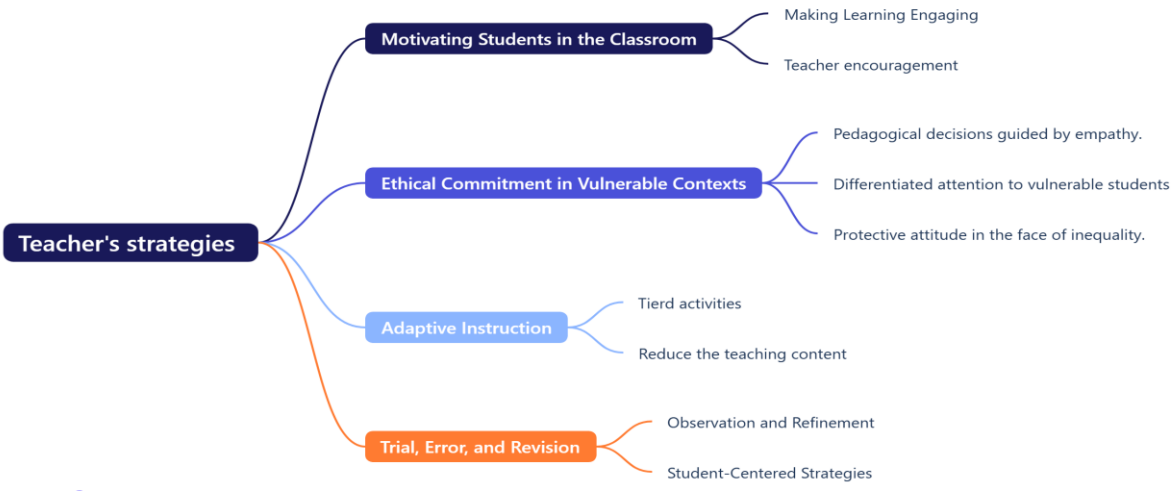


Figure 4 highlights the teaching strategies that the teacher implemented with the purpose of engaging sixth-grade students in a large class in basic education in public schools. The information that will be mentioned in Figure 4 is taken accordingly from Figure 2(challenges) as mentioned, priorly for the sake of this research, the definition used for the coded information is referred to as what the teacher does for the students in the sense of battling in the teaching field against those challenges in a classroom context.

The information provided by the teacher is divided into four subthemes, with each corresponding category. The following are motivating Students in the Classroom, ethical Commitment in Vulnerable Contexts, adaptive Instruction, and trial, Error, & Revision. This information was coded in response to the teachers' interviews, based on what is done in class to confront the mentioned challenges. Each of the branches in the graphic represents those elements. To begin with, motivating students in the classroom refers to an affective or behavioral disengagement from writing tasks; therefore, there is a constant need to encourage students to become motivated through innovation. Alongside this, ethical commitment in vulnerable

contexts highlights what happens behind the scenes at students' homes, how there is a variety of learners with individual struggles, such as vulnerability and special needs, who attend class despite their background, and how the teacher's role is beyond teaching. Another category mentioned adaptive instruction, which emphasizes student-centered activities. These are modified, placing the learner first, acknowledging the learner's level and skills; therefore, the context can be extended or reduced for comprehension purposes. Lastly, trial, Error, & Revision illustrates the name states strategy application and modification in class based on students' interactions. Together, these categories reflect the reality behind teaching a large classroom size and ways that the teacher makes a learning environment and gives an education from a different perspective.

