



## SUMMARY

This investigatory project had the purpose of proving if the motivational techniques developed by Miriam Darnell were efficient when applied during a lesson in a local high school. It is important to know that these techniques were originally developed for American students who were native speakers of English, so our challenge was to adapt them for an EFL classroom.

The project was based on the design and application of a lesson in order to increment the disposition of students to write creatively in class, and the subsequent diagnosis and analysis of the data obtained. Besides the lesson plan, a previous research on the importance of creative writing and motivation in education, different approaches from additional authors and researchers, and the problems that EFL teachers must deal with in the classroom was done, so the needs that the students who participated in the application class could be satisfied.

As a result, what we could perceive and how the students themselves felt about the way the class was carried out demonstrated that these techniques proved indeed efficient at the time of motivating learners to write. This way we hoped to contribute in some way to the creative writing process of our students by adopting these techniques in our daily teaching practice.

**Tags:** Motivation, EFL, Teaching Techniques, Creative Writing, Lesson Plan, Miriam Darnell.



## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this investigatory project was to prove whether the motivational techniques developed by Miriam Darnell were efficient when applied during a lesson in a local high school. It is necessary to stress that these techniques were originally developed for American students who were native speakers of English, so our challenge was to adapt them for an EFL classroom.

The project was based on the design and application of a lesson in order to increment the disposition of students to write creatively in class, and the subsequent diagnosis and analysis of the data obtained. Nevertheless, before planning the lesson, it was necessary to look for information about the importance of creative writing and motivation in education, different approaches from additional authors and researchers, and the problems that EFL teachers must deal with in the classroom, so the needs that students in our educational context have nowadays could be satisfied.

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# UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

## FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

### ESCUELA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

# “THE USE OF THE DARNELL TECHNIQUES AS A MOTIVATIONAL ELEMENT TO PROMOTE CREATIVE WRITING IN STUDENTS OF AN EFL CLASS”

Trabajo de Investigación previo a la obtención del Título de Licenciados en la Especialidad de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.

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All the content of this thesis is the exclusive responsibility of its authors.

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## DEDICATION

*This work is dedicated to my parents, who have offered me their unconditional support throughout my life; to my sisters, who have always been by my side giving me good advice; and to my nephews and nieces, who have been my motivation in hard times.*

*Andrés Peralta S.*

*I dedicate this work to my mother, who has never failed to give me love, moral, and financial support and who is my example of life; to my brother, who has always supported me to move forward and achieve my goals; to my sisters, nephew, and nieces that have been helping me in every moment in my life, and especially to my son, who is my principal inspiration in every moment in my life.*

*Guadalupe Valencia N.*



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*Andrés Peralta S.*

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## INTRODUCTION

English is a very important language all over the world. Nowadays, it increases educational opportunities and leads businesses. So, in order to be educated and literate, people need to study English thoroughly. English also teaches you to communicate and process things more accurately. For those reasons, English teachers must be aware of this fact, and encourage students to develop all the skills (speaking, listening reading, and writing) in a very equitable way.

However, the writing skill is the one less used by the teachers of English when preparing and giving lessons. Knowing this information, our thesis is dedicated to promote creative writing in students of an EFL class by making use of the Darnell techniques as a motivational element. Such techniques give many options to solve the reluctance of the students to do writing assignments.

Our proposal consists of incorporating several activities which promote the motivation in the students, especially in those of 6th grade who are about to finish their high school education, since they will need good management of the English language during their university education, and also get an advance in their professional world. These activities let them get involved in the topic that they have to write about. This sort of techniques, moreover, influences learners in a very positive way because they can have fun while practicing writing. By making use of these techniques and methods, students will surely make writing part of their favorite tasks.

The principal reason that motivated us to choose this topic is the fact that during our experience as English teachers we noticed students do not feel motivated enough to write in English, and this fact is causing problems for the whole English learning process.

There are many causes for this lack of motivation. The main cause for this is that students do not feel motivated enough to write in English because it is not their mother tongue. Additional causes that could be considered are the





students' low level of knowledge or proficiency in grammatical structures and rules of composition and redaction, and lack of vocabulary.

Our principal goal, however, is not to emphasize how students can overcome these weaknesses and deficiencies themselves, but to contribute to the creative writing of the students by means of the implementation of the motivational techniques of Miriam Darnell.

We considered it pertinent to apply these techniques in our educational context because of the two major problems exposed above: the almost inexistent practice of the writing skill in class, and the students' own unwillingness and boredom to do writing assignments



## CHAPTER I

### Motivation in the EFL Classroom and the Darnell techniques for Creative Writing

#### 1.1. Motivation in the EFL Classroom

The task of teachers around the world has always been, besides offering knowledge, to get their students engaged in any activity planned for the class. But this task results extremely difficult to fulfill, despite the efforts teachers put in trying to achieve the goal of getting their students motivated and maintaining a high level of motivation for a long period of time.

