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Extranjera Cohorte: II

Managing Anxiety Regarding the International Baccalaureate Program Evaluation, Paper 1  
(Mock Exams): An Action Research Study

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## **Resumen:**

La ansiedad es un factor afectivo que juega un papel crucial en los estudiantes cuando se trata de desarrollar cualquier tipo de evaluación académica. Se han sugerido varias estrategias para hacer frente a este factor afectivo, obteniendo diferentes resultados. Por otro lado, la estrategia de Escritura Expresiva (EE) ha sido considerada durante muchos años como un reductor de la ansiedad en diferentes campos, ya que permite a las personas expresar sus emociones y sentimientos referente a un factor estresante al que se enfrentan en su debido momento. El presente estudio investigó los efectos de la EE en la reducción de la ansiedad en 78 estudiantes del tercer año de bachillerato de la Unidad Educativa Particular Rosa de Jesús Cordero al momento de realizar la prueba 1 del Programa de Bachillerato Internacional (PBI). En este estudio se utilizó un diseño de investigación de método mixto. La parte cuantitativa consistió en un pre y post prueba de ansiedad, mientras que los datos de la parte cualitativa se recogieron a través del análisis de los diarios de las estudiantes. El análisis y la interpretación de los datos cuantitativos revelaron que la EE tuvo un efecto positivo en lo que respecta al manejo de la ansiedad de las estudiantes antes de desarrollar la prueba 1; mientras que los datos recogidos cualitativamente apoyaron este hallazgo.

**Palabras claves:** Ansiedad. Escritura Expresiva. Prueba 1. Programa de Bachillerato Internacional. Efecto.



**Abstract:**

Anxiety is an affective factor that plays a crucial role in students when it comes to take any type of academic assessment. There has been suggested several strategies to cope with this affective factor, obtaining different results. On the other hand, the strategy Expressive Writing (EW) has been considered for many years as an anxiety reducer in different fields, since it allows people to express their emotions and feelings regarding an important stressor they are facing at the moment. The current study investigated the effects of EW in reducing anxiety in 78 female senior students from Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School while taking paper 1 mock exam in the International Baccalaureate Program (IBP). A mixed method research design was used in this study. The quantitative part consisted of a TAS pretest and posttest, while the qualitative part data was collected through the analysis of students' journals. The analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data revealed that EW had a positive effect in regards to managing students' anxiety before developing paper 1; whereas the data gathered qualitatively supported this finding.

**Keywords:** Anxiety. Expressive Writing. Paper 1. International Baccalaureate Program. Effect.



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## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my beloved father Gabriel, who has been by my side all the time. To my brothers Fernando, Marco, and Wilson, to my little niece, Vale who is the apple of my eye; and to my beautiful angel who I believe is always taking care of me, my mom.

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## INTRODUCTION

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a demanding program that is taught in several countries around the world. It offers four programs so far Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), Diploma Programme (DP), and Career-related Programme (CP). They help students to study the world in ways that are beyond the scope of individual subjects, having as a main approach the development of international mindedness in students. Rosa de Jesus Cordero High School currently offers the DP which is a program that requires the best skills of students in regards of research, communication, and service to the community. Due to the fact of how demanding the DP might turn out to be for most students, the current study has proved that anxiety is a factor that affects the academic performance in students, specifically when developing paper 1(readings) in the English B subject. In order to assist students to manage their anxiety before taking paper 1, the strategy *expressive writing* has been applied. The chosen population for this study was 78 female senior students who took the DP in Rosa de Jesus Cordero High School located in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador.

Six chapters will be presented along this dissertation work which will explain in detail the content and results found before and after the intervention.

Chapter one offers the background of the study, the rationale, purpose, statement of the problem, research questions, general objective and specific objectives.

Chapter two displays the theoretical framework and literature review with used in this study.



Chapter three explains the methodology that was applied in the study, which consists of the research design and approach, context and participants, ethical issues, and the data collection design and instruments.

Chapter four presents the results that were obtained from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data through the use of a Test Anxiety Scale (TAS) pretest, posttest, and the writing of journals.

Chapter five states the discussion of the study.

Chapter six shows the conclusions, recommendations, and limitations.



## CHAPTER I

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Background

“Imagine a worldwide community of schools, educators and students with a shared mission to empower young people with the values, knowledge and skills to create a better and more peaceful world. This is the International Baccalaureate (IB).” (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2019, p. 1). In this globalized world, education must put more emphasis on instructing young people on how to deal with the world, and that is the purpose of the International Baccalaureate, as stated in IB’s mission:

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right. (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2019)

Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School started the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) in August 2017 with junior students. This program, which lasts two years, consists of six core subjects stated within Standard Level (SL) and Higher Level (HL) according to the importance of each one. In SL there are Math, Biology, and History and in HL there are Spanish A: Literature, Business Management, and English B. The





content of HL subjects is considered to be more complex than the subjects taught in SL and the final examination is held differently, and this situation produces students to feel stressed.

## **1.2 Rationale**

As stated before, the subject English B belongs to HL; therefore, it demands much more commitment from students since the DP does not require grammar to be taught throughout the two years of study. Rather, students are instructed how to analyze different contexts, write reports and letters, and be critical for the different contexts presented to them; but above all, students are required to read information in the target language. According to the International Baccalaureate Organization (2011), the IB external evaluation is established as follows: paper 1 (25%), paper 2 (25%), and the written assignment (20%). Paper 2 and the written assignment are about the writing skill, and paper 1 assesses the ability of the students to read a range of five texts such as articles, blogs, essays, interviews, and news reports, among others, and answer questions related to those texts, all in one hour and thirty minutes.

Unfortunately, there is not a solid reading culture in students in their second language (L2), nor has the school implemented the previous programmes offered by the IB yet; which are Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP), in theory, these should be developed before the DP is applied. Since these programmes were not offered to these students, the results are a lack of reading strategies and students getting anxious when being timed to develop reading texts. Due to this fact, Paper 1 is considered the hardest part of the final evaluation because of the time given and the produced anxiety. In addition, further research proposed by Suldo, Shaunessy, Michalowski, and Shaffer



(2008) is to carry out a study with students in urban and suburban environments and from other college-preparatory programmes, which extends the generalizability of findings, which were the different levels of anxiety found in IB students. Additional research is needed to empirically confirm the sources of stress perceived by students in the IB programme. This is why it is necessary to study these sources and consider possible strategies as expressive writing to relieve stress at Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School. The possible findings might be that IB students from Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School feel stressed when taking paper 1, then expressive writing might help them to overcome this.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The aim of this study is to apply the strategy *expressive writing* in order to prepare students for the final assessment (external evaluation) which will be held on May 2019. Such strategy might help them not only to improve their abilities to read but also to manage their time wisely in order to reduce anxiety. In addition, practicing *reading* may increase students' vocabulary in English helping them perform paper 2 and the written assignment better. It is important to establish that students will have only one external assessment by the IB organization; however, they have been on constant training during the 2017-2018 school year and will continue this as part of the next academic year 2018-2019. Shen, Yang, Zhang, and Zhang (2018) expressed that training on a process might produce changes in a posttest anxiety, adding to this that excessive test anxiety could have an effect in learning, academic performance, and psychological health.



#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

When the DP, offered by the IB, begins in any school, students are free to choose if they want to take that programme or not. Currently, Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School does not offer the Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU), which is the High School diploma obtained in the Ecuadorian educational system. Students must study a group of core subjects that allow them to acquire basic knowledge in subjects such as social science, math, literature, and English to name a few in order to prepare them to go to university (Ministerio de Educacion, n.d.) Nevertheless, at Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School, only the DP is available; therefore, students did not have the option of BGU and all of them were signed up for the DP by their parents. Before the DP began, students took a TOEFL test on May 2017 and the English proficiency results varied from A1 to C1. It is important to note that to successfully complete the IB; the minimum English requirement is a B1 for Higher Level subjects since grammar is no longer explicitly taught. During the DP, students must be trained for the final external evaluation that corresponds to Paper 1, Paper 2, and The Written Assignment. The exams for the external evaluation will be sent by the IB organization and the DP coordinator along with the professors from the school will be in charge of administering them to students.

During the first semester (September 2017 to January 2018), of instruction for the DP, students have already demonstrated a better performance on mock exams of Paper 2 (writing) than Paper 1 (reading). It has been noticed that every time they have a text with questions to answer within a certain time, they get very nervous and anxious, and suffer a great deal because they had never worked with the reading skill in that way before. Hence, they still cannot finish two reading activities with their corresponding questions



within a forty-minute class and the goal is five texts in ninety minutes during the external exam. Consequently, their grades are low and they ask the teacher not to have any more readings, they do not even want to practice, which demonstrates the degree to which students suffer from anxiety.

This is supported by Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999) who stated that reading in a foreign language (FL) can be anxiety provoking for some students and their reading anxiety levels increase with the perceptions of the complexity of the readings, and as a result, have low grades. In addition, Bernhardt (2005) demonstrated that anxiety had been ignored in previous reading models, and this could explain the variations in recorded reading performances. Bernhardt (2005) found that anxiety was an inevitable effect that may be found in the FL reading process and that it may influence FL reading achievement.

Also, Von der Embse, Barterian, and Segool (2013), established that in the last decade, only ten studies have been found in the literature examining the effectiveness of test anxiety interventions with children and adolescents. Considering the information previously stated, anxiety is an important affective factor that needs to be analyzed in research.

Shen et al., (2018) stated that students found expressive writing (EW) an effective test anxiety reducer in their study and that EW as an inexpensive, easy, and convenient method for managing anxiety; and given its high efficiency, they encourage promoting this method in schools. Nevertheless, this study only measured the changes in test anxiety among students but not the changes in their performance. For that reason, the strategy *expressive writing* has been chosen to be applied to these students.



## 1.5 Research Question

Considering that learning a language is not all that matters, but also the different affective factors that influence its learning, such as anxiety during evaluations, it was considered to develop the following research question.

- To what degree does the strategy *expressive writing* help senior students manage their anxiety while solving paper 1, mock exams, of the external evaluation from the International Baccalaureate Program at Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School?

## 1.6 Objectives

### 1.6.1 General Objective

- To analyze the effects that the *expressive writing* technique has on students' anxiety management during the mock exams pertaining to the external evaluation of the International Baccalaureate, paper 1.

### 1.6.2 Specific Objectives

- To evaluate the degree of perceived anxiety using a pretest and posttest through Sarason's Anxiety Test Scale to determine the effect of expressive writing.
- To recognize the main elements that trigger anxiety in students before engaging in paper 1 (mock exams) activity through their journals.



## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The following Theoretical Framework and Literature Review combine information that has been gathered from research articles, books, and web resources in order to provide a better understanding of the International Baccalaureate Program, the *anxiety* affective factor in students while being assessed, and how the strategy *expressive writing* can help overcome anxiety in students.

#### 2. Theoretical Framework

##### 2.1 What is an IB education?

According to the International Baccalaureate Organization (2019), the IB is a worldwide community of schools, educators and students that have the same ideology to empower young people with skills, values and knowledge to create a better and more peaceful world.

The IB motivates students and teachers as well to fulfill the ten attributes such as inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective. The development of such attributes allows students to keep learning for the rest of their lives either independently or collaboratively.

The IB offers four programmes so far, Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), Diploma Programme (DP), and Career-related Programme (CP). These programmes highlight the significance of making connections, establishing relationships between the different academic disciplines, and study the world in ways beyond the scope of individual subjects. All of them share the same approach which is the



development of international mindedness in students. (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2019).

Assessment is constant, varied, and integral during the four IB programmes, that is why students are required the accomplishment of a culminating project for each programme. For example, the PYP has an exhibition of the subject areas; the MYP presents a personal or community project; the DP develops an extended essay of one of the subject areas; and the CP does a reflective project. These works offer students the opportunity to deepen and display their knowledge, understanding and skills, and to celebrate their learning journey (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2019).

The International Baccalaureate Organization (2019) states:

The MYP, DP and CP also offer a range of IB-validated assessments. These assessments balance validity and reliability, offering assessment tasks that, for example, require students to demonstrate higher-order thinking rather than simple, factual recall. These rigorous assessments help to maintain the IB's hard-earned reputation for high standards and challenging programmes. (p. 5)

### **2.1.1 Diploma Programme**

The first programme offered by the IB was the Diploma Programme (DP) in 1968. It aimed to provide a challenging and balanced education to promote intercultural understanding and respect of other cultures, languages and points of view. At the beginning only private schools offered the IB; nonetheless, this has changed over the years since in 1994, with the introduction of the Middle Years Programme (MYP) and the



Primary Years Programme (PYP) in 1997, the IB recognized a continuum of international education for students aged 3 to 19, adding the Career-related Programme (CP) in 2012 which enriched the education (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

The curriculum of the DP offers a challenging, internationally focused, broad and balanced educational experience for students aged 16 to 19, who are required to study six subjects and a core curriculum. Those six subjects are allocated within any of the following: Language and Literature, Language Acquisition, Individuals and Societies, Sciences, Mathematics, The Arts; and the Core: creativity, activity, service (CAS), extended essay (EE), and theory of knowledge (TOK). The curriculum is currently studied over two years, the last two years of secondary school. The DP desires to give an education that crosses disciplinary, cultural, national and geographical boundaries due to the fact the IB supports the development of values and life skills needed to have a satisfied and meaningful life Nowadays, the diploma is accepted by the best universities around the world and the majority of DP graduates enter higher education. (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

## **2.1.2 Approaches to Learning and Teaching in the Diploma Programme (DP)**

### **2.1.2.1 Approaches to Learning**

The Approaches to Learning (ATL) in the DP aim to develop students' cognitive, metacognitive and affective skills, which are grouped into the same five categories: Thinking skills, Communication skills, Social skills, Self-management skills, and Research skills.