The teacher mentioned how important motivation is in their classes, as she *states, "At least they'll try. At least. That's also important—always motivating the student to do it. If they make a mistake, do it anyway. 'I can't.' Do it. You can. If you make a mistake, it doesn't matter. It's your mistake, and I'll correct your mistake. Do it. Because blank texts—even exams—I tell them, I don't accept blank exams. I don't. Try, because the attempt counts a lot too. That's why motivating students, even if they make mistakes, is so important."* This is how teachers encourage students to continue even though students commit mistakes, most of the time, as teachers find it difficult to continue giving motivation, and we are left behind, but here the teacher states the importance of not leaving blank spaces or tasks. As well, the teacher mentioned how she needs to keep short activities that are designed for students who need adaptations in class. *"It has to be something short, something that, I mean, has both quantity and quality, you know. Something short and meaningful, so they can really learn. If I say, 'I'm going to give you a*

worksheet with 20 sentences,' I don't think that's very useful. They'll do maybe five or six on their own, and then the copying starts. And then it's, 'I didn't finish,' or, 'I don't want to do it anymore,' and they just leave it. But if you give them something short, like five or six sentences, they'll do it. We work with physical limitations, we work with intellectual limitations, but… And sometimes a teacher has to make two, three, even four adaptations." That is how the teacher supports the idea of meaningful, shorter tasks for the different adaptations that she has, also how students can get lost if we send like 20 or 10 sentences, they will copy or wait until others help them, or basically they will do nothing. And when that happens, we start to rage at the student, but we don't know the background that the student has. That is why the teacher mentioned, *"Why didn't you come? 'Teacher, there was no one to take care of the animals in the mountain.' How old is this student? Ten. Ten years old. And he's up in the mountain taking care of animals alone. Sleeping in the mountains alone. And then I say to myself, Wow. Now I understand why he is the way he is. Why doesn't he complete things? Why does he get angry? Why is he always tired? Why does he start working and then give up? These are realities that we, as teachers, really struggle with. So yes, personally, when one begins to teach, you really have to come prepared for everything."* What the teacher said about this student had such an impact on us that, at his young age, he already has burdens that are not appropriate for his age. These experiences teach us to be better and be critical when we demand more from our students, as teachers here mention, *"There are days when you just don't give a good class, and you have to be very analytical and very critical with yourself. You say, well, today was very mediocre, today I gave a really bad class. But then, if the next day you prepare the same class with another strategy, and you see completely different results compared to that simple or mediocre class you gave before, then yes,*

you have to be self-analytical and very critical to say, 'You know what? You did it wrong.'"

The teacher accepts that sometimes classes are not the best for them, but she tries to look for other strategies or better materials to improve. She emphasizes the importance of being critical and analytical.

So, according to our literature review re affirms how motivation should be important for teachers towards students, even when students do not want to complete activities or they don't know how. This is aligned with the Process Writing Approach that emphasizes the importance of the writing process and the engagement with the class (Raimes, 1983; Badger & White, 2000). Also, (Jokhio et al., 2020; Ogunyemi, 2022). Despite claims that large class size reduces motivation in students due to limited individual attention, the teacher used short tasks to support engagement while adapting the task for the students who have different needs. Also, the importance of understanding the context and background of those students who need support from us, as teachers, we need to consider students' personal challenges, and look for possible adaptations that would help them to progress in their learning path, and accept the diverse needs that in our classroom can appear. (Jokhio et al., 2020; Ogunyemi, 2022; Aslam & Jameel, 2025). Such attention ensures that the instruction is meaningful, inclusive, and responsive to individual factors that can hinder the learning process. Likewise, the teacher described making multiple adaptations to the task with the objective that students can complete them and reflects in the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing, emphasizing how teachers should plan considering these students and making the required modifications (Raimes, 1983; Badger & White, 2000). However, the limited time that teachers must plan and the multiple adaptations that they can have could be considered difficult to do. It also supports Sevy-Biloon et al. (2020), who highlighted

the necessity of adapting activities to ensure instruction, particularly in large classrooms with varying skill levels. However, is important as teachers to reflect on the lesson, activities, materials, and approaches effectiveness that will help us to analyze if are working or not, criticism help teacher to keep looking for possibles materials of activities that enhance the learning of their students, also maintain teachers working for their student with commitment and passion for it, however sometimes is difficult to keep in track with these research due to the absence of support by parents, directors, and government.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is important to restate our main focus, which was analyzing how teachers cope with the problems, challenges, and difficulties of teaching writing in public basic education. Thus, with the intention of understanding how this affects public teachers with a real perspective in an overcrowded classroom, through coding and interviews, we gather how this teacher promotes the use of their writing skills with different strategies that help her to maintain engaged students despite the fact that it is difficult to manage students with different capabilities, necessities, or behavior.