A teacher's role in creating a classroom where students are motivated to learn is essential in the educational process. Motivation in students makes all the difference in the world, and students can be motivated by their teachers to reach heights of excellence in school.

However, EFL teachers have to face a greater difficulty since most of the time students are reluctant to learn English. It is important to think about motivation as the essence of language teaching because of the poor realities of learning English in which most of our students are present. All of the conditions that we know that contribute to successful second language acquisition are lacking in most EFL contexts: there isn't enough English input in the environment, there aren't enough opportunities for interaction with English speakers, there aren't enough strong role models promoting the learning of English, and there is not enough widespread social acceptance of the idea of becoming proficient in English. Because of these adverse conditions, a learner has to have extraordinary motivation in order to succeed at learning English.

But what is motivation? And how can teachers get their students motivated to learn?

The word "motivation" has adopted so many definitions through the years that nowadays it results really hard to have a precise conception of this term. Biehler and Snowman in their work *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, define motivation as "the forces that account for the arousal, selection, direction, and



continuation of behavior” (366). Nevertheless, many teachers have two misconceptions about motivation that keep them from using this concept with maximum effectiveness. One misconception is that some students are unmotivated. This is not entirely true because teachers tend to confuse motivation with the students’ behavior in the classroom. The second misconception is that one person can directly motivate another. This view is also erroneous because motivation comes from within the person. So the best that we as educators can do is to create the circumstances that influence our students to do what we want them to do.

Something that many researchers agree with is that classroom motivation is highly influenced by both internal and external factors. Thus there are two kinds of motivation teachers must be aware of: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

A student is intrinsically motivated when he/she feels delighted with learning activities. He/she finds pleasure and satisfaction when doing homework, asking for challenging tasks, and finding a personal reward when learning. In other words, an intrinsically motivated student likes and wants to study.

On the contrary, extrinsic motivation refers to the external factors that influence learners to study and perform different academic duties. As a result, the motivation of these students depends on the type of reinforcement provided by teachers and parents. This reinforcement could be positive (rewards, prizes, grades) or negative (punishments, sanctions). However, other factors, like the classroom atmosphere, family issues, or inappropriate teaching strategies and techniques can also be equally influential.

It is obvious, then, that one of our principal duties as teachers is to create the perfect environment where our students can feel comfortable and their intrinsic motivation can be developed, rather than just prompting them with grades or other rewards. On this matter, William T. Lile, a teacher at the Nagoya International Senior High School in Japan, gives various



recommendations that are really helpful for teachers who seek to increase their students' intrinsic motivation in the classroom.

What Lile recommends, in the first place, is to make learning relevant and meaningful to the students. Motivation can be gained by creating relevant connections to the students' lives, presenting challenges according to the students' language level, and bringing some fun into the process.

The next recommendation given by Lile is to maintain and protect motivation, otherwise, everything the teacher does in order to get his/her students engaged might be in vain. This could happen if a teacher sets low standards, so the tasks should always be at least one level higher than the level in which the students currently are.

Finally, Lile proposes to encourage students' self-confidence and language competence. It has been verified that when a teacher shows a positive attitude and gives opportune feedback to his/her students, it helps to increase their participation and understanding, and prevents them from being reluctant to do tasks.

As a conclusion, whichever the type of motivation our students are influenced by, the real key to success is based not only on establishing in them the desire to learn, but also in maintaining that level of motivation for a long period of time. Therefore, everything that we as teachers do in the classroom must be aimed towards two main objectives: one is, of course, to further language development, and the other is to generate motivation for continued learning.

Additionally, much of the research on motivation has confirmed the fundamental principle of causality: motivation affects effort, effort affects results, and positive results lead to an increase in ability. What this means is that by improving the students' motivation we are actually strengthening their ability in the language and increasing their ability to learn. However, the existence of mixed ability classes makes this process even more difficult than it already is. Since no two students can in any way be the same in terms of language



experience, background, learning ability, learning speed, and other factors, so we can conclude, therefore, that our English language classes being homogenous is just utopic.

By knowing that motivation leads to an increase in the students' learning abilities, Michael Rost, editor in chief at Longman, suggests three specific approaches with which educators can influence their students and become motivating teachers. These approaches, or "layers of motivation" as Rost calls them, are the result of synthesizing ideas of famous scholars and researchers such as Dörnyei, Gardner, and Deci who aimed their work at determining the best way to establish an optimally motivating classroom environment.

The first layer of motivation suggested by Rost is focused on finding the learners' passion. This does not mean that the students are going to become passionate about learning English, but the teacher has to connect English to their real passion in life. To do this, different elements, such as music, pictures, movies, or games, are introduced into the classroom in order to stimulate the students' real interests. Moreover, self-expression and personalized activities can be very helpful, since they promote a deeper level of commitment and motivation in the students.

The second layer Rost talks about is centered on changing the reality in which students learn and practice the language. This becomes very important because EFL learners do not receive enough input and do not have enough opportunities for serious output. So it becomes imperative for teachers to offer their students new ways to engage them in further learning activities outside the classroom. To achieve this, learning websites and multimedia learning sources are the most suitable tools.