*Thinking skills:* Being “thinkers” is one of the attributes of an IB learner and this skill exercises initiative to recognize and approach complex problems, and make decisions that are reasoned and ethical in a critical and creative form. Thinking skills cover metacognition, reflection and critical thinking (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

*Communication skills:* They are needed because they form and maintain good interpersonal relationships with the educational community. The communication skills encompass different abilities such as communicating in written or oral form, listening and understanding spoken messages, writing different types of texts, and formulating one’s arguments. Such skills play an essential role in the DP, especially in the Core subjects that are CAS, EE, and TOK (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

*Social skills:* These skills have a close relation with *communication skills* and also to the attributes of the IB profile learner such as being *caring*. Nevertheless, collaboration is imperative for developing these skills as well as social and emotional learning (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

*Self-management skills:* These skills are categorized in organization and affective skills, being *organization* the skill that manages time, tasks, goal-setting etc. in an effective way; and *affective* refers to the management of the state of mind, self-motivation, resilience, mindfulness, etc. to enable students to gain control over their mood and behavior (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).



*Research skills:* they play a significant role in the DP, especially when developing the extended essay (EE), which is a demanding task, where students have the opportunity to improve their sophisticated research and writing skills. Another purpose of these skills is to prepare students for university where they will have similar tasks to undertake. When students work on their research skills, they also work on values such as academic honesty and the importance of giving the appropriate recognition to others' work (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

### **2.1.2.2 Approaches to Teaching**

On the other hand, there are Approaches to teaching which explore the main pedagogical principles that influence and support the IB programmes along with associated teaching strategies. Approaches to teaching offer further guidance on five key areas related to the DP: Teaching the DP with Approaches to learning (ATL) in mind, pedagogy or andragogy?, utilizing technology effectively, every DP teacher is a language teacher, and planning. (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

*Teaching the DP with ATL in mind* starts identifying the types of skills that are trying to be developed and for this, some steps need to be taken into consideration such as allowing the student to self-assess and analyze the results that have been obtained across the class. Teaching with ATL in mind influences on the pedagogical approach adopted by teachers, especially on how teachers see themselves within the classroom (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).



*Pedagogy or andragogy?* The science and art of teaching children is called pedagogy, contrary to andragogy, which is the art and science of helping adults during the learning process. Since the DP is aimed for 16-19-year-old students, it is more suitable to move away from pedagogical approaches towards the andragogical ones. Due to the fact that the DP is a preparation course for further education, then focusing on andragogical approaches is more appropriate and beneficial for students rather than the pedagogical ones (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

*Utilizing technology effectively:* Technology will always play a significant role when referring to approaches to teaching in order to support and enable them. One example is the “flipped classroom” where students obtain new knowledge at home by watching or reading material related to certain topics; by doing so, students will free up the lesson to proceed with application on that knowledge and discussion. There are several technology integration frameworks that can be used within classrooms and enhance students’ educational experiences, and help teachers as well to think more systematically about technology use (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

*Every DP teacher is a language teacher:* Three main aspects are involved in IB, multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement; hence, language is greatly valued by the IB because it considers every teacher plays an important role and has the responsibility to support and reinforce students’ language development through the use of teaching approaches that guarantee all multilingual students, including the ones learning in a different language than their native, to have access to the curriculum (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).



*Planning:* The IB unit planners are intended to make teachers reflect not only on what they are teaching but how they are teaching. A subject-specific unit plan should be an engaging, relevant and challenging learning experience that is built on the prior knowledge of students, teach them positive attitudes, and develop the ten attributes of an IB learner. In addition, a unit planner should have a summative assessment at the end of the unit so students have the opportunity to show the achievement of the DP objectives (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

### **2.1.3 Affective Factors: Anxiety**

Rachman (2004) illustrated anxiety as a phenomenon that people encounter within their daily experience. It is considered to be one of the most prevalent and pervasive human emotions, with a large sector of the world's populations suffering from excessive and overbearing levels. Additionally, Rachman (2004) described anxiety as a psychological distress that might occur for the expectation of a disconcerting event.

According to Henter (2013), the learning process of language acquisition depends on a series of factors: cognitive factors (language aptitude, learning strategies), affective factors (attitudes, motivation, anxiety), metacognitive factors, and demographic factors. Henter (2013) referred to language anxiety as a factor with devastating effects on performance in oral communication and it usually happens in a recurrent situation such as learning a foreign language.

Ehmke (2018) said that sometimes anxiety may be easy to identify within the classroom by observation, like when a child feels nervous before a test. However, other times anxiety



may look entirely different, such as an upset stomach, angry behavior, and even a learning disorder. There are different kinds of anxiety and it can be challenging to identify in the classroom. Among the different types of anxiety that a student can suffer, the most common is *generalized anxiety*, which refers to the concern that students have regarding school performance.

#### **2.1.4 Expressive Writing**

Murray (2002) stated that *writing* is linked to therapy and as a proof of this, for years, practitioners have used journals, questionnaires, and different writing forms to help people heal from stress and trauma. Nevertheless, skeptics have argued that there are other forms of helping people to recover their health such as changes in social support or simply time. Murray (2002) also suggested that writing does make a difference, even though this difference will always depend on the population being studied and the form that writing takes. In addition, Murray (2002) said the key to writing's effectiveness lays on the way people use this strategy to understand their experiences and the words they choose to express their emotion; nonetheless, exposing those emotions alone is not enough to relieve stress, thereby improve health.

Pennebaker and Beall (1986) established expressive writing (EW) as a simple and clinical technique that encourages individuals to write about their thoughts and feelings freely regarding an important stressor they are facing. Park, Beilock, Ramirez (2014) mentioned that previous work demonstrates that writing about a stressful or emotional event for 15-20 minutes may provide physical and psychological benefits for clinical and



non-clinical populations; therefore, EW has shown to mitigate negative thoughts in anxious and depressed people.

Slatcher and Pennebaker (2004) stated that writing has produced very positive results in participants –from children to the elderly, from honor students to maximum-security prisoners— who have lived a remarkable range and depth of traumatic experiences.

Slatcher and Pennebaker (2004) also pointed out that the real value of EW is its influence on physical health and fewer visits to the doctor.

## **2.2 Literature Review**

Suldo et al (2008) established that their study explored coping strategies that the IB students used to identify which of those may be assessed while they are young. There were forty-eight IB students, fifteen to eighteen years old, everybody completed self-report surveys on The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) Anxiety Problems scale of the Youth Self-Report (YSR), assessing mental health stress and school functioning. After nine months of collecting data of the self-report surveys, and the coping strategies for students above-average levels of anxiety were self-reliance and engaging in multiple type of diversions; whereas students with low anxiety coping strategies were seeking support from specific resources and avoiding problems. The further research proposed by Suldo et al. (2008) is that research with students in urban and suburban environments and from other college-preparatory programs is needed to extend the generalizability of findings; and additional research is needed as well to empirically confirm the sources of stress perceived by students in the IB program.

Rezaabadi (2017) referred to social class anxiety, test anxiety, facilitating and debilitating anxiety, and foreign language reading anxiety. For this study, a subjective and a



general social class were used. In addition, Rezaabadi (2017) stated that weakening anxiety may hinder learning and achievement in students, while enabling anxiety may improve them. In other words, a lesser state of anxiety may have a facilitative function, but a high level of anxiety is associated with a debilitating influence.

Rezaabadi's study (2017) had forty-seven Iranian students, twenty-two intermediate and twenty-five advanced students. This research used the academic reading IELTS from Cambridge University, the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS). The twenty-two-item Social Class Anxiety Scale (SCAS), and an open-ended questionnaire. The results demonstrated that students had a higher level of anxiety when they knew their reading tests would be graded; contrary to the ones with low anxiety level when they knew their tests would not be graded and would not affect their future.

According to Pressley, Dinary, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, and Brown (1992), when students read an L2 text, it is a problem-solving activity and they try to adjust their reading behaviors to the difficulty of the text, task demands, and other contextual variables.

Mirzaei, Rahimi Domakani, & Heidari, (2014) developed their study based on Gardner's MIT (Multiple Intelligence Test) and the possible role that this theory may be able to play in explaining the successful L2 learner's use of effective reading strategies. The authors were seeking a relationship between reading strategies and Multiple Intelligences (MI) profiles of the successful EFL readers and the types of intelligences and reading strategies that can act as the best predictor of reading comprehension. A quantitative data-collection was used for this study through a standardized proficiency test and two questionnaires which were applied to eighty successful university student readers. Mirzaei et al. (2014) states that seven types of intelligences were determined by the MI Inventory for Adults,



developed by Armstrong, T. (1993), and the results were obtained in the form of a Likert scale. In addition, to detect reading strategies, Oxford's taxonomy of language-learning strategies and Waxman and Pardon's strategy inventory were used. As a result of this study, Mirzaei et al. (2014) found that the students gave the affective strategy the minimum score meanwhile the cognitive and metacognitive received the maximum score due to their linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences.

Cassady (2009) said that a test anxiety should have cognitive (worries and preoccupying thoughts), behavioral (study habits before taking a test and their action during a test) and affective components (headaches, shaking, and heart rate increasing), and the researchers used this test anxiety model except they added one more component: social (fear of negative judgments).

Martin and Marsh (2006) referred to the academic buoyancy as the capacity that a student has to overcome the challenges and pressures that academic study and schooling may produce. The test anxiety was measured using the worry and tension scales from the Revised Test Anxiety Scale with 19 items classified later in categories such as: worry, tension, and social derogation. Whereas the academic buoyance was measured using the four-item scale for the stimulus "I don't let a bad grade affect my confidence." Out of the 3,225 participants, only 13.7% completed all six sessions. As a result, STEPS (Strategies to Tackle Exam Pressure and Stress) had impact in reducing anxiety in students who had a high level of tension; however, it did not have an impact in students who were low or mid test anxious. Putwain, Chamberlain, Daly, and Sadreddini (2014) added the social strategy to STEPS, having no reduction as a result in the extent that students were still fearful of negative comments by their peers. Even though STEPS worked with high anxiety students





test, the researchers established that there were two limitations that may have influenced the successful outcome which were the countless factors out of their immediate control and the participants showed willingness to please the researchers; therefore, a positive result was expected.

Kong (2012) established that in China different methods have been used by students such as cognitive therapy, psychoanalytic therapy, behavior therapy, and pharmacotherapy to reduce test anxiety, but the most effective methods take the longest time. Also, Ming-li, Hui-hui, Yuan, Qian, and Fang (2014) said that given the cons of these conventional interventions, scholars have started to look for new approaches and expressive writing may be one since it significantly reduced levels of test anxiety and is rather easily implemented.

Shen, Yang, Zhang, and Zhang (2018) randomly selected 200 senior students in Xinxiang city and asked them to complete Sarason's Test Anxiety (TAS). Seventy-five students with high test anxiety were recruited and divided in two groups: expressive writing (EW) and control writing (CW). The students were instructed to write for twenty minutes every day during thirty days. In the EW group students were required to write about their positive emotions, whereas the CW group had to write about their daily activities, and to prevent any student from withdrawing the project, they were provided with payment. Qualitative and quantitative results were gathered through pretest and posttest of TAS; and codes, definition, guidelines for inclusion and exclusion criteria, and example test. The results that were obtained by Shen et al. (2018) focused on three nodes: effectiveness, frequency, and convenience. Students found expressive writing as a test anxiety reducer in effectiveness; for some students the frequency of writing was acceptable; and the intervention was easy to carry out because all students needed was paper and pen. On the



other hand, CW group did not show a significant reduction in test anxiety. The researchers indicate that expressive writing of positive emotions does help reduce anxiety among subjects.

Considering that the IB program examination does cause stress in students, further research is proposed in different environments, according to Suldo et al. (2008), in order to confirm the sources of stress, one of them being *anxiety* while taking a test. The level of anxiety increases when students have to take a reading test acknowledging this would be graded; this is supported by Razzabadi's study (2017). Mirzaei et al. (2014) proved the affective strategy was given the minimum score by students due to their linguistic and mathematical intelligences, which made them give the cognitive and metacognitive strategy the highest score. Furthermore, to treat anxiety Shen et al (2018) found the expressive writing technique as a reducer of it for students. The researchers indicated this technique did reduce anxiety among subjects. Ming-li et al (2014) stated scholars have found expressive writing as a new approach due to the fact it reduced their levels of anxiety and can be easily implemented since all that is needed is paper and pen.