The first specific objective was to identify the problems that affect teaching writing; this showed us how the curriculum states the main guidelines that teachers should follow, complete the threads and skills. Nevertheless, the curriculum does not consider the reality of the Ecuadorian situation and the poor time that teachers are given to complete these tasks. This reflects on us how teachers are forced to fulfill skills that are sometimes not visible in the classroom or cannot be achieved due to the limited time available and the large number of

students, which affects the development of the class and the quality of teaching. This reflects on how teachers are alone in this process of teaching English without cooperation by the government on how to deal with this problematic situation that can impede the development of the curriculum expectations in class without training.

The second one shows the challenges and difficulties that teachers confront in class. The result showed how the previous problems can affect the quality of teaching with traditional approaches and textbooks dependency on just focusing on completing activities, this is related to the poor time that teacher have in class and the lack of educational resources that she can add to help students, this reflect on how teachers need to rely on the same traditional approaches even though the curriculum states innovative and pedagogical approaches to enhance education. Also, as teachers, if we want to help them with extra activities that are not in the textbook, parents would also interfere, suing the teacher for adding more work. This is also associated with the extra workload that teachers have to cover with lesson plans, classroom cleaning, and forms that they have to fill out during class, reducing the time. All these problems, challenges, and difficulties are interconnected in a linear way that affects students and teachers.

Finally, the last objective focused on how large classes influence teachers' strategies and students' engagement. The result showed that the teacher is fully committed to their students. Students must complete their assignments and leave no space blank, which reflects how she tries to motivate students to do their best. This is also linked to how students are sometimes disconnected from their reality. It caught our attention that some students do not know what a celebration is and are in a context where they feel that working or caring for animals is more

important than attending classes. As teachers, this leads us to believe that sometimes it is not the students who are at fault, but rather the teachers who must find ways to get their attention, even when we have the problem of large class sizes.

Overall, this study met the main objective of the research, which was understanding how teachers cope with the problems, challenges, and difficulties of teaching writing in overcrowded classrooms. The reality proposed by the English language teaching curriculum can trigger more factors that affect the quality of teaching and also the mental health of teachers when they see that all their proposals and ideas that could change education are limited by problems that sometimes cannot be changed. This study exposes the reality of English language teaching and the biggest problem, which is the large number of students, reflecting that the government needs to take action to improve teaching and find the best solution to solve these problems in the education system. This reflects on a systemic cycle where the curricular objectives are fundamentally unachievable under these conditions, ultimately harming both teacher and students and perpetuating low levels of English proficiency in Ecuador.

Recommendations

According to the results of the study, there are some suggestions made to improve the teaching of writing in large classes in public basic education. First, it is suggested that teachers, whether they are pre-service or in-service, must receive systematic instruction in strategies appropriate to large classes. Pre-service teachers need to be prepared in their preparation programs through practicum experiences that replicate crowded classrooms, while in-service

teachers should be engaged in ongoing professional development programs in which they are provided with differentiated strategies like scaffolded tasks and collaborative projects that ensure sustained engagement and learning in writing.

Secondly, it is advisable to establish the structural conditions that enable these strategies to be realized practically. This entails instituting workshops within the curriculum, hiring more staff support, building into the structure digital platforms that foster a space for writing commentary, and acknowledging the workload of more students than the average class size in any given course. Among others, universities should provide different perspectives to practitioners, offering pre-service teachers theoretical and practical preparation. Third, the curriculum should adapt textbooks that are relevant for students, and include a variety of tasks beyond mechanical exercises. Educational leaders and policymakers are recommended to develop reforms that deal with the systemic nature of the problem. Reducing student–teacher ratios, where applicable, implementing technological infrastructure, and integrating large-class pedagogy modules into teacher education program curricula are key components to achieving sustainable growth in writing instruction.