Finally, the third layer of motivation that Rost proposes places emphasis on connecting the different learning activities, in order to make them significant for the students. These activities have to fulfill a series of characteristics that will ease the accomplishment of this goal. Each learning activity must be as vivid and tangible as possible; it also needs to be suitable enough so every student



can be involved and engaged in the class; and, finally, these activities must promote autonomy in the learners.

## **1.2. The Darnell techniques for Creative Writing**

Before describing the motivational techniques of Miriam Darnell and how they work, we consider it is necessary to start by defining what Creative Writing is, its importance, and what skills students can develop by means of using it.

If one looks up in the 'Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture' he/she will find that the word creative means "producing new and original ideas and things, imaginative and inventive", while creativity is defined as "the ability to produce new and original ideas and things."

Precisely, creative writing focuses on fostering the innate inventive abilities of every student, by means of the creation of stories, which are mostly fictitious, and generally its main objective is to amuse or entertain the reader (Hale). Additionally, the teen mind is full of abstract images, creativity, and imagination, elements that if oriented efficiently could become a rich and infinite source of literary production.

Creative Writing is a method in line with the learner-centered teaching approach which stimulates students' imagination and originality, helping them feel the excitement of expressing their own ideas in forms that are different from the usual writing tasks. When writing creatively, students feel free to choose the audience they want to address. In this way, they liberate themselves from the restrictions imposed by their teacher, who thinks that the only thing he/she has to do is to evaluate the correctness of the linguistic form used by the students. Having a specific audience in mind, students are able to identify the particular context which will determine the form (poetry, prose, drama) and style of writing.

About this, Susan Alicie stresses the importance of Creative Writing by indicating five major facts related to the usage of creative writing activities in the classroom:



- a) Creative Writing Encourages Imagination: Creative writing helps develop students' critical thinking, consequently improving their problem-solving skills.
- b) Creative Writing Teaches Persuasiveness: If a student writes a story about an unusual creature, he/she is going to try to find a way to convince the reader of the possibility of that creature existing. To do this the students will include detailed descriptions, and even personality and actions for the creature, making the reader believe it is all possible.
- c) Creative Writing Teaches Discipline: Letting students imagine freely may not seem the most feasible way to encourage discipline. Then what writers must do is to arrange their thoughts clearly and concisely when transferring what is in their minds onto paper.
- d) Creative Writing Can Be Used As Therapy: Many times children as well as adults have difficulty when trying to say what is on their minds, but with creative writing therapy they are able to express whatever is bothering them from a third person point of view.
- e) Grammar Skills: Allowing students to choose what to write about helps them practice good grammar and spelling skills, without it seeming like a school assignment. They also learn how to use proper punctuation and redaction rules.

Nevertheless, things are different in practice. Speaking, reading and listening occupy most of the time assigned to a lesson. Writing is left at the end, when the teacher looks at it as at a proper piece of homework, a task usually intended to reinforce what learners have studied in class.

Additionally, teachers know that students get bored easily, unless the activities they are involved in are varied and meaningful. Not only does creative writing offer the learners the variety they need, but it rewards them for their effort as well. Students get used to handling language better by producing their



own pieces of writing. In fact, this is the only way they find that new meaning is added to the vocabulary and grammar structures they are familiar with.

Living in the age of technology, adolescents find literature more than time consuming. As a result, students do not develop a taste for fiction. So the development of Creative Writing in the English classroom will help learners reconsider their attitude towards literature and, turn them not only into fiction producers, but also into fiction consumers.

Here is where Miriam Darnell, an American pedagogue who has been teaching creative writing for over 20 years, comes into the scene. After having witnessed the problems her students had during her Creative Writing classes, she came to the conclusion that the root of these problems was the lack of motivation in the classroom. For this reason, she decided to develop a series of techniques and activities in order to motivate her students at the moment of embodying their ideas and thoughts on paper.

Being aware of how important it is to develop students' creativity and imagination, Darnell created the fictional world of *Druidawn*, which is a clear example of learning-through-play where students can submit, read, and comment on stories about the multi-layered *Druidawn* universe. This imagination developing program includes a series of Ebooks (*Druidawn Volume I and II*), a writing motivation role-playing game, local and online (*Legends of Druidawn*), creative writing clubs, writing mentorships, publishing opportunities for young authors, and an exciting interactive website where creative students can interact, play games, and get feedback on their work.

Likewise, Darnell has developed many exceptional and valuable techniques that work to motivate students to write more original content than they ever have before. As a result of the writing activities and techniques proposed for her classes of English, Darnell noticed the increase and consolidation of the lexical basis and the functional-grammatical elements of the language.





It is also worth emphasizing that the motivation Darnell seeks for her students is different from the one called Theory of Incentive, which has been widely utilized in the traditional class as an element of reinforcement in order to consolidate certain behaviors in the students. In contemporary education, on the other hand, the incentives are centered either on the attainment of the objectives or on the significance of the activities.