Taking into account that anxiety is an important affective factor among students while taking a test and expressive writing is considered as an anxiety reducer technique, this research will apply the EW technique to help reduce anxiety in students while taking paper

- 1.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY: ACTION RESEARCH

#### 3.1 Research Design and Approach

The study was a mixed method research design, which, according to Creswell (2014), has a combination of qualitative and quantitative research and data in a research study. Creswell (2014) established three basic mixed methods designs: convergent parallel, explanatory sequential and exploratory sequential. For the purpose of this study, the convergent mixed method approach was used since in this method, the researcher gathers the quantitative and qualitative data, studies them distinctly, and then proceeds to compare the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other, having as a key factor that both types of data should offer different types of information (Creswell, 2014).

The quantitative section of this study was a comparison and contrast of an anxiety pre and posttest, a T-test, carried out at the beginning and at the end of the study to verify if there was a reduction of the anxiety level and to validate the effectiveness of the *expressive writing* strategy. On the other hand, the qualitative portion included an in-depth interpretation of six students' journals that were written in their mother tongue Spanish, from December, 2018 to April, 2019. Veridical information may be found in students' journals about the different reasons that lead to anxiety. For ethical reasons, the name of the six students who wrote the journals will not be given, numbers will be used instead. It was an action research study.



### 3.2 Context and Participants

Rosa de Jesús Cordero is a Catholic private school located in Ricaurte parish in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador. It offers the levels of kindergarten (inicial), elementary school (básica elemental), middle school (básica media), high school (básica superior), and international baccalaureate (bachillerato internacional). During the research, there were 1699 female students who attended classes in the morning from 7:15 to 13:50. English, as a core subject, was taught for 8 hours per week in kindergarten, 10 hours in elementary, middle, and high school, and 8 hours in the international baccalaureate because of the number of subjects dictated in the programme.

Currently, the school does not offer content-based learning subjects in the target language and the DP does not have a student book; however, the teacher is in charge of generating authentic material, for which she has attended workshops offered by the IB organization nationally and internationally in 2016 and 2017. Moreover, there is an official IB web page and the High School is signed up for it; therefore, teachers have access to the material published there. In addition, there is a student book that the teacher has used as guide to create material.

At that time, there were 132 female students between 16 and 17 years old who were studying the DP and according to the school principal, there would not be new students admitted the next year because of the nature of the programme. The researcher (teacher) was in charge of three classes, 80 students in total; meanwhile a co-teacher was in charge of the rest of students. The participants for the study were the 80 female senior students (current 2017-2018 junior students) in Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School from the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. The group's English level was not



homogenous as it varied from A1 to C2 according to the Common European Framework; these results are based on the EPI exam that students took in December 2017.

Table 1	
<i>English Level of students according to the EPI exam</i>	
English level	Number of students
A1	6
A2	9
B1	20
B2	27
C1	11
C2	7
<i>Note.</i> The 132 students took the EPI exam; however, the data presented belongs to the 80 students under the charge of the researcher.	

The project was developed by only one researcher (teacher) since the current junior students continued with the same teacher during the next school year (2018-2019). The estimated date for launching the project was from September, 2018 until February, 2019.

### 3.3 Ethical Issues

During the school year 2017-2018, all the permissions were arranged so the project could start in November 2018. A letter of consent for developing the research project within the institution was sent to the principal and the vice principal was notified about the project for she is in charge of the academic part of the high school (See Appendix A). It is imperative to mention that the institution requires parents to sign a letter at the beginning of every school year where they give their consent to the institution to develop any academic project with their daughters (See appendix B). The group of students were informed about



the project and their participation was voluntary; even when not all students participated, the same activities were applied for everyone and their grades were not affected. A consent letter about the project was sent to their parents so they would sign it authorizing their daughter's participation (See appendix C). The real names of the participants were not displayed on any document and they did not have any risk of damage. The ethical part was presented to the committee of the institution for its approval.

### **3.4 Data Collection Design and Instruments**

#### **3.4.1 Instruments**

- ❖ An anxiety pretest and posttest (an adapted version of Sarason's Test Anxiety Scale (TAS, Shen, Yang, Zhang, & Zhang, 2018) (See appendix D, English version) This version was adapted and translated into Spanish by the English department from Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School. (See appendix E, Spanish version)
- ❖ Students' Journals: students wrote nine entries about their feelings and emotions in their journals, once a week since December 2018 until April 2019. The entries were written in their native language, Spanish.

#### **3.4.2 Quantitative study**

Quantitative research, as a concept, can be divided into two types: associational and experimental, having these two in common the determination of a relationship between or within variables. On one hand, the aim of associational research is to determine if there is a relationship between variables, and if it does, the strength of that relationship. On the other hand, in experimental research, one or more variables (independent) are manipulated to



determine the effect on another variable (dependent); such manipulation is defined as a treatment and the main objective of the researcher is to conclude whether there is a casual relationship or not. Many experimental researches encompass a comparison of pretreatment and posttreatment performance (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Consequently, the quantitative information of the present study can be considered as an experimental study.

Before applying the *expressive writing* strategy, students were asked to complete an adapted version of Sarason's Test Anxiety Scale (TAS) (Shen, Yang, Zhang, & Zhang, 2018) to have evidence of the anxiety that they went through, as Mackey & Gass (2005) said that participants should be given a pretest to confirm the comparability before their treatment, and a posttest to measure the effects of the treatment. This version, which consisted of 37 items of (true / false) Likert scale, was used to collect data from 78 learners at the high school. It is significant to mention that this test was translated into Spanish language by the English department of the High School; the researcher is part of the department, so the students did not find the items confusing in another language.

At the beginning of the school year of 2018-2019 in September, the researcher (teacher) had 80 students in total; nevertheless, a month later one student changed her class, and she became a student of the researcher's co-teacher; consequently, the researcher had 79 students left. Before the TAS was applied to students, the teacher explained to them about each item they would find on their questionnaires so they could answer properly, but at the end of that explanation, one student decided not to be part of the study, leaving the researcher with 78 students in total for the project.

Since the English subject was taught during eight hours per week, two hours per day during four days, the researcher used some of her academic hours to give the proper



explanation and after this; she distributed the questionnaires to her 78 students who were divided in three classes of 27, 27, and 25. Students had 40 minutes (one academic hour) to fill in the TAS.

The data collected from the adapted version of Sarason's Test Anxiety Scale (TAS) was entered in spreadsheets and later analyzed through SPSS 25 Software. The results are expressed through measures of central tendency and dispersion and percentage frequencies. The data behavior was not normal according to Kolmogorov Smirnov test ( $p < .05$ ); for this reason two nonparametric tests were utilized: Wilcoxon test to establish the general change of the pre and the post test of anxiety, and McNemar's chi-squared test to establish the change in affirmations per item in the TAS. The statistical significance considered was 0.05 ( $p < .05$ ). Additionally, it is essentially to explain the implication of the score of the Test Anxiety Scale, meaning that the total number of "True" answers is the student's anxiety level. A total of 12 or below ranks in the low anxiety range, a score of 12-20 ranks in the medium range; and any score above 20 signifies high-test anxiety. Nonetheless, scoring 15 or higher is an indicator that a student experiences considerable discomfort about taking tests.

### **3.4.3 Qualitative study**

According to Mackey & Gass (2005), the term *qualitative research* refers to investigation that is based on descriptive data that does not regularly make use of statistics. Qualitative research usually includes important characteristics such as rich description rather than quantification, natural and holistic representation rather than controlling contextual factors, few participants instead of using a large group, emic perspectives which





are the meanings people attach to the data being these distinguished from the etic ones which are interpreted according to the hypotheses of the researcher and they are more common in quantitative studies.

Mackey & Gass (2005) also noted that there are several techniques to collect qualitative data and the most common, according to them, are ethnographies, interviews, diaries/journals, case studies, and observational techniques. Consequently, for the purpose of this study, the technique of *expressive writing* through journals was used with the participants in order to collect the qualitative data since journals may show a rich description and a natural and holistic representation of the whole process of applying this technique. Using a journal to collect data may allow the researcher to have insights into the language learning process from other perspectives besides his/her own.

When it comes to analyze qualitative data, researchers must consider the following three concerns: credibility, dependability, and transferability. In terms of *credibility*, it is important for researchers to demonstrate that their findings are reliable to their research population. As for *dependability*, the aim of researchers is to fully characterize the research context and the relationships among the participants. Meanwhile for *transferability*, the context is seen as integral. Even when qualitative data is rarely directly transferable from one context to another, the findings that might be transferable depend on the similarity of such context. A main method of reporting for determining similarity of context is known as “thick description” which is the process of using different perspectives to explain the insights gathered from a study (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

One of the most important concepts in the lexicon of a qualitative researcher, according to Ponterotto (2006), is “thick description” also known as “description, thick” due to the



fact that this term has been used in several entries of every major textbook regarding qualitative methods that has been published during the last three decades and can be found in the *Subject Index*. Moreover, it is important to establish the origin of the term ‘thick description’ and why it has become vital for qualitative researchers.

The first person in using this term was Gilbert Ryle, a British metaphysical philosopher at the University of Oxford. Ryle (1971) had referred to “thick” description as something that entailed ascribing intentionality to one’s behavior, understanding and absorbing the context of that behavior. Nevertheless, this term was used to describe the work of ethnography, and Geertz (1973) borrowed it stating the following,

From one point of view, that of the textbook, doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures, that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, "thick description." (p. 6)

Geertz (1973) pointed out that the anthropological writings data, was “our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (p. 9). Consequently, in order for a reader of anthropological information to rely on the credibility of the author’s findings and interpretations, the context must be thickly described. Moreover, Denzin (1989) asserted that a thick description does not only record what a person does but it goes beyond the facts and appearances. It shows details, context, emotions, and inserts history into experience establishing the significance of such



experience for the person or people involved in the process. In thick description, feelings, actions and voices are heard.

Furthermore, Davis (1995) explained that presenting and verifying assertions is the main goal in reporting interpretive qualitative research, and usually journal research reports focus on a limited number of assertions, making authors to organize such assertions in subsections of the report, mentioning thick description with three essential components:

1. Particular description: Richness of detail or representative examples from the gathered data.
2. General description: Information about the general patterns found in the data.
3. Interpretive commentary: Interpretation and explanation of the meaning of the findings in the qualitative data.

Thus, based on the previous information, thick description along with its three main components will be used to analyze the students' journals.

The expressive writing, which is the technique used in this study to reduce anxiety level in students, was obtained through journals. These journals were written by them until they had to take their formal assessment paper 1 mock exam on April of 2019, delivered by the school, before their official external examination that was held in May of the same year, delivered by the IB Organization.

As it was stated, English classes were taught for eight hours per week, and every week, in a two-period class (40 minutes each period), students had to develop a paper 1 (readings). Before developing their paper 1 practice, students had to write in their journals for a 10-minute lapse; nevertheless, Park et al (2014) and Shen et al (2018) suggested the writing should range from 15 to 20 minutes, but considering the time that was required for



students to read and answer questions related to the texts, they were asked to write for a maximum of ten minutes. Pennebaker (1997) noted that the instructions for the participants assigned to the experiment should be standard; therefore, the instruction was that they would write about their deepest thoughts and feelings about an important and emotional issue that has had an effect in their lives. Also, they would write down the thoughts that worried them the most and could affect their performance in school the day they had to write in their journals. While writing, participants were informed they should not be concerned about spelling, sentence structure, or grammar, the only thing they had to do is to start writing and continue doing so until the ten minutes were over; however, some students might have found it difficult to write for that amount of time and for that reason, Pennebaker (1997) indicated that if words were exhausted, students could draw lines instead until they could express their thoughts in words again.

Students began to write in their journals since December 2018 until April 2019. They used to write once per week; nevertheless, due to some activities carried by the school and midterm vacation in February 2019, it was not possible to do the expressive writing every week during the four months. Each student wrote a total of nine journal entries. It is important to state that the last entry was written before they took their official Paper 1: mock exam; accordingly, they were asked to write about the expressive writing technique and if they felt it had had an effect on them and their anxiety management regarding their reading practices.

Students were asked to write in their native language, Spanish, even when their English level was intermediate, as Filep (2009) suggested, since words and phrases that exist in one



language might not have the same translation in another, in this case, English.

Consequently, students could express their feelings better in Spanish rather than in English.

There were 78 journals in total; however, not all of them had the nine entries since some students missed classes the days they had to write a new entry in their journals. Hence, the ones that had the complete number of entries were separated from the ones that were incomplete. The latter ones were excluded from the next part regarding the selection since only the journals that had nine entries, 43 out of 78, were given a number, entered in an excel spreadsheet, and with them, the excel function RANDBETWEEN was applied. The selected journals were the following: 2, 16, 26, 30, 40, and 43. These were later given a code to follow a sequence for the data analysis; therefore, the following codes will be used to refer to the analysis and findings.