Last, future research should explore whether teacher adaptations have enduring effects on students' outcomes, compare practices across different institutional settings, and examine how technology may help both teachers and students. It is also suggested that future research incorporate the viewpoint of the students themselves, as the latter is an indispensable perspective for capturing the intricacies of engagement in a crowded classroom.

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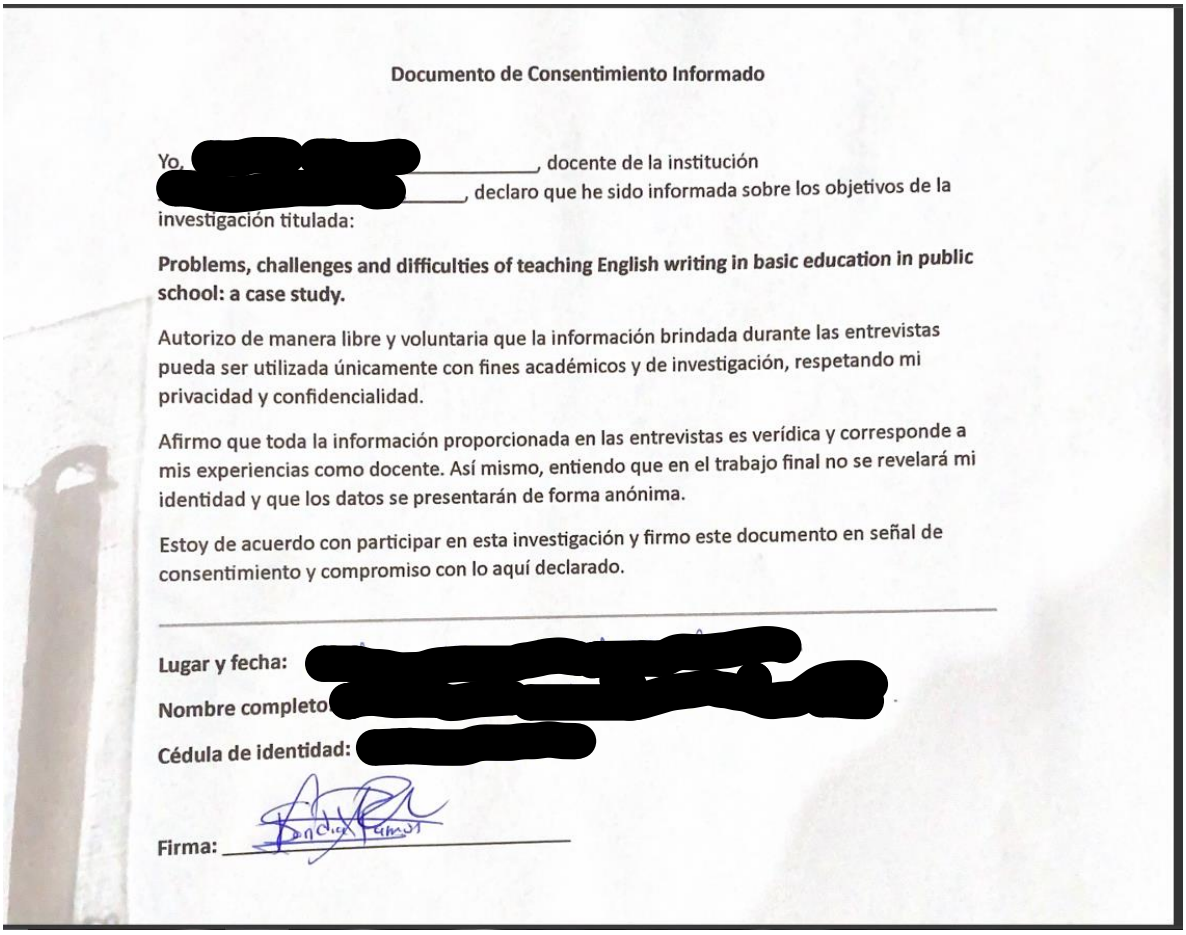
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Appendix 1: Teacher consent



Documento de Consentimiento Informado

Yo, [redacted], docente de la institución [redacted], declaro que he sido informada sobre los objetivos de la investigación titulada:

Problems, challenges and difficulties of teaching English writing in basic education in public school: a case study.