## CHAPTER II

### **Planning and application of a Lesson Plan on Creative Writing based on the Darnell motivational techniques**

#### **2.1. The Problem of Writing in the EFL Classroom**

A student of English needs to have a good handling of the four communicational skills - speaking, listening, reading, and writing- in order to be considered proficient. All of these skills are very important and necessary for a correct English learning process. For this project we were only focused on writing. It does not mean, though, that the other three skills have less importance.

On the contrary, we based our thesis on how to motivate students to write because in our experience as teachers of English we have realized that the writing assignments are the ones that students show more reluctance to do in class. They do not like this class of assignments because of some reasons. One of the strongest reasons for this is that students do not feel motivated enough to write in English, since it is not their mother tongue. Other reasons could be the students' low level of knowledge of grammatical structures, the incorrect usage of rules of composition and redaction, and lack of vocabulary.

During the process of writing in English, the students not only learn how to write in a foreign language, but also master the other communicative skills (speaking, listening, reading) when they exchange and share ideas and thoughts with their classmates. If the ability of writing is properly canalized, it will greatly help the development of other aspects of the verbal activity, but this must be performed frequently in the classroom, and not only as an isolated activity.

The most important of these considerations in defense of writing is that it offers various didactic proposals based on the ludic field, the literary world, and the social context.



1. The ludic field: if the teaching is carried out with attractive activities and motivational strategies, it will lead to an accelerated, uninhibited learning, where creativity and groupwork are stimulated. These activities, of course, must be adapted to the ages of the students we are working with.
2. The literary world: it offers numerous alternatives of writing according to the style and the literary genre we are focusing on. It develops the reading abilities and comprehension, reveals new grammatical contents, and amalgamates the other communicative skills.
3. The social context: scholars like L. S. Vigotski (Russian psychologist from the first third of the XX century) and R. Feuerstein (Israeli psychologist and educator, whose first studies began in the 1960's) highlight the importance of the social context in which the learning process is carried out, and its convenience as a complement of individual learning.

Moreover, Claudia Bruno says that when students are asked the question “What does writing mean to you?”, most of them coincide in saying that it is something boring, or they relate it to terms such as orthography, grammar, redaction, or punctuation, which are not entirely appealing or relevant for the students. Even though we make use of grammatical rules and dictionaries to write, writing is much more than that, since through it we can learn, imagine, reflect, and enjoy the beauty of reality or invention.

## **2.2. Planning the lesson**

Being aware of the problems implied in giving writing assignments to learners of English, we decided to design a lesson that enclosed the most relevant and appropriate activities with which our students would be able to accomplish these tasks in a successful way, avoiding their unwillingness to write in class.



The lesson plan (see Appendix 1) and the class in general were a compilation of methods and techniques which resulted really helpful to students for doing any kind of writing tasks. This lesson was planned especially for 16 to 17-year-old students with an intermediate level of English. The group of ten students (five boys and five girls) that participated in the lesson was selected randomly. All of them are currently attending the sixth grade at the “Nuestra Familia” high school.

The entire lesson was centered on the Titanic theme, because it is a famous and well-known story which most people, young and grown-up, have heard about; therefore, they had a previous background, and the activities were easier to be carried out. Also, the lesson focused on practicing the simple past tense because it is the most suitable and easiest verb tense to write stories.

Since we intended to employ various activities during our lesson, we needed to plan our class carefully. The lesson was timed accordingly to the difficulty and the time each activity required to be completed satisfactorily. This let us keep control of the pace we set when implementing the planned activities, too.

In addition, we introduced technology to the lesson planning because it has been proven that when students are exposed to multimedia and interactive activities, they increase their percentage of retention and participation. So we made use of video, audio recordings, and music, and we even designed a series of slides in PowerPoint that helped us practice the grammar points selected for the lesson.

### **2.3. The application of the Darnell motivational techniques in three stages**

After many years of trying to develop a suitable method to increase motivation in her students, Miriam Darnell discovered by trial and error that the most efficient way to achieve this was to split the lesson into three main stages according to the nature of the activities utilized. Each of these stages consists of various activities focused on getting the students relaxed, preparing them to



write, and giving them writing assignments. Therefore, we followed this scheme and executed the lesson in the three stages suggested by Darnell.

### **2.3.1. Relaxation Stage**

When planning our lesson, we kept in mind the suggestions that Miriam Darnell gives before starting every class. She says that every time teachers intend to motivate and encourage students to write creatively, the sessions must begin with a short but efficient relaxation time. Thus, the first two activities of the lesson were based on the recommendations made by Darnell.

The first activity, which took us about three minutes, consisted of a warm-up where the students were asked to stand up and stretch. Then they had to place their hands on the shoulders of the classmate next to them and massage for a while. After this, the roles were changed, that is, the students who received the massage had to do the same to their classmates. With this preliminary activity we tried to get our students relaxed and comfortable in the classroom for the upcoming activities of the lesson.