Table 2	
<i>Journals chosen randomly through an excel spreadsheet</i>	
Chosen journals	Given codes
2	Student A
16	Student B
26	Student C
30	Student D
40	Student E
43	Student F

Six journals were selected since Creswell (2014) considered the qualitative data would undeniably be smaller than that for the quantitative data collection for the objective of qualitative data collection is to gather evidence from a small sample but to obtain extensive information from that sample. In this way, different perspectives could be collected to interpret the qualitative data. In order to have a more reliable data, students were told not



to write their names on the journals but numbers were assigned to them, so they would feel more confident when expressing their feelings knowing that their entries were private.



## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The aims of this research were to evaluate the degree of perceived anxiety using a pretest and posttest through Sarason's Anxiety Test Scale to determine the effect of expressive writing; and to recognize the main elements that trigger anxiety in students before engaging in paper 1 (mock exams) activity through their journals. In order to fulfill these objectives a pretest, posttest, and journal analysis were conducted to obtain quantitative and qualitative data, which will be described below.

#### 4.4 Quantitative results

Second language researchers generally use one or more measures to offer precise quantitative information, in this case, mode, median, and mean. Mean is the most common measure of central tendency for it is the basis of statistics, and it is usually reported in second language studies (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

The results of the present study indicate that the measured anxiety in an interval from 0 to 37 before intervention had an oscillation between 11 and 30 with a mean of 21.32 (SD=46), revealing, in general, a nonconformance when taking exams or tests (high anxiety). Figure 1 demonstrates that more than half of students had a high anxiety level (56.4%) and the 6.4% of students show a low anxiety level.

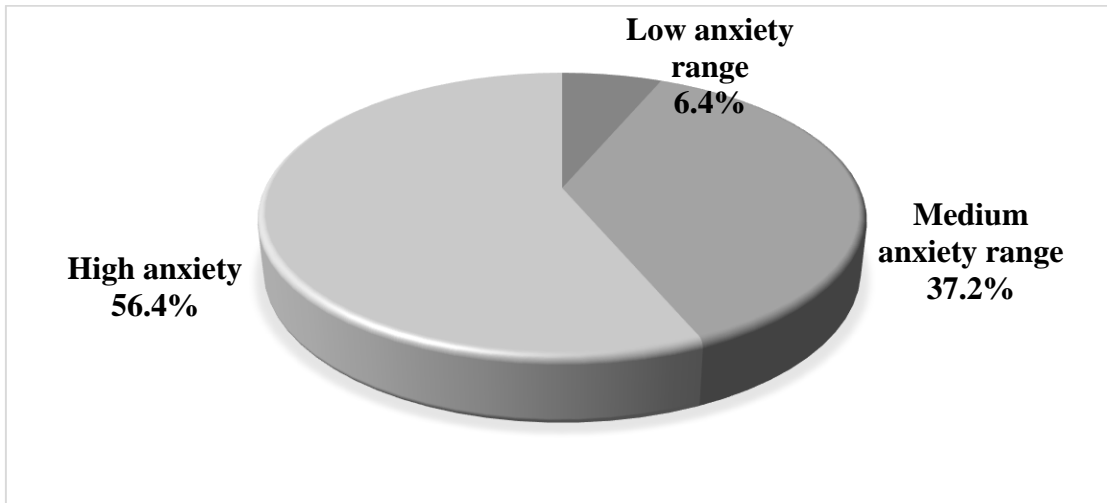


Figure 1. Anxiety levels (Pretest)

**Changes after the intervention:** The results after the intervention indicated that in almost two-thirds of the participants (62.8%) a decrease in anxiety of between 1 and 21 points was evidenced with a mean of 5.8 (SD = 4.8), 3.8% remained; and in 33.3% of the cases, there was an increase of between 1 and 11 points with a mean of 3.8 (SD = 3.0). See figure 2.

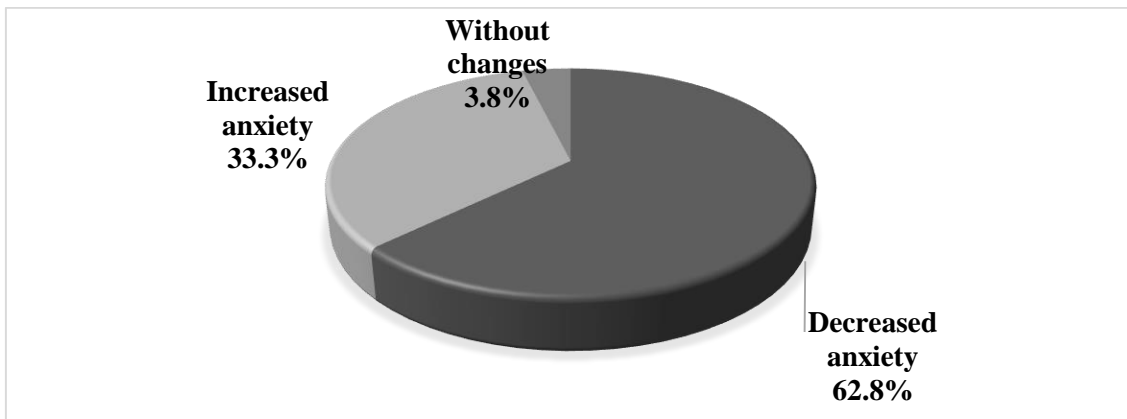


Figure 2. Changes in anxiety



Figure 3 shows the behavior of the data before and after the intervention, a significant overall average decrease of 2.3 points was determined ( $p < .002$ ), it was also found that before the intervention the data dispersion was homogeneous implying similar anxiety behavior among the students.

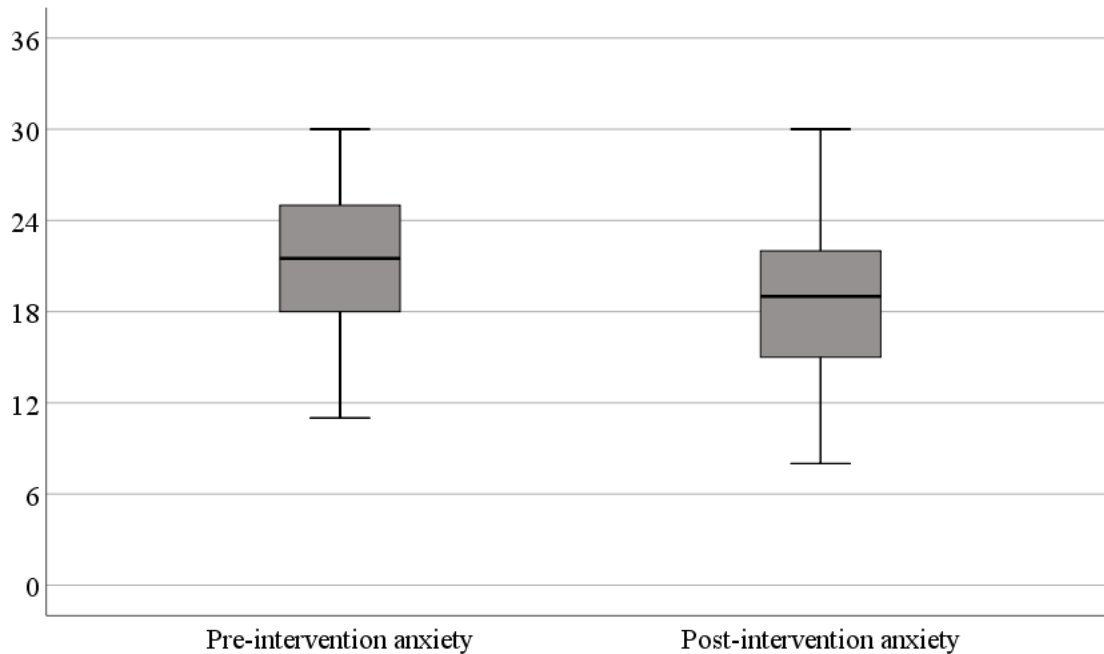


Figure 3. Anxiety scores: pre and post intervention

Table 3 illustrates the first 18 manifestations of anxiety: “*I have an uneasy, upset feeling before taking a final examination*” and “*After taking a test, I always feel I could have done better than I actually did*” were the most frequent manifestations presented by the students before and after the intervention. On the other hand, the least frequent manifestation turned out to be “*When taking a test, my emotional feelings do not interfere with my performance*”.

Significant decreases were identified in: “*During a test, I find myself thinking of the consequences of failing.*”, “*I sometimes feel my heart beating very fast during important*



exams”, and “*I have an uneasy, upset feeling before taking a final examination*”, representing the manifestations with greater decrease. This survey was translated into Spanish as Filep (2009) suggested that for participants to assertively understand and express their feelings and perceptions, it is better to resort to their mother tongue (See appendix D) for the English version).

Table 3.  
*Anxiety Manifestations*

Item	Pre intervention		Post intervention		p
	n	%	n	%	
Mientras estoy tomando un examen importante, me encuentro pensando en qué tan más inteligentes y más brillantes son otros estudiantes que yo.	29	37.2	29	37.2	1.000
Si fuese a tomar un test de inteligencia, me preocuparía mucho antes de tomarlo.	43	55.1	33	42.3	.164
Si supiera que voy a tomar un test de inteligencia, me sentiría confiada y relajada.	33	42.3	37	47.4	.636
Mientras estoy tomando un examen importante, puedo llegar a sudar mucho.	29	37.2	20	25.6	.188
Durante evaluaciones en clases, me encuentro pensando en cosas que no están relacionadas al material revisado en clases.	59	75.6	48	61.5	.090
Tiendo a sentir pánico cuando tengo que tomar un examen sorpresa.	54	69.2	42	53.8	.081
<b>Durante una evaluación, me encuentro pensando en las consecuencias de fallar dicha evaluación.</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>80.8</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>65.4</b>	<b>.036*</b>
Después de pruebas importantes, me encuentro tan tenso que mi estómago se ve afectado.	31	39.7	23	29.5	.200
Me congelo en cosas como tests de inteligencia o exámenes finales.	46	59.0	34	43.6	.081
Obtener una buena calificación en un examen no parece aumentar mi confianza en los resultados de otro examen.	30	38.5	25	32.1	.458
<b>Algunas veces siento mi corazón palpitando rápidamente durante exámenes importantes.</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>.038*</b>
<b>Después de tomar un examen siempre siento que pude haber hecho un mejor trabajo del que hice.</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>83.3</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>80.8</b>	<b>.824*</b>
Usualmente me deprimó después de tomar un examen.	26	33.3	19	24.4	.281



<b>Tengo una sensación incómoda antes de tomar un examen final.</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>88.5</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>75.6</b>	<b>.041*</b>
Cuando estoy tomando un examen, mis emociones no interfieren con mi rendimiento.	23	29.5	23	29.5	1.000
Durante una evaluación en clases, frecuentemente me siento tan nervioso que olvido datos que realmente conozco.	57	73.1	47	60.3	.121
Mientras más me esfuerzo en un examen, o estudiando para uno, más confundida me siento.	32	41.0	24	30.8	.229
Tan pronto termino un examen, trato de dejar de preocuparme, pero simplemente no puedo hacerlo.	31	39.7	24	30.8	.296

Note: \* ( $p < .05$ ) Significant difference

In the last manifestations, Table 4, it was found that the most frequent ones corresponded to “*I would rather write a paper than take an examination for my grade in a course*” and “*The college should recognize that some students are more nervous than others about tests and that this affects their performance*”. These were responded affirmatively by 94.9% of students, without differing post-intervention thinking. It was also found that the manifestation “*During exams, I sometimes wonder if I'll ever get through school*” was the least frequent manifestation of anxiety in this group with an affirmative response of less than 30% of students. In this group, the statement “*Thoughts of doing poorly interfere with my performance on tests*” was the one with the greatest decrease in affirmative responses.

Tabla 4.  
*Anxiety Manifestations*

Item	Pre		Post		p
	intervention		intervention		
	n	%	n	%	
Durante los exámenes, algunas veces me pregunto si lograré terminar mis estudios secundarios.	25	32.1	20	25.6	.442
<i>Preferiría el presentar un trabajo escrito en lugar de tomar un examen para obtener una calificación para mi clase.</i>	74	94.9	74	94.9	1.000



Me gustaría que las evaluaciones no me causen tanta incomodidad.	68	87.2	67	85.9	1.000
Creo que me iría mejor en las pruebas si pudiera tomarlas sola y sin tener la presión del tiempo.	59	75.6	56	71.8	.690
El pensar acerca de la nota que puedo llegar a obtener en una clase interfiere con mis estudios y mi desempeño en las evaluaciones.	41	52.6	34	43.6	.349
Si se pudiera obviar el uso de evaluaciones y exámenes, creo que podría aprender mejor	60	76.9	60	76.9	1.000
En los exámenes tomo la actitud de “si no lo sé ahora, no tiene sentido el preocuparme acerca de esto”	23	29.5	30	38.5	.296
En realidad no comprendo porque algunas personas se preocupan tanto por los exámenes.	32	41	33	42.3	1.000
<b>Pensamientos acerca de fracasar en el examen interfiere en mi desempeño durante del examen.</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>56.4</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>.041*</b>
No estudio más intensamente para los exámenes finales de lo que estudio para el resto de mis clases.	32	41	38	48.7	.418
Aun cuando estoy bien preparada para un examen, me siento sumamente ansiosa por la evaluación.	54	69.2	48	61.5	.405
No disfruto el comer antes de una evaluación importante.	38	48.7	29	37.2	.163
Antes de un examen importante, mis manos o brazos están temblando.	35	44.9	25	32.1	.143
Rara vez siento la necesidad de “llenarme” de información antes de un examen	37	47.4	34	43.6	.728
<i>La institución debería reconocer que algunas estudiantes se ponen más nerviosas que otras por los exámenes y que esto afecta su desempeño.</i>	74	94.9	73	93.6	1.000
Me parece que los periodos de evaluación no deberían ser situaciones tan intensas.	73	93.6	76	97.4	.453
Comienzo a sentir mucha preocupación al momento de recibir mi examen de vuelta.	66	84.6	56	71.8	.052
Me asustan mucho las clases donde el profesor tiene el hábito de tomar pruebas sorpresa.	52	66.7	50	64.1	.856

Finally, it was found that post-intervention anxiety ranged between 8 and 30 with a mean of 18.93 (SD = 4.49), generally being in a range of medium anxiety; 38.5% of

students had high anxiety, 6.4% a low range, being the same number of students from the pre-intervention, and 55.1% were in a medium anxiety range, showing that the students who initially had high anxiety were placed within a medium range. See figure 4.