Autorizo de manera libre y voluntaria que la información brindada durante las entrevistas pueda ser utilizada únicamente con fines académicos y de investigación, respetando mi privacidad y confidencialidad.

Afirmo que toda la información proporcionada en las entrevistas es verídica y corresponde a mis experiencias como docente. Así mismo, entiendo que en el trabajo final no se revelará mi identidad y que los datos se presentarán de forma anónima.

Estoy de acuerdo con participar en esta investigación y firmo este documento en señal de consentimiento y compromiso con lo aquí declarado.

Lugar y fecha: [redacted]

Nombre completo [redacted]

Cédula de identidad: [redacted]

Firma: _____

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Institution Consent

REPÚBLICA DEL ECUADOR

Ministerio de Educación

Oficio Nro. MINEDUC-CZ6-01D04-2025-0393-OF

Gualaceo, 07 de mayo de 2025

Asunto: RESPUESTA OFICIO DR. DIEGO CAJAS COORDINADOR DE INVESTIGACIÓN DE LA U.UNAE - INGRESO E.E.B.CIUDAD DE GUALACEO - ESTUDIANTES PROYECTO DE TITULACION

Señor Doctor Phd
Diego Christian Cajas Quishpe
En su Despacho

De mi consideración:

En respuesta al Documento No. Referencia MINEDUC-CZ6-01D04-2025-0405-E, al Oficio S/N suscrito por Dr. Diego Christian Cajas Q. Tutor y Coordinador Académico de investigación de la UNAE, solicita *"autorización de ingreso a la Unidad Educativa Ciudad de Gualaceo, con el objetivo de ejecutar un estudio educativo como parte de nuestro Proyecto de Titulación de los estudiantes Karen Montenegro y Carlos Correa con el tema "Desafíos en la implementación del eje de escritura del currículo de inglés como lengua extranjera" ; como equipo de investigación consideramos que ésta institución educativa representa un contexto ideal para el desarrollo de nuestro estudio, permitiendo realizar observaciones de clases y entrevista al docente, cabe indicar que éste estudio no se centra en la interacción directa con el estudiante sino en observar el proceso de enseñanza y comprender los desafíos que enfrentan el docente al implementar dicho eje curricular (...)".*

Este Despacho analizando su solicitud y considerando el artículo 7 de la Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural literal a) y b) sobre los Derechos de los estudiantes prevé: "[...] a. ser actores fundamentales en el proceso educativo, b. Recibir una formación integral y científica, que contribuya al pleno desarrollo de su personalidad, capacidades y potencialidades [...]". se Autoriza lo solicitado responsabilizando a los organizadores la socialización con los directivos para que se coordine esta actividad y asistan al DECE Distrital para seguir un taller de Protocolos de actuación frente a situaciones de violencia detectadas o cometidas en el sistema educativo y suscribir de manera personal, indelegable e intransferible, una carta de compromiso de protección y no vulneración de derechos de niñas, niños y adolescentes, conforme formato establecido por el nivel central, con la Mgs Monica Nieto, teléfono Nro. 0969625698 y presentar al momento de ingresar a la institución como lo indica el Acuerdo Ministerial Nro.MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2023-00073-A., se detalla los funcionarios que asistirán al taller:

Dirección: Av. Amazonas N34-451 y Av. Atahualpa
Código Postal: 170507 / Quito – Ecuador
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EL NUEVO ECUADOR

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Appendix 2: Interview transcriptions

Link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DMDngczjl1iw8P9-fkVLeZj7yb1_qUUs?usp=sharing

Appendix 3: Codebook

Link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-8C26QNtmvgd3MLqyiYVYn8IG-RlhwfG?usp=sharing

Appendix 4: Questions for Interview

Link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YC9zRwdCP0GnqjlUcOP33ef3jft_czVM?usp=sharing

Appendix 5: Field Notes and Observations

Link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1f0xiUiFcjP2V4wLU2BKeVWWmX2LrDg9K?usp=sharing