The next activity was completed in another five minutes. It consisted of the application of the Suggestopedia method, created by the Bulgarian educator and psychologist Georgi Lozanov. This method promotes motivation by means of using external elements of relaxation, especially music, and helps learners acquire a vast useable vocabulary in a short time. So we decided to utilize this method by taking our students into a mental journey aboard the famous ship Titanic, with the help of a piece of classical music as a relaxing factor.

The music used while the story was being told was of the Baroque type. We used this type of songs because besides helping students get relaxed, it also improves memory and contributes to a fast assimilation of facts. This can be asserted by research findings which discovered that the 80-beat-per-minute tempo that the Baroque music has stimulates the zones of the brain related to memory and retention of information (272). Although Lozanov has also subscribed to other types of music, Baroque music is most highly recommended



for this kind of activities. Additionally, the music chosen by us contained ocean sounds. The purpose of this selection was obvious; since we were using the Titanic as the basis for our lesson, these sounds went according to the topic; consequently, it also helped the students create a mental image of what they were going to write about.

Moreover, we guided the students through an imaginary journey aboard the Titanic. The journey started when we asked the students to close their eyes and listen to the music playing. Then a descriptive story about a voyage on this famous cruise was told by us with a low and paused pitch of voice. The narration was full of useful new words, which could be inferred by the students according to the context, but, above all, they were able to remember those new words easily later. This is very important for the writing process because if a person needs to write, he/she has to know as much vocabulary as possible in order to make an adequate and accurate use of words, so their ideas will not be mistaken.



Img 1. The students during the relaxation process.



Img 2. The students were taken into an imaginary journey.

### 2.3.2. Preparation and Practice Stage

After the students have been through a phase of relaxation, Darnell proposes to start a process of preparation and practice prior to the attainment of our principal objective, which is making students write creatively. The purpose of this process is to immerse the learners into the central theme of the lesson,



increasing their level of commitment and predisposition for the upcoming writing task.

Thus, in the next activity the students were asked to talk about what they knew about the Titanic. The intention of this activity was to encourage them to speak, without worrying too much about grammar, but emphasizing the correct pronunciation of the –ed forms. With this, we tried to develop the principle of automaticity in the students, which is focused on fluency rather than on the overanalysis of grammatical forms. This activity had a great importance because the students not only recalled what they already knew about the Titanic, but also they listened to some features told by their classmates that they did not know about. This activity was planned to be finished in ten minutes.

Then the students were shown a five-minute video with the most relevant scenes from the movie “Titanic”. After that, the students had the opportunity to practice with a series of slides about the video they just saw (see Appendix 2). Every slide consisted of a picture from the scenes and a sentence in which the students had to fill in the blanks with the correct past form of the verbs in parenthesis. Every time a student answered correctly, positive reinforcement and feedback were given to that student. This was very beneficial because it increased students’ participation and encouraged them to speak.



Img 3. The students watched a short video with scenes from the movie “Titanic”.



It is also worth emphasizing that technology played a great role in the implementation of the activities described previously, since it provided many options to the learners and turned the conventional classroom into an attractive and interactive one. This clearly verified what is exposed by Rost in the previous chapter, who says that the introduction of elements such as videos, presentations, or recordings are really helpful to increase the students' commitment in the classroom.

### 2.3.3. Writing Stage

The final recommendation Darnell gives to teachers is that the writing assignment must be only done at the end of the session, once the students have been motivated enough and after an adequate preparation process.

Thus, for the last activity of the lesson, the students wrote an alternative ending for the story of the Titanic on a worksheet provided by us (see Appendix 3). They were given ten minutes to freely write anything their imagination could create. The only condition for this task was that they must use at least five verbs in past tense. When all the students finished their writing assignments, some volunteers read their stories while the rest of the class clapped as they heard a verb in past tense.



Img 4. The students during the final writing stage.





## CHAPTER III

### Results and Analysis of Data

Since the starting point of this project was the formulation of a hypothesis, which was to verify if the Darnell techniques were really effective to increase the students' motivation to write, we needed to apply certain techniques and instruments for gathering data that would help us corroborate or contradict that hypothesis in an empiric way.

The first of these techniques was observation. This consists of observing attentively the phenomenon, fact, or case, taking information and registering it for posterior analysis. The observation was performed in a direct way (participative observation), which means that we as investigators were in direct contact with the reality being investigated, and also intervened in the activities of the group, so a higher number of precise data was obtained.

This data was collected by using numerical rating scales which let us determine if the students increased their levels of motivation or not. The purpose of these scales was to establish ranks of response and interaction in the students, according to what we observed throughout the execution of the activities prepared for the lesson. In other words, the scales helped us classify in a very accurate way the resultant data from the observation process we performed when the planned activities were being carried out by the students in the classroom (see Appendix 4). Below, the results of the observation are presented:

1. The students participated in class (Darnell techniques): Both of us agreed that the students participated very much (5) in each activity.
2. The students felt motivated: One of us thought that the students were highly motivated (5) with the usage of these techniques and activities, while the other thought the students were not very motivated (4).
3. The students felt relaxed with the music: With this we also had different perceptions about the level of relaxation by means of the music. One of us said that the students were really relaxed at the time the



classical music was playing (5); however, the other said that the students were not entirely relaxed with the music (4).