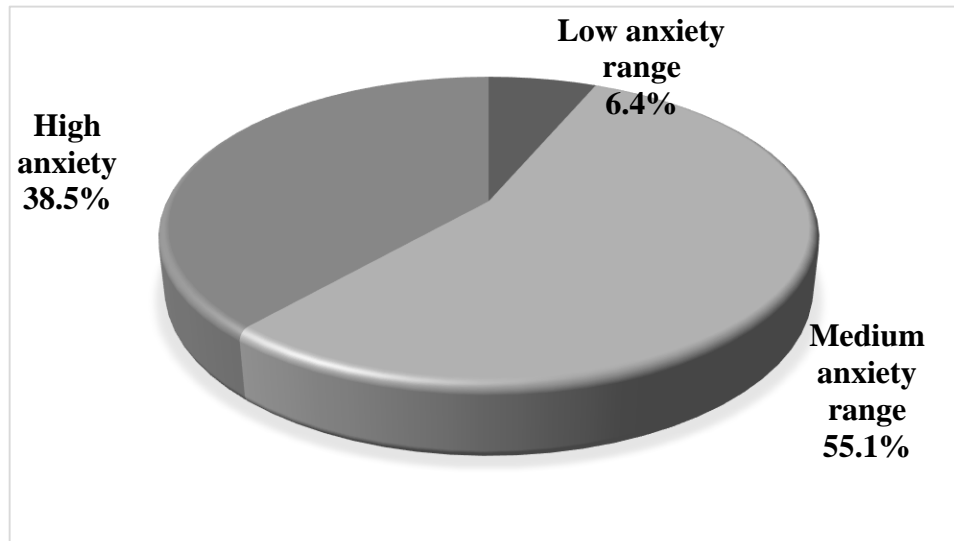


Figure 4. Anxiety levels (Posttest).

#### 4.5 Qualitative results

The idea behind thick description, according to Mackey & Gass (2005), is that if researchers report their findings with in-depth details for readers to comprehend the main characteristics of the research context and participants, they will be able to make a comparison between the study situation and their own and see if it is feasible to transfer some of the findings to their own setting. Based on the previous information, the current study used thick description to analyze and interpret three out of the nine entries of the students' journals: The first, the fifth, and the ninth entry.

The first and the fifth entry, students were instructed to write about what worries them the most, academically speaking, portraying their feelings and emotions as well. The ninth



entry took place right before they developed their paper 1 mock exam, formal assessment delivered by the school. In this entry, they had to express if they felt the expressive writing technique had had an effect on them, either positive or negative.

#### 4.5.1 First component of thick description

Particular description: Richness of detail or representative examples from the gathered data

**Student A (See appendix F):** In the first entry, the student referred to three precise subjects that caused her stress *Math*, *Business Management*, and *English*. In the two first subjects, she stated the reasons for her stress were that the teachers explained the content fast and sometimes it was not understandable; whereas in the latter one, the reason for her stress was the tasks she had to develop.

The student's second entry began with a positive phrase saying that things have turned out to be better during that week; nevertheless, after the positive phrase, the student expressed that her anxiety was still present and perhaps it was because of the fear of getting a bad grade in paper 1.

The student's last entry gave the impression of her being relieved and exhausted at the same time for taking her last paper 1 since she mentioned she could not stand it anymore and she was overwhelmed by that activity.

**Student B (See appendix G):** The student opened her first entry noting that stress had not been part of her life until two years ago, which was the time the DP had started, adding



to this that her level of anxiety had increased during the DP because of the submission of different assignments, such as the internal assessments and she was afraid to fail. She, as well as student A, wrote that there were subjects that generated her anxiety which were *Business Management* and *Biology* since she felt she did not learn anything.

Her second entry showed her concern in regards to doing paper 1 by herself because she preferred to develop it in groups in case she needed help.

The last entry portrayed her nerves fearing she would not have enough time to develop paper 1. Nonetheless, she added writing a journal had indeed helped her to be more relaxed because it was a relief space.

**Student C (See appendix H):** This student, as well as the previous ones, started her first entry explaining her stress about some subjects within the IB program but naming only two *TOK* and *Biology*. Her worry was that she would fail those subject quizzes.

She began her second entry mentioning paper 1 and her anxiety regarding to it since that activity was going to be considered that day as a unit quiz grade. The student feared she would fail despite having practiced that activity several times.

The student expressed her feelings about her last paper 1 establishing he felt a bit nervous because that would be considered as her second-term exam. Moreover, she discussed the effectiveness of writing a journal, saying that it had been helpful to express her feelings, but it did not make her feel completely calm before taking paper 1.



**Student D (See appendix I):** This student's first journal entry was opened by expressing the stress she had felt for the last week due to the number of tasks to be done; however, she was aware that happened because she did not organize her time appropriately.

In her second journal entry, she described how the fear of developing paper 1 had disappeared due to all the mocks she had done so far. Nonetheless, what she did fear was the fact of getting a bad grade.

The last entry denoted nervousness regarding the time she had to take the official paper 1 mock exam. In addition, she referred to the EW technique saying that writing before an exam made her more nervous and anxious. She also accepted it might be a good technique, but it was not for her. At the end of this entry, she drew some lines.

**Student E (See appendix J):** The student started her first entry describing the reasons for her anxiety which were she was in charge of organizing an academic event and because of that she had to miss school; that stressed her out.

The second entry discussed the strategy EW indicating that it had helped her to relax before taking paper 1; however, it did not make her anxiety disappear. She recognized the strategy made her feel better but in fact, she was always nervous. At the end of this entry, she drew some lines.

There existed positivism in her last entry regarding EW specifying it had been useful since she was not that anxious as before and she could then portray her concern into words. All of this made the student feel calm before taking paper 1.





**Student F (See appendix K):** The student expressed that formal activities or assessments were the ones that made her feel stressed the most.

The second entry portrayed her feelings towards paper 1 establishing she was frightened of getting a bad grade in the unit quiz. Furthermore, her third entry revealed her relief for taking the last paper 1, expressing she felt calm and less stressed on one side, but on the other side she was scared and nervous because that paper 1 was going to be considered as the final exam.

#### 4.5.2 Second component of thick description

General description: Information about the general patterns found in the data.

**Student A (See appendix F):** The first entry presented the student's academic stress with subjects such as *Mathematics*, *English*, and *Business Management* because of the content and assignments, claiming she did not comprehend them. Also, she affirmed the amount of homework was excessive and that caused her stress as well.

In the second entry, the student referred to her teacher wishing she knew the bad grades affect the students. The student stopped writing for a moment and drew some lines in the middle of the entry, then she continued with her previous thought regarding her teacher. Additionally, she indicated she did not like to develop readings (paper 1).

The student reasserted her wish of producing a correct paper 1 mock exam in her last entry. Then she made a pause to draw some lines and finished her entry thanking her teacher.

**Student B (See appendix G):** In the first entry, the student described her perfectionist style and what she considered anxiety since she was a child was that she did more than



what was required trying to aim the perfection and looking for approval. To close her entry, she recognized she did not use her time wisely to do her tasks.

In her second entry, the student evidenced her fear of taking the paper 1 quiz alone because she did not recall all the text types, which were 30 in total. The student concluded her entry emphasizing her wish of facing an easy text type and her feeling of drowsiness. Finally, after portraying her last thought, the student drew some lines.

Even when the student established in her third entry that she was nervous for the allotted time to develop paper 1, she accepted that all the practicums had contributed to her knowledge.

**Student C (See appendix H):** The student began her entry by expressing she was stressed and blamed her TOK teacher in case she did not get the IB diploma because she believed her teacher was not trying hard enough. The student also added another reason for her stress, which was working in groups and not all the members participated to fulfill the task.

An explanation about why the student did not feel confident enough despite having practiced paper 1 several times is given in the second entry; she expressed there were words or phrases she did not understand and that was why she usually failed. She drew some lines and then added she would not like to obtain a bad grade in the English B subject. Her last entry did not present general patterns.

**Student D (See appendix I):** The first entry displayed an explanation of a technique the student found to help her fulfill her tasks and it was called *Pomodoro*, which she worked



during 25 minutes and took a five-minute break, by doing this repeatedly, the students got to complete her assignments. She ends her entry by admitting she had to be more responsible and stop complaining about everything.

Her second entry showed that the student recognized paper 1 mock exams have helped her to improve her reading skill and extend her answers. After portraying this thought, she drew some lines.

The student's last thought was to finish with the mock exams and leave school so she could rest and forget everything that was about to come in university.

**Student E (See appendix J):** The student pointed out some other activities that took her time such as doing her homework or catching up with the classes for university.

Her second entry revealed that she also was frightened of the grade she would get in that paper 1. She explained she could develop that paper 1 as well as she did the last time because she is worried about the grading part. The student ended her entry by drawing some lines.

As a final entry, the student indicated she was ready for taking the official paper 1 mock exam due to the other paper 1 mock exams she had practiced in class.

**Student F (See appendix K):** The first entry was written about the student's goal, which was to obtain the IB diploma, even though when that caused her to be stressed. She concludes her first entry by explaining she also felt anxious before taking a *History* quiz or any other important exam in school.



Her second entry was a memory from the junior year when she dialed her final exam because of the reading part, and that was the reason she was then concerned that it would happen again.

Hope was the feeling written in her last entry. She expected her feeling of doing a better paper 1 that time compared to the past times because she had always given her best.

#### **4.5.3 Third component of thick description**

Interpretive commentary: Interpretation and explanation of the meaning of the findings in the qualitative data.

**Student A (See appendix F):** The student certainly presented academic stress, mentioning specific subjects such as Mathematics, English, and Business Management along with examples of them and the possible consequences that this stress might have produced in her health. She mentioned English as one of the subjects that made her anxious, specifying ‘readings’ which refer to paper 1, proving with this that paper 1 did have an effect of anxiety in students. Moreover, according to her own words, she still feared the fact of getting bad grades for developing paper 1 exercises and getting low final scores merely for paper 1 indeed concerned her. Finally, the student portrayed she wanted to finish with all the practicums and not develop paper 1 again, closing her entry by drawing lines.

**Student B (See appendix G):** The student explained her anxiety was because she had the feeling of not fully understanding the content of subjects taught in the IB Program such as Business Management and Biology. Moreover, she repeatedly stated her wish of taking



paper 1 quiz in groups because she felt more comfortable in that way and her classmates could help her in case she forgot any text type. The student drew some lines before continuing expressing herself, seeing the last paper 1 mock exam as an opportunity to practice for the official one. The student took the journal as a relief space where she felt relaxed, showing with this that EW did benefit the student.

**Student C (See appendix H):** The student was concerned and anxious about the number of activities she had to do, but there was one special subject, TOK, which is considered as a core subject in the IB Program. She also demonstrated her apprehension regarding the grades obtained in paper 1 activities. This student expressed her relief for taking her last paper 1 as well; however, she restated again she was worried about the grade she would get in the final paper 1 since that could affect her final score. The student recognized that expressing her feelings and emotions in a written form indeed helped her to feel calmer but not completely because the anxiety was still present. The student presented drawn lines in her entry.

**Student D (See appendix I):** The student asserted her stress was due to the amount of the IB assignments to be done, but admitted at the same time that she could have organized her time better. In addition, she also confirmed the fear she had towards paper 1, even when that fear was vanishing due to all the mock exams she had developed so far. Lastly, she referred to the strategy EW saying it had not helped her, on the contrary, that it had an adverse effect on her since she found herself bothered by having to write before a test. She



stated it might have a good technique but it was not the appropriate one for her. The student presented drawn lines in her entry.

**Student E (See appendix J):** The student did present stress but she specified it was not related to assignments or quizzes, but more related to other events she was in charge of. In this journal, the student also discussed her grades related to paper 1 because she was concerned she would not be able to recover a low grade and that made her feel more anxious. Her thoughts regarding EW were that it did help her to be more relaxed before developing paper 1; nonetheless, writing did not take her anxiety away. It is essential to point out that at the end of her journal, she stated she felt completely ready for the last paper 1 mock exam, adding she was serene before taking it. The student drew some lines in the middle and at the end of her entry.