4. The students demonstrated being interested in the new technique: Both of us saw that the students were greatly interested in the Darnell technique (5).

5: The students demonstrated being interested in writing at the end of the session: We both came to an agreement in saying that the ten students were really interested to write the new ending for the movie *Titanic* (5).

6. The students got adapted to the material used by the teacher: Our perception was that the students did not present any kind of difficulty to understand and work with the material given for each one of the activities (5).

7. The students assimilated the Darnell technique: This time we also had different ideas about the assimilation of the Darnell motivational technique. While one of us thought that the students had an excellent assimilation of the technique, the other thought the students had only fair assimilation of the technique.

Once all the activities planned for our lesson were completed, the ten students were asked to participate in a short survey, our second technique for collecting data. For this, they were given questionnaires, as they are a useful and effective means to collect information in a relatively short time. Each of the questionnaires contained five multiple choice questions (see Appendix 5). We decided to use this type of questions because they offer a more accurate description of the phenomenon and are more viable at the time of quantifying results.

Since this questionnaire had the purpose of determining if the objectives proposed for the lesson were fulfilled or not, the students were asked to express their opinion by choosing the item that best described what they thought about the activities, the methods, and the materials utilized for the lesson they just attended. Following are the results of each one of the questions from the questionnaire (see Appendix 6):



1. Do you think English is important?: Ninety percent (90%) of the students thought English is definitely important. Ten percent (10%) of them thought English is probably important. None (0%) of them were indecisive, or thought English was probably or definitely unimportant.

2. Do you think that the materials your teacher commonly uses in the classroom are actually useful to reinforce or increase your level of English?: Only thirty (30%) of the students thought the materials used by their teacher were definitely useful. Seventy percent (70%) of them thought that those materials were probably useful. None (0%) of them were indecisive, or thought the materials were probably or definitely useless.

3. Have you had classes of English like this previously?: Only ten percent (10%) of the students said that they had always had this kind of classes. Also, ten percent (10%) of them said that they had regularly had this kind of classes before. Twenty percent (20%) of the students said that they had sometimes had this kind of classes. Also, twenty percent (20%) of them said that they had rarely had classes of English like this before. And forty percent (40%) of them said that they had never had this kind of classes of English previously.

4. How useful were these techniques to increase your motivation in the classroom?: Fifty percent (50%) of the students thought the activities and techniques used during the lesson definitely increased their level of motivation. The other fifty percent (10%) of them thought that the activities and techniques probably increased their motivation. None (0%) of them were indecisive, or thought the activities and techniques probably or definitely did not increase their level of motivation.

5. Would you like to continue having classes of English like this?: Eighty percent (80%) of the students said that they definitely would like to keep having this type of classes. Only twenty percent (20%) of them said that they probably would like to continue having this kind of classes of English



in the future. None (0%) of them were indecisive, or said that they probably or definitely would not like to continue having classes like this in future sessions.



## CONCLUSIONS

Our perspectives before the implementation of this investigatory project were based on the experiences and difficulties we had gone through in our teaching career. At the beginning, we assumed that students were unwilling to do tasks at school by nature, but after completing the activities we planned for our lesson, we could realize that students have the tendency of not fulfilling their assignments because they are not properly or sufficiently motivated.

We were pleasantly surprised when we perceived the immediate positive response of the students who participated in the class planned by us. It was also clear that their level of participation was increased thanks to the integration of multimedia elements into the lesson, such as PowerPoint presentations, videos, and music. However, it is important to point out that the successful carrying out of our lesson was due to the fact that the institution where we implemented it had the facilities and technological devices needed for each and every one of our activities.

Additionally, the results of the survey were also very satisfactory for us, since most of the students felt the lesson was appropriate and well-directed. Nevertheless, those students who thought our lesson was not good enough gave us the duty of correcting our mistakes and adding some details that were missing during the execution of the lesson. This correction process will enhance our future teaching practices and will make us better teachers, consequently benefitting our students, who are the real motif of our work.

The experience of this application led us to think of a further improvement in the designing of the lesson in order to overcome the difficulties presented in our first approach, since there were so many activities planned that we needed to set specific timing for each activity. We think that this did not allow the students to develop their creativity well because they felt attached to a certain period of time for completing an activity.

As a conclusion, we can say that the techniques and activities proposed by Miriam Darnell are in fact useful and can be applied in our classroom. It is



worth emphasizing, though, that we need to have the necessary implements and materials for the accomplishment of the activities we want to use, and also we need a meticulous timing for the activities, so they can be completed in a proper and effective way.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Our first suggestion when applying the Darnell techniques in the classroom is to try to use as many activities as we can to develop students' motivation to write. It is also important to choose activities according to the students' ages, since inappropriate activities may result boring or unappealing for the learners, consequently, discouraging them.

When planning the activities, we have to take into account whether the school has all the resources needed, and that we have enough resources for every student in the class because in order to achieve our objective all the materials used for the activities must be the correct ones.

Time can be against us, but if we organize and control the time for each activity, we can be successful and carry out the lesson plan satisfactorily. The number of students will also affect the time, since a larger class will take more time for completing the activities.

To have a better idea of the students' performance during the class period and by the end of a lesson teachers should employ activities that combine different communicational skills. For example, making students clap every time they hear a certain grammatical structure when one of their classmates is reading what he/she just wrote.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Lesson Plan

Lesson topic: Past Tense

Grade/Age/Language Level: 16-17 year olds – intermediate

Time/Date/Length: 45 mins.

Overall Objectives: Students will be able to use the past tense of the verbs.

	Time	Groups	Activities	Materials/ Resources	Specific Objectives
<b>Prepare</b>	5'	Whole class	- Begin the class with a warm-up activity based on the Suggestopedia method. Students are asked to close their eyes. A story about a journey on the Titanic is told while relaxing music is played.	- Radio - CD/MP3 Player	Introduce the topic. Get students relaxed and motivated.
<b>Present</b>	10'	Whole class	- Ask the students if they know the story of the Titanic.  - Students are asked to tell different aspects they remember about this historical ship.  - Write the different answers the students give on the whiteboard, emphasizing the past form of the verbs. Check the correct pronunciation of the –ed forms.	-Whiteboard/ markers	Students will recall a known story from the past.  Students will use the past tense to convey what they remember.
<b>Practice</b>	5'  5'	Whole class	- Show a short video with scenes from the movie “Titanic” to the students.  - Show a series of slides about those scenes with which students will practice the past form of regular and irregular verbs.  - Reinforce pronunciation of the past tense of regular verbs.	- Projector - Computer	Students will practice and review the past tense form of verbs.
<b>Perform</b>	10'  10'	Pairs	- Students will work in pairs writing a short alternative ending for the movie using verbs in the past tense and their imagination.  - Students share their writings in front of the class. The rest of the class will clap every time they hear a verb in past tense.	- Writing Paper	Students will practice the past tense form of the verbs in writing. Teacher will observe if students have mastered the use of the past tense form of the verbs.





Appendix 2. PowerPoint Slides

Complete the following sentences with the simple past form of the verb in parenthesis.



Jack **won** (win) the tickets.



Jack **saved** (save) Rose.



Jack and Rose **talked** (talk) the next day.



Jack **dined** (dine\*) with wealthy\*\* people.

\* Have a meal  
\*\* Rich



Jack and Rose **danced** (dance) and **had** (have) fun.



Jack and Rose **felt** (feel) they were flying.



The Titanic **hit** (hit) the iceberg.



While the Titanic **sank** (sink), some people **escaped** (escape) on lifeboats.



Jack **passed away** (pass away\*) in the cold water and Rose **cried** (cry).

\*Die



### Appendix 3. Worksheet

## TITANIC

Write a different and original end for the story of the Titanic. You must use at least 5 verbs in their respective past tense form.



*The Titanic was an enormous and powerful ship, for this reason people thought it was unsinkable. On its first and only voyage many people from different social classes travelled on it. Jack was a poor young boy who won a ticket for this cruise. Rose was a rich young girl who had to get married to a rich man, but she didn't love him. One day she decided to jump off from the ship. Fortunately, Jack showed up and saved her. They started to spend time together and fell in love, but obviously their love was forbidden. One night the ship hit a giant iceberg and began to sink into the ocean.*

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## Appendix 5. Questionnaire

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Please mark with a cross (x) your answer.

#### 1. Do you think English is important?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Indecisive
- Probably no
- Definitely no

#### 2. Do you think that the materials your teacher commonly uses in the classroom are actually useful to reinforce or increase your level of English?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Indecisive
- Probably no
- Definitely no