**Student F (See appendix K):** The student also began her entry stating that having to develop activities that were related to the acquisition of the IB diploma made her become nervous. Additionally, she stated *History* quizzes made her anxious as well as other important exams in school. As well as in the previous students' journal entries, this student noted her nerves were related to the fear of getting a low grade in paper 1, and the more nervous she was, the higher were the probabilities she would fail those activities. As a conclusion of her journal, she acknowledged she felt relief for taking the last paper 1 and expected to do better than the other times.



#### **4.5.4 Common Patterns found in the Journal Analysis**

There are several patterns that have been found in the journal analysis such as the ones that triggered anxiety in students, EW effects, concerns, etc.; that is why they have been categorized as follows: content that caused anxiety, grading apprehension, expressive writing effects, paper 1 considerations, drawn lines.

##### **4.5.4.1 Content that Caused Anxiety**

All the journal entries mentioned the subjects that caused them anxiety, being paper 1 in English not the only one but also Mathematics, Business Management, Biology, TOK, and History. Students referred to the amount of activities, assignments, and quizzes they had to develop in those subjects, being them the main ones taught in the IB program. In addition, they also complained about some teachers who impart those subjects.

##### **4.5.4.2 Grading Apprehension**

In the gathered data, students recognized their apprehension regarding the grades that were going to be obtained in the different subject activities; nevertheless, their concern towards paper 1 grades was evidenced due to the fact they were aware those grades were going to be considered as a unit quiz and as a second-term exam. Students believed the low grading would affect their final score in order to obtain their IB Diploma.

##### **4.5.4.3 Expressive Writing Effects**

All students referred to the strategy *expressive writing* pointing out to what extent it was helpful for them before developing paper 1, mentioning that EW was a nice activity and it helped them to relax, that it was such relief for them to express their feelings and emotions; and made them feel calm before taking paper 1. On the other hand, there was one comment



saying EW had not helped her at all, it must probably be a good technique, but it was not for her.

#### **4.5.4.4 Paper 1 Considerations**

All students portrayed their thoughts about paper 1, indicating the anxiety that was produced on them; nonetheless, after the intervention, most of them expressed their relief for taking it for the last time of the school year and saying they were prepared for it but still with some nerves.

#### **4.5.4.5 Drawn Lines**

As Pennebaker (1997) indicated in his study that if words were exhausted, students could draw lines, and that is what all students did, when they ran out of words, they stopped writing in their journals and drew lines instead until they wanted to write again.

### **4.3 Overall Results**

The results obtained in the quantitative and qualitative analysis have successfully fulfilled the specific objectives of this study which were:

- To evaluate the degree of perceived anxiety using a pretest and posttest through Sarason's Anxiety Test Scale to determine the effect of expressive writing.
- To recognize the main elements that trigger anxiety in students before engaging in paper 1 (mock exams) activity through their journals.

Through the use of a pretest and a posttest it has been possible to determine the changes in anxiety before and after the intervention which evidences a decrease of anxiety in students. Also, it was found that before the intervention the data dispersion was





homogeneous implying similar anxiety behavior among the students. This illustrates the effects of the strategy expressive writing. Below, you will see tables with the main changes collected in the quantitative data (See tables 3 and 4 for reference).

Table 5.					
<i>The most frequent manifestations presented by the students before and after the intervention.</i>					
Anxiety Manifestation	Pre intervention		Post intervention		p
	n	%	n	%	
I have an uneasy, upset feeling before taking a final examination	69	88.5	59	75.6	.041
After taking a test, I always feel I could have done better than I actually did	65	83.3	63	80.8	.824

Table 6.					
<i>The least frequent manifestation presented by the students before and after the intervention.</i>					
Anxiety Manifestation	Pre intervention		Post intervention		p
	n	%	n	%	
When taking a test, my emotional feelings do not interfere with my performance	23	29.5	23	29.5	1.000
During exams, I sometimes wonder if I'll ever get through school	25	32.1	20	25.6	.442



Table 7.					
<i>Significant decreases in anxiety manifestations.</i>					
Anxiety Manifestation	Pre intervention		Post intervention		p
	n	%	n	%	
During a test, I find myself thinking of the consequences of failing	63	80.8	51	65.4	.036
I sometimes feel my heart beating very fast during important exams	56	71.8	42	53.8	.038
I have an uneasy, upset feeling before taking a final examination	69	88.5	59	75.6	.041
Thoughts of doing poorly interfere with my performance on tests	44	56.4	31	39.7	.041

Table 8.					
<i>Manifestations that did not differ in the post-intervention</i>					
Anxiety Manifestation	Pre intervention		Post intervention		p
	n	%	n	%	
I would rather write a paper than take an examination for my grade in a course	74	94.9	74	94.9	1.000
The college should recognize that some students are more nervous than others about tests and that this affects their performance	74	94.9	73	93.6	1.000

Furthermore, there were several patterns that were found in the journal analysis; therefore, they were categorized as follows: *content that caused anxiety* embodies the subjects and activities that made students anxious; *grading apprehension* shows students' concern in regards to grades; *expressive writing effects* demonstrates that EW had a positive impact in students; *paper 1 considerations* expresses how students felt towards paper 1; and *drawn lines* indicates when students stopped writing and drew lines instead.



Consequently, the results and the findings of analyzed data affirm that the strategy EW did have a positive effect in students by helping them to reduce their level of anxiety before taking their final paper 1 mock exam.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the importance from both the quantitative and qualitative findings that have been gathered from this research. The results that were obtained in this study will be compared and analyzed to the findings of the researches that were cited in the literature review.

Rezaabadi (2017), Cassady (2009), and Martin and Marsh (2006) used an anxiety test and mentioned it should have elements such as cognitive, behavioral, affective, and social components; which are the elements that Sarason's Anxiety Test Scale (TAS) adapted version by Shen et al. (2018) has and was used for the present study.

Preliminary research showed coping strategies for students above-average levels of anxiety were self-reliance and engaging in multiple type of diversions; whereas students with low anxiety coping strategies were seeking support from specific resources and avoiding problems (Suldo et al., 2008). The current study did not classify students into groups of high and low anxiety, but did obtain general results of the level of anxiety students were going through in order to apply the EW as a strategy for students to cope with their anxiety. It is needed to point out that a further research with students from other college-preparatory programs to confirm the sources of stress perceived by students in the IB program was proposed by Suldo et al. (2008), and that is what the present study has investigated, other sources of stress through the writing of a journal. One common factor found in the current study and in Suldo's et al is *procrastination*; one student (See appendix



I, first entry) recognized she needed to be more organized with her time but it was difficult for her, so she used a technique called *Pomodoro* to cope with her procrastination.

Nevertheless, this was the only time this pattern was found, meaning it was not a main source of anxiety in IB students.

Rezaabadi's study (2017) did not only discussed foreign language reading anxiety but also social class anxiety, test anxiety, and facilitating and debilitating anxiety. The main point stated in that study was that if students debilitated anxiety, that could obstruct learning and achievement in students; whereas enabling anxiety might increase them. Even when that study used different instruments (FLRAS, SCAS, open-ended questionnaire) from the current one (TAS, journals), the findings regarding the reasons of anxiety are similar. Rezaabadi's (2017) study revealed that when students knew their reading tests were going to be graded, they had a higher level of anxiety while students who did not know that particularity had a low anxiety level because they were aware those grades would not have affected them in the future. The present study confirms those findings since the journal analysis indicated as one of its main patterns that all students expressed their concern regarding the grades of paper 1. They manifested they became more anxious because they were aware paper 1 would be graded, fearing that this score would affect their final one. In fact, they did become anxious before taking paper 1 and that did not allow them to develop the activity appropriately.

Pressley's et al. study (1992) sought a relationship between reading strategies and Multiple Intelligences (MI) profiles of the successful EFL readers and the types of intelligences and reading strategies that can act as the best predictor of reading



comprehension, having gathered quantitative data in the form of a Likert Scale. They discovered the *affective strategy* was given a minimum score by the students meanwhile the cognitive and metacognitive received the maximum score due to their linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences. Contrary to this, the current study did not use strategies to improve students' reading comprehension skill, but the EW strategy was used to diminish their anxiety in order to have a better performance, therefore, better scores in paper 1. Students from Rosa de Jesús Cordero did give importance to the affective factor, in this case the stress caused by the different activities that had to be done within the IB Program.

Martin and Marsh's research (2006) used the Revised Test Anxiety Scale as the instrument to measure anxiety in students; and the stimulus "I don't let a bad grade affect my confidence" was used to measure academic buoyance. Their results were that STEPS did have an effect in reducing anxiety in high-level tension students, but it did not have the same effect in students who were low or mid test anxious. On the other hand, the instrument that was used for the current study was TAS to measure anxiety, and the strategy EW was applied to diminish anxiety. One of the factors found in the journal analysis, which is the opposite to the study previously mentioned, was that students did feel affected by their grades. In fact, the only thought of getting a low final score made them even more anxious since that would have represented a risk for not obtaining the IB Diploma. Nonetheless, EW helped students to reduce the beliefs that would do a test poorly. Additionally, Putwain et al., (2014) based their study on Martin and Marsh's having as a result STEPS worked with high-anxious students; however, the authors pointed out



that positive results were expected due to the fact that participants were willing to please the researchers; which is not the case of the current study since students were assigned a code for the pre and posttest and also for the journals, this prevented the researcher from knowing who the data belonged to. As a matter of fact, there was a student who wrote specifically about the researcher (See appendix F: Second entry) claiming her wish about her teacher understanding her and her classmates' preoccupation for the low grades. Perhaps by portraying her suggestion in the journal, she expected the teacher would have changed her methodology when assigning those exercises. The fact is she was being honest and trying to please the researcher.

Shen et al. (2018) used TAS to measure anxiety in seventy-five students who were divided into two groups: expressive writing (EW) and control writing (CW). These authors' study results were focused on three nodes, which were effectiveness, frequency, and convenience. Students from EW group found this strategy as a test anxiety reducer in the node of effectiveness and students agreed the frequency of writing was acceptable, which was twenty minutes every day for thirty days. Contrary to these results, CW group did not show a significant reduction in test anxiety since they were required to write about their daily activities and not positive emotions as EW group. An essential finding of this study is that expressive writing of positive emotions did help reduce anxiety among subjects. These findings are similar to the ones gathered in the present study which used the same instrument (TAS) to measure anxiety and the strategy EW in order to reduce the anxiety level in students. The findings of this study confirm EW is a reducer of anxiety in students before taking an examination; however, it is vital to note that students were not required to



write only about positive emotions. Contrary to this, they had to write in the first and fifth entries about what worries them the most, academically speaking, portraying their feelings and emotions as well, not necessarily positive; and in the ninth entry they had to express if they felt EW had had an effect on them, either positive, negative or none at all. Another difference between the two researches is that Shen et al. (2018) had two groups, in which they paid the participants to prevent them from withdrawing the project; whereas the current study had only one group of 78 female students and no payment was provided for them.





## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of how the general and specific objectives have been fulfilled and how they helped to answer the research question.

#### 6.1 Conclusions

The results presented in this study were gathered through the achievement of the general and specific objectives which helped to answer the research question, consequently taking into consideration all the results previously discussed, the research question established at the beginning of this study will be answered.

***Research question:** To what degree does the strategy expressive writing help senior students manage their anxiety while solving paper 1, mock exams, of the external evaluation from the International Baccalaureate Program at Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School?*

The main purpose of this study was to determine if the strategy EW helped students from Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School to manage their anxiety and to what degree it did while solving paper 1. In this regard, the first specific objective aimed to have evidence of the anxiety level in students before and after the EW treatment, for this a TAS pretest and posttest were conducted in order to determine the changes in anxiety before and after the intervention. The outcome revealed that there was a significant difference between the results obtained on the pretest towards the ones obtained on the posttest. Before the intervention more than half of students (56.4%) showed a high anxiety level and the 6.4% of students had a low anxiety level (See Figure 1), whereas that after the intervention two-thirds of the participants (62.8%) showed a decrease in anxiety (See Figure 2). Moreover,



before the treatment, the data dispersion was consistent and after the treatment, there was a substantial overall average decrease of 2.3 points (See Figure 3). On the other hand, the second specific objective aimed to recognize the elements that triggered anxiety in students, this was possible through the data found in the students' journals, which were put into five categories: *content that caused anxiety*; *grading apprehension*; *expressive writing effects*; *paper 1 considerations*, and *drawn lines*. Consequently, these results confirm the effects that EW had on the students were positive and helped them to manage their anxiety before developing Paper 1.

## 6.2 Recommendations

It has been evidenced that students suffer from anxiety and stress before taking a test, and even when EW has been proven to lessen anxiety, it is recommended to find more strategies and to apply them; therefore, students would be able to cope with anxiety since that factor plays a crucial role in the academic performance of students.

## 6.3 Limitations

Three limitations have been found in the current study:

- The obtained results were gathered only from female participants. Probably, different outcomes could have been found with male participants or mix-gender groups.
- The researcher was in charge of three senior classes out of five. Thus, the treatment was applied to a small number of students.
- The period of treatment is considered relatively short. Possibly if EW had been applied for a longer period, a better outcome might have been expected.



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## APPENDIX A

[www.catalinas.edu.ec](http://www.catalinas.edu.ec)



Cuenca, 3 de septiembre del 2018

**Hna.  
Maribel Silva Carrasco O.P.  
RECTORA DE LA INSTITUCIÓN  
Su despacho**

De mi consideración:

Mediante la presente, yo Tania Gabriela Atariguana Fajardo con número de cédula 030187213-1, me encuentro estudiando la maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera en la Universidad de Cuenca y como requisito para la graduación se me pide realizar un proyecto de investigación dentro de una institución educativa. Por tal motivo, me dirijo a usted para solicitarle se me permita aplicar mi proyecto de investigación “Managing Anxiety Regarding the International Baccalaureate Program Evaluation, Paper 1 (Mock Exams): An Action Research Study” “El Manejo de la Ansiedad Relacionado con los simulacros de la Prueba 1 del Bachillerato Internacional: Estudio Investigativo de Acción” dentro de la institución en el bachillerato internacional con el segundo año de diploma: tercero de bachillerato durante el año lectivo 2018-2019.

Esperando contar con su valioso apoyo, le anticipo mi agradecimiento.

Atentamente,

**Gabriela Atariguana Fajardo  
DOCENTE DE LA INSTITUCIÓN  
ESTUDIANTE DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA**

cc: Juanita Argudo, Mg.  
archivo

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Tania Gabriela Atariguana Fajardo





## APPENDIX B

www.catalinas.edu.ec



### SOLICITUD DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Al ser la Unidad Educativa Particular “Rosa de Jesús Cordero” una Unidad Educativa Católica, al servicio de la sociedad, consagrada a la educación integral de niñas y jóvenes en la fe y en la ciencia, promoviendo la formación de una persona compasiva, crítica, creativa, autónoma, reflexiva e íntegra, capaz de contribuir a la creación de un mundo mejor y pacífico, siendo testigo de los valores del Evangelio al estilo característico del Carisma Dominicano; solicita el debido consentimiento para poder publicar trabajos y proyectos de su representada, así como continuar tomando y publicando fotografías y videos de la misma en material digital e impreso, sean estos: web, revistas institucionales, manuales, calendarios, afiches, entre otros.

Además solicita el consentimiento de salida de su representada para las diferentes actividades: socio culturales, deportivas, académicas y religiosas en las que la Institución participa.

En caso de que el Padre de Familia y/o Representante Legal no firme el presente documento, se suspenderá en proceso de matriculación, de manera que para perfeccionarlo deberá en el término de tres días presentar una justificación expresa de su negativa, la misma que responderá a temas de índole legal – educativo.

Es conforme,

\_\_\_\_\_

Representante Legal

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

CI: \_\_\_\_\_

Cuenca, \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX C

[www.catalinas.edu.ec](http://www.catalinas.edu.ec)



### CARTA INFORMATIVA Y FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Estimado representante,

Soy estudiante de la Universidad de Cuenca que cursa actualmente la Maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera - Cohorte II y está desarrollando su proyecto de titulación denominado “*El Manejo de la Ansiedad Relacionado con los simulacros de la Prueba 1 del Bachillerato Internacional: Estudio Investigativo de Acción*”, para el cual solicito leer la información detallada a continuación.

El propósito de la presente investigación consiste en analizar los efectos de la estrategia *Escritura Expresiva* que se aplicará a la estudiante para reducir la ansiedad al momento de dar una Prueba 1 en la asignatura de Inglés B dentro del Programa Diploma del Bachillerato Internacional. Es importante establecer que la participación será voluntaria y en caso de que la estudiante decida retirarse una vez iniciada la investigación, podrá hacerlo y si decide no participar o retirarse no tendrá ninguna consecuencia en su rendimiento académico. Para llevar a cabo el estudio, su representada no necesitará adquirir ningún material extra.

Por lo antes descrito, solicito su autorización para la participación voluntaria de su representada en este estudio; en caso de aceptar, la estudiante deberá realizar dos *tests* de ansiedad uno al inicio y otro al final del estudio, así como también deberá escribir un diario referente a diferentes temas+, cuya información será vital para el trabajo de investigación.

La participación es anónima y con su firma usted autorizará que los resultados de la investigación sean publicados en un documento final y en posibles eventos de socialización.

Desde ya anticipo mi agradecimiento.

---

Lcda. Gabriela Atariguana Fajardo  
**Docente de Inglés B de la U.E.P Rosa de Jesús Cordero**  
**Estudiante de la Universidad de Cuenca**



## FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Yo, \_\_\_\_\_,  
representante de la estudiante

\_\_\_\_\_, he leído esta  
información, estoy de acuerdo y autorizo a mi representada a participar dentro de todas las  
actividades propuestas dentro de la investigación.

Firma del representante: \_\_\_\_\_

I.D: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma de la estudiante: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D****Test Anxiety Scale (English Version)**

How much test anxiety do you have? Answer the following questions with a check under the appropriate column. Count the number checks in the True and False columns and total them in the last row.

True	False	
		While taking an important exam, I find myself thinking of how much brighter the other students are than I am.
		If I were to take an intelligence test, I would worry a great deal before taking it.
		If I knew I was going to take an intelligence test, I would feel confident and relaxed.
		While taking an important exam, I perspire a great deal.
		During class examinations, I find myself thinking of things unrelated to the actual course material.
		I get to feeling very panicky when I have to take a surprise exam.
		During a test, I find myself thinking of the consequences of failing.
		After important tests, I am frequently so tense my stomach gets upset.
		I freeze up on things like intelligence tests and final exams.
		Getting good grades on one test doesn't seem to increase my confidence on the second.
		I sometimes feel my heart beating very fast during important exams.
		After taking a test, I always feel I could have done better than I actually did.
		I usually get depressed after taking a test.
		I have an uneasy, upset feeling before taking a final examination.
		When taking a test, my emotional feelings do not interfere with my performance.
		During a course examination, I frequently get so nervous that I forget facts I really know. I seem to defeat myself while working on important tests.
		The harder I work at taking a test or studying for one, the more confused I get.



		As soon as an exam is over, I try to stop worrying about it, but I just can't.
		During exams, I sometimes wonder if I'll ever get through school.
		I would rather write a paper than take an examination for my grade in a course.
True	False	
		I wish examinations did not bother me so much.
		I think I could do much better on tests if I could take them alone and not feel pressured by time limits.
		Thinking about the grade I may get in a course interferes with my studying and performance on tests.
		If examinations could be done away with, I think I would actually learn more.
		On exams I take the attitude, "If I don't know it now, there's no point in worrying about it."
		I really don't see why some people get so upset about tests.
		Thoughts of doing poorly interfere with my performance on tests.
		I don't study any harder for final exams than for the rest of my coursework.
		Even when I'm well prepared for a test, I feel very anxious about it.
		I don't enjoy eating before an important test.
		Before an important examination, I find my hands or arms trembling.
		I seldom feel the need for "cramming" before an exam.
		The college should recognize that some students are more nervous than others about tests and that this affects their performance.
		It seems to me that examination periods should not be made such intense situations.
		I started feeling very uneasy just before getting a test paper back.
		I dread courses where the instructor has the habit of giving "pop" quizzes.
		Total of True's and False's



Test Anxiety Scale adapted from Sarason, I.G. (1980), *Test Anxiety: Theory, Research, and Applications*.

Scoring the Test Anxiety Scale is very easy. The total number of "True" checks is your test anxiety score. A score of 12 or below ranks in the low-test anxiety range. If that is your score, the chances are you wouldn't be looking at this book. A score of 12 to 20 ranks in the medium range. Any score above 20 signifies high-test anxiety. Scoring 15 or greater is a good indication you experience considerable discomfort about taking tests. A high-test anxiety score is not cause for alarm. Scoring in the medium to high range simply means that you would benefit from developing some strategies to help you cope with stress anxiety. You can overcome excessive anxiety.

You may find some techniques and strategies produce dramatic results. More often, changing the way you respond to pressure and stress will take time. Deep and lasting change very rarely happens instantly.

**APPENDIX E****Prueba de Escala de Ansiedad (Versión Español)**

¿Cuánta ansiedad tienes? Contesta las siguientes preguntas con una marca debajo de la columna apropiada. Cuenta el número de marcas en las columnas de *Verdadero* y *Falso* y marca el total en la última fila

Verdadero	Falso	
		Mientras estoy tomando un examen importante, me encuentro pensando en qué tan más inteligentes y más brillantes son otros estudiantes que yo.
		Si fuese a tomar un test de inteligencia, me preocuparía mucho antes de tomarlo.
		Si supiera que voy a tomar un test de inteligencia, me sentiría confiada y relajada.
		Mientras estoy tomando un examen importante, puedo llegar a sudar mucho.
		Durante evaluaciones en clases, me encuentro pensando en cosas que no están relacionadas al material revisado en clases.
		Tiendo a sentir pánico cuando tengo que tomar un examen sorpresa.
		Durante una evaluación, me encuentro pensando en las consecuencias de fallar dicha evaluación.
		Después de pruebas importantes, me encuentro tan tenso que mi estómago se ve afectado.
		Me congelo en cosas como tests de inteligencia o exámenes finales.
		Obtener una buena calificación en un examen no parece aumentar mi confianza en los resultados de otro examen.
		Algunas veces siento mi corazón palpitando rápidamente durante exámenes importantes.
		Después de tomar un examen siempre siento que pude haber hecho un mejor trabajo del que hice.
		Usualmente me deprimó después de tomar un examen.
		Tengo una sensación incómoda antes de tomar un examen final.



		Cuando estoy tomando un examen, mis emociones no interfieren con mi rendimiento.
Verdadero	Falso	
		Durante una evaluación en clases, frecuentemente me siento tan nervioso que olvido datos que realmente conozco. Parece que me saboteo a mí mismo cuando estoy trabajando en exámenes importantes.
		Mientras más me esfuerzo en un examen, o estudiando para uno, más confundida me siento.
		Tan pronto termino un examen, trato de dejar de preocuparme, pero simplemente no puedo hacerlo.
		Durante los exámenes, algunas veces me pregunto si lograré terminar mis estudios secundarios.
		Preferiría el presentar un trabajo escrito en lugar de tomar un examen para obtener una calificación para mi clase.
		Me gustaría que las evaluaciones no me causen tanta incomodidad.
		Creo que me iría mejor en las pruebas si pudiera tomarlas sola y sin tener la presión del tiempo.
		El pensar acerca de la nota que puedo llegar a obtener en una clase interfiere con mis estudios y mi desempeño en las evaluaciones.
		Si se pudiera obviar el uso de evaluaciones y exámenes, creo que podría aprender mejor
		En los exámenes tomo la actitud de “si no lo sé ahora, no tiene sentido el preocuparme acerca de esto”
		En realidad no comprendo porque algunas personas se preocupan tanto por los exámenes.
		Pensamientos acerca de fracasar en el examen interfiere en mi desempeño durante del examen.
		No estudio más intensamente para los exámenes finales de lo que estudio para el resto de mis clases.
		Aún cuando estoy bien preparada para un examen, me siento sumamente ansiosa por la evaluación.





		No disfruto el comer antes de una evaluación importante.
		Antes de un examen importante, mis manos o brazos están temblando.
		Rara vez siento la necesidad de “llenarme” de información antes de un examen
		La institución debería reconocer que algunas estudiantes se ponen más nerviosas que otras por los exámenes y que esto afecta su desempeño.
		Me parece que los periodos de evaluación no deberían ser situaciones tan intensas.
		Comienzo a sentir mucha preocupación al momento de recibir mi examen de vuelta.
		Me asustan mucho las clases donde el profesor tiene el hábito de tomar pruebas sorpresa.
		<b>TOTAL DE RESPUESTAS VERDADERO O FALSO</b>

Test de escala de ansiedad adaptado de Sarason I.G. (1980), *Test Anxiety: Theory, Research, and Applications*.

Puntuar la escala del Test de Ansiedad es sencillo. El número total de marcas de "**Verdadero**" es su puntuación de la escala de ansiedad. Una puntuación de 12 o menor se encuentra en el rango de *ansiedad baja*. Si esa es su puntuación, usted no estaría mirando este libro. Una puntuación de 12 a 20 se encuentra en rango de *ansiedad media*. Cualquier puntuación mayor a 20 significa *ansiedad alta*. Una puntuación de 15 o mayor es un buen indicador que usted sufre de una inconformidad considerable al tomar exámenes o pruebas. Una puntuación que indique *ansiedad alta* no es causa para alarmarse. Una puntuación en el rango medio-alto simplemente significa que usted se beneficiaría desarrollando algunas estrategias que le ayuden a hacer frente con la ansiedad y estrés. Usted puede superar la ansiedad excesiva. Puede encontrar que algunas técnicas y estrategias producen resultados



dramáticos. Muy a menudo, cambiar la forma en la que usted responde a la presión y estrés le tomará tiempo. Un cambio profundo y duradero raramente ocurre al instante.

## APPENDIX F

## STUDENT A: FIRST ENTRY

Fecha: 04 / 12 / 18

Al hablar de estrés académico me enfoca mucho en las materias más complicadas, en este caso en Matemáticas, ya que la profesora es muy rápida y todo quiere que hagamos en 5 a 10 minutos entonces eso a veces genera dolor de cabeza y mucho estrés. También en inglés, por las tareas que existe tales como los readings, los interactive oral, entre otras. Además en la materia de gestión empresarial existen clases en donde realmente no entiendo la manera en que nos da las clases entonces es muy confuso y al momento de algún deber o prueba estoy o estamos asustadas por lo que no sabemos que hacer y genera mucho estrés. Otro punto importante es la cantidad de deberes que nos mandan a la casa los

Fecha: 04 / 12 / 18

profesores y ellos no saben con cuánto trabajo más estamos llevando a la casa, sin embargo, cuando estamos en casa nos empezamos a estresar demasiado, generando dolores de cabeza, cualquier otra enfermedad que afecte a nuestro cuerpo.





STUDENT A: SECOND ENTRY

Fecha : 29 / 01 / 19

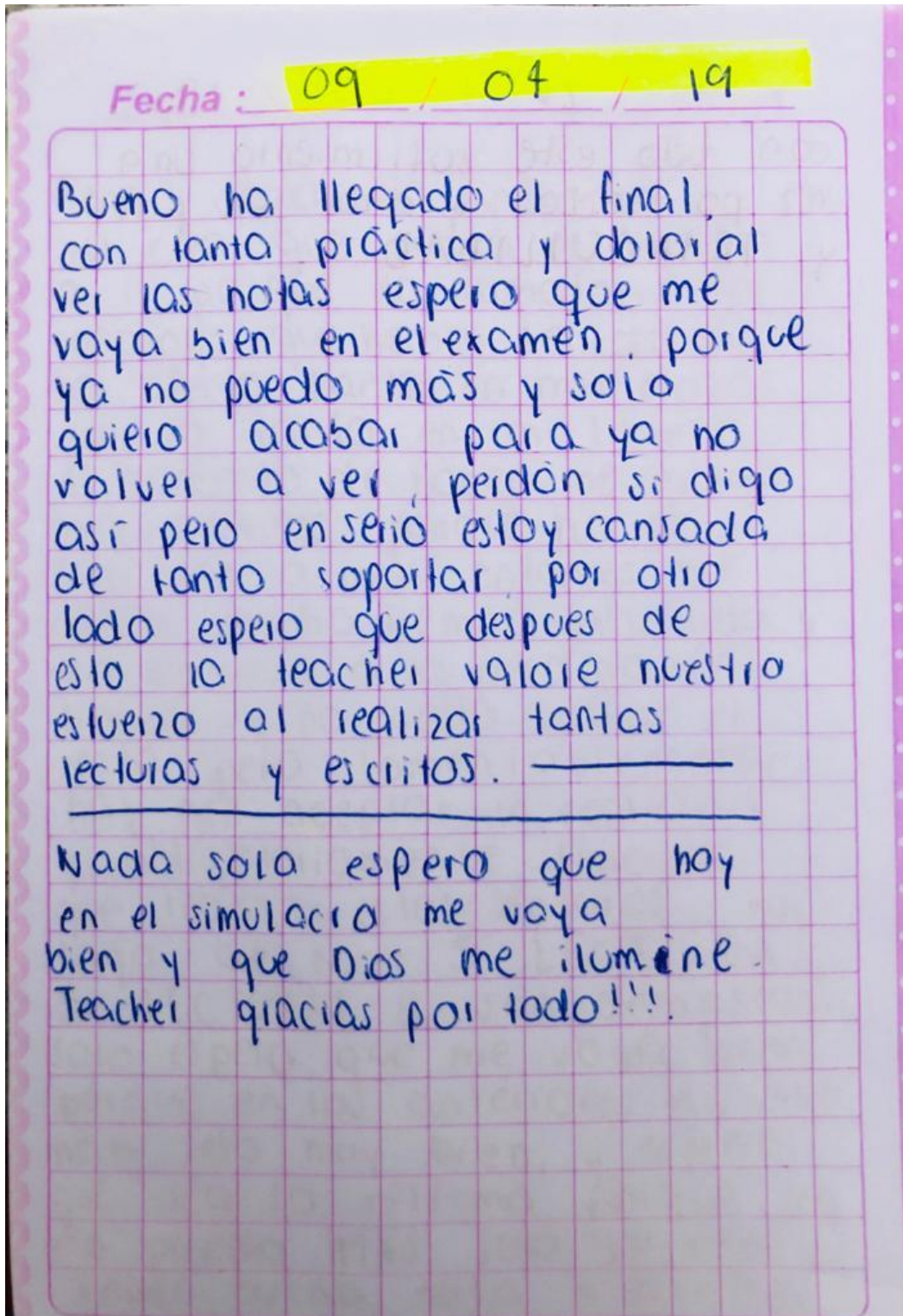
Empezamos una nueva semana, en la cual las cosas si han salido de lo mejor como en mis individuales oral pude demostrar menos ataques de nervios y me siento orgullosa, ya que esto me ayuda para mi otras conversaciones ya sea individual o grupal, pero el estrés sigue ahí no se si es por miedo a una mala nota o porque realmente no lo pueda realizar, hablo del Paper 1, lamentablemente en eso no me va tan bien.

he sacado bajas notas en casi todas las lecturas y mi teacher no entiende mucho que eso nos está afectando en las notas de la Unidad, creo que la mayoría de veces le hemos dicho que nos ayude haciendo en grupos o en parejas pero ultimamente no se ha dado, yo se que la teacher debe seguir una rúbrica en

Fecha : 29 / 01 / 19

donde le dicen que las lecturas son de tal forma y así, así... pero no se me gustaria que la teacher se ponga en nuestro lugar y sienta lo que nosotras sentimos cuando nos va mal, al menos yo estoy muy preocupada por mis notas y realmente no me gusta para nada realizar las paper 1. Además en la vida no me va a servir, pero aunque voy a tener el conocimiento.

## STUDENT A: THIRD ENTRY





## APPENDIX G


## STUDENT B: FIRST ENTRY

1. Situación sentida con estrés o ansiedad a nivel académico.

**High School Musical**

Diciembre del 2018.


No considero el estrés como algo propio de mi día a día al menos no hasta hace 2 años. Siempre he sido perfeccionista, en medida de como un procrastinador puede serlo, me moría de ansiedad a los 9 años por escribir nueve líneas en un examen que solicitaba solo ocho, apuntaba a la perfección en busca de aprobación, que mente tan dañada. Ahora mi estrés se da por la entrega y el cumplimiento de todo, y que cada cosa se encuentre bien hecha, la evaluación interna la he intentado postergar ya que me da miedo a fallar por hacerla mal, pero ahora tengo estrés extremo porque



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**High School Musical**

no la tengo terminada. Es una lástima no haber utilizado el tiempo de forma propia. Cae que me causan ansiedad el el hecho de material como gestión o biología en el que siento que no aprendo nada, no importa el esfuerzo que haga, siento una deficiencia en el sistema académico y quienes lo imparten no todo, pero lo que ...




©Disney

## STUDENT B: SECOND ENTRY

High School Musical January 30, 2019

Hoy tenemos una prueba de Paper 1 y no se como me vaya a ir, no recuerdo bien la text type entonces no se como realizar nada que no sea un blog. Casi siempre lo hacemos en grupo entonces es mucho más fácil porque todos aportan, además tengo hambre y sueño, y escribir me da más sueño del necesario así que espero tener ideal claro y no hacerlo medio dormida media despierta.

En serio quisiera que fuera en grupo, así si no recuerdo algo puedo preguntar a mi compañera, ojalá nos ponga un text type fácil, un blog o un artículo de newspaper,



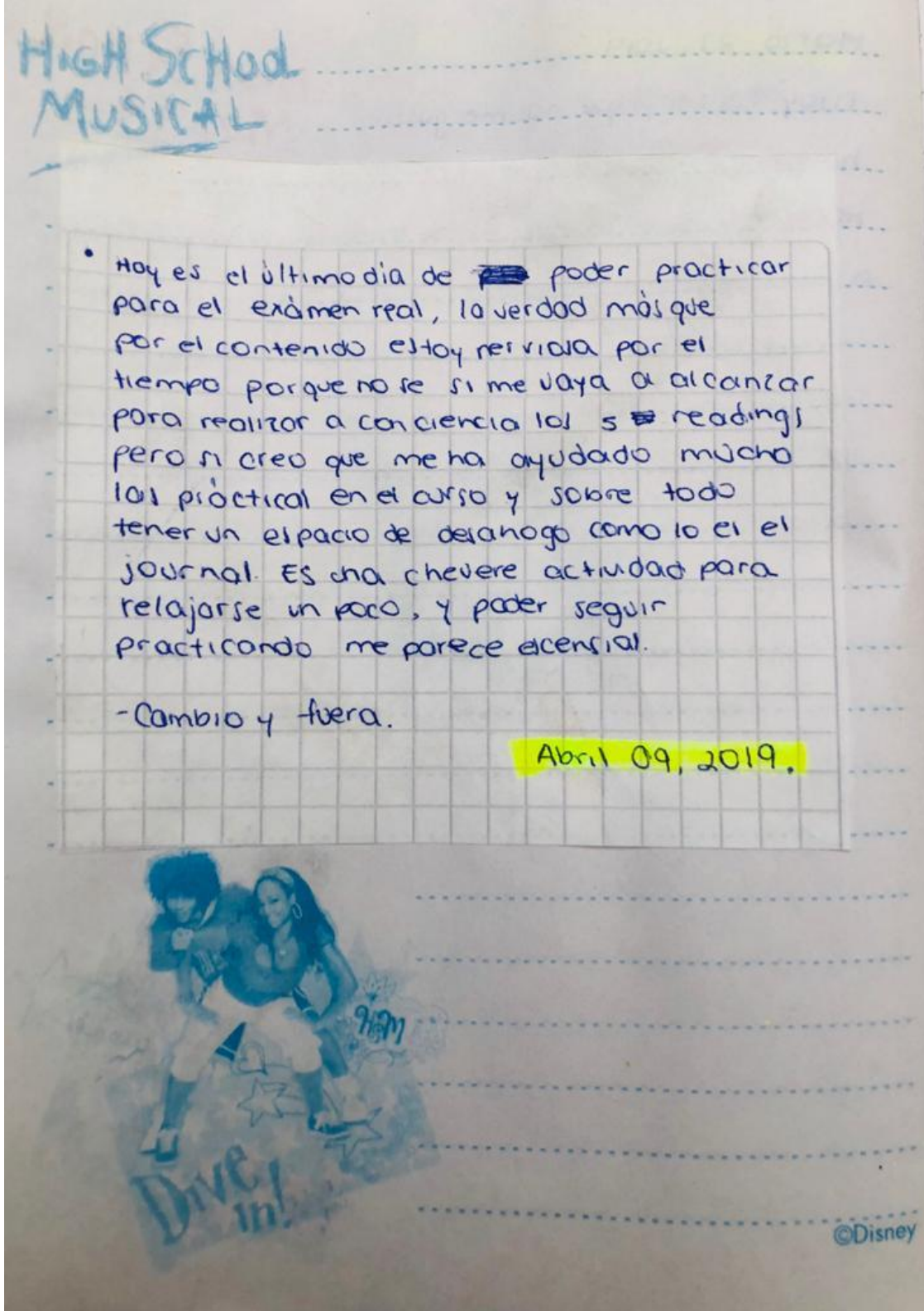
Creo que de eso me acuerdo.

Sigo con sueño y tengo gripe, lo que no ayuda en nada.

©Disney



## STUDENT B: THIRD ENTRY







## APPENDIX H

### STUDENT C: FIRST ENTRY

journal

Diciembre 5 / 2018

Desde hace una semana ~~ya~~ ~~hoy~~ hemos iniciado la construcción del ensayo de TDC, sin embargo, estoy muy preocupado porque no creo que nos hayan preparado lo suficiente para hacerlo y tengo miedo de no lograrlo y por eso no obtener el diploma IB, a pesar de que en cada materia me he esforzado demasiado y creo que sería tirar todo mi trabajo a la basura por un profesor que no se esfuerza lo suficiente.

Además, esta semana me he estresado porque en una materia estamos trabajando en grupo, pero hay personas que no parecen

ni el mínimo esfuerzo y provocan que tengamos problemas para terminar el trabajo, cosa que no me gusta, y me estresa que su poca dedicación vaya a afectar el trabajo que yo sí estoy haciendo junto con una compañera que también trabaja.

Otra cosa es que tenemos que entregar finalizada la evaluación interna de Biología el viernes y a pesar de que solo debo recoger también tengo 2 pruebas de materias difíciles y me preocupa no lograr las 3 cosas.



STUDENT C: SECOND ENTRY