#### 3. Have you had classes of English like this previously?

- Always
- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

#### 4. Were these techniques useful to increase your motivation in the classroom?

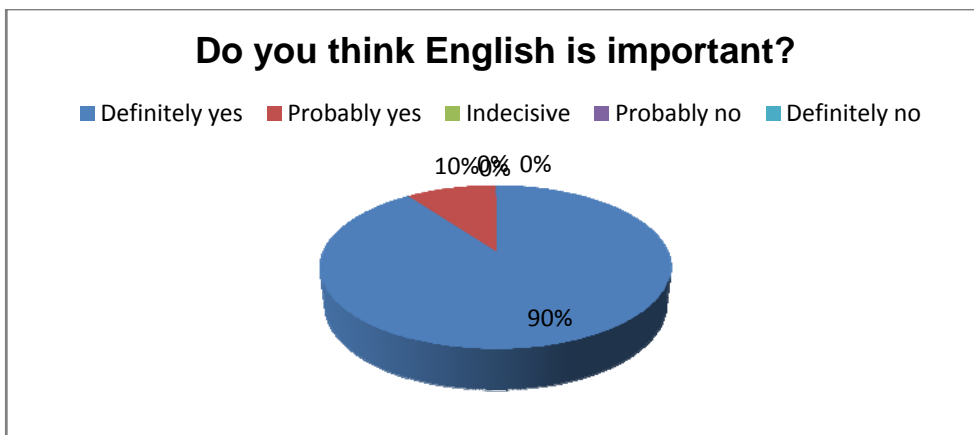
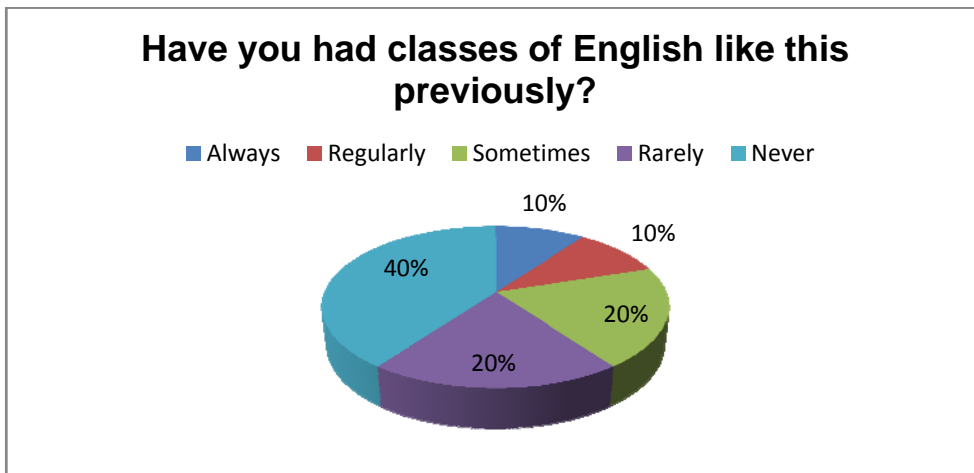
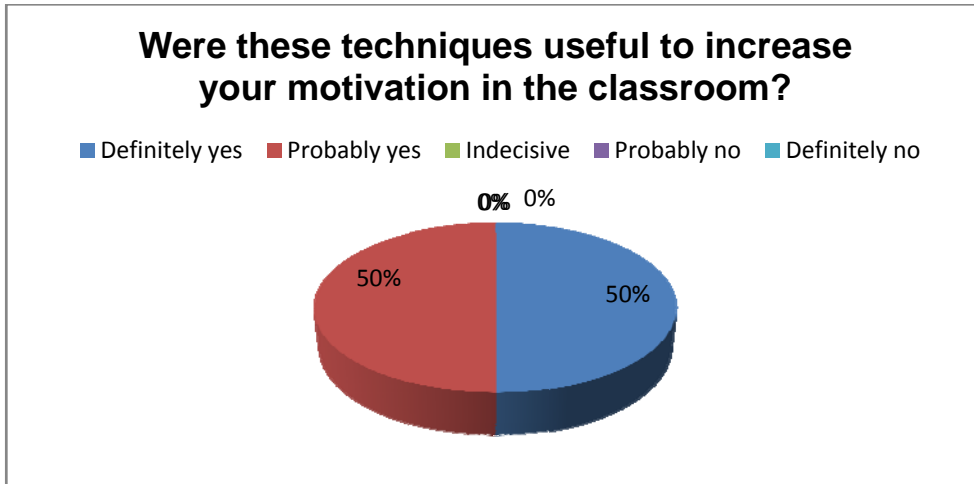
- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Indecisive
- Probably no
- Definitely no

#### 5. Would you like to continue having classes of English like this?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Indecisive
- Probably no
- Definitely no



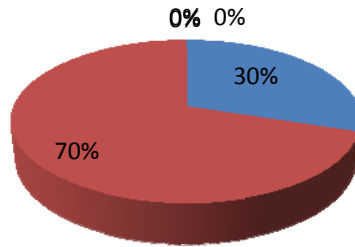
**Appendix 6. Graphs**





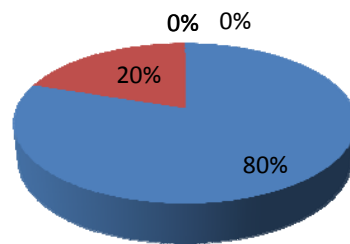
**Do you think that the materials your teacher commonly uses in the classroom are actually useful to reinforce or increase your level of English?**

■ Definitely yes ■ Probably yes ■ Indecisive ■ Probably no ■ Definitely no



**Would you like to continue having classes of English like this?**

■ Definitely yes ■ Probably yes ■ Indecisive ■ Probably no ■ Definitely no





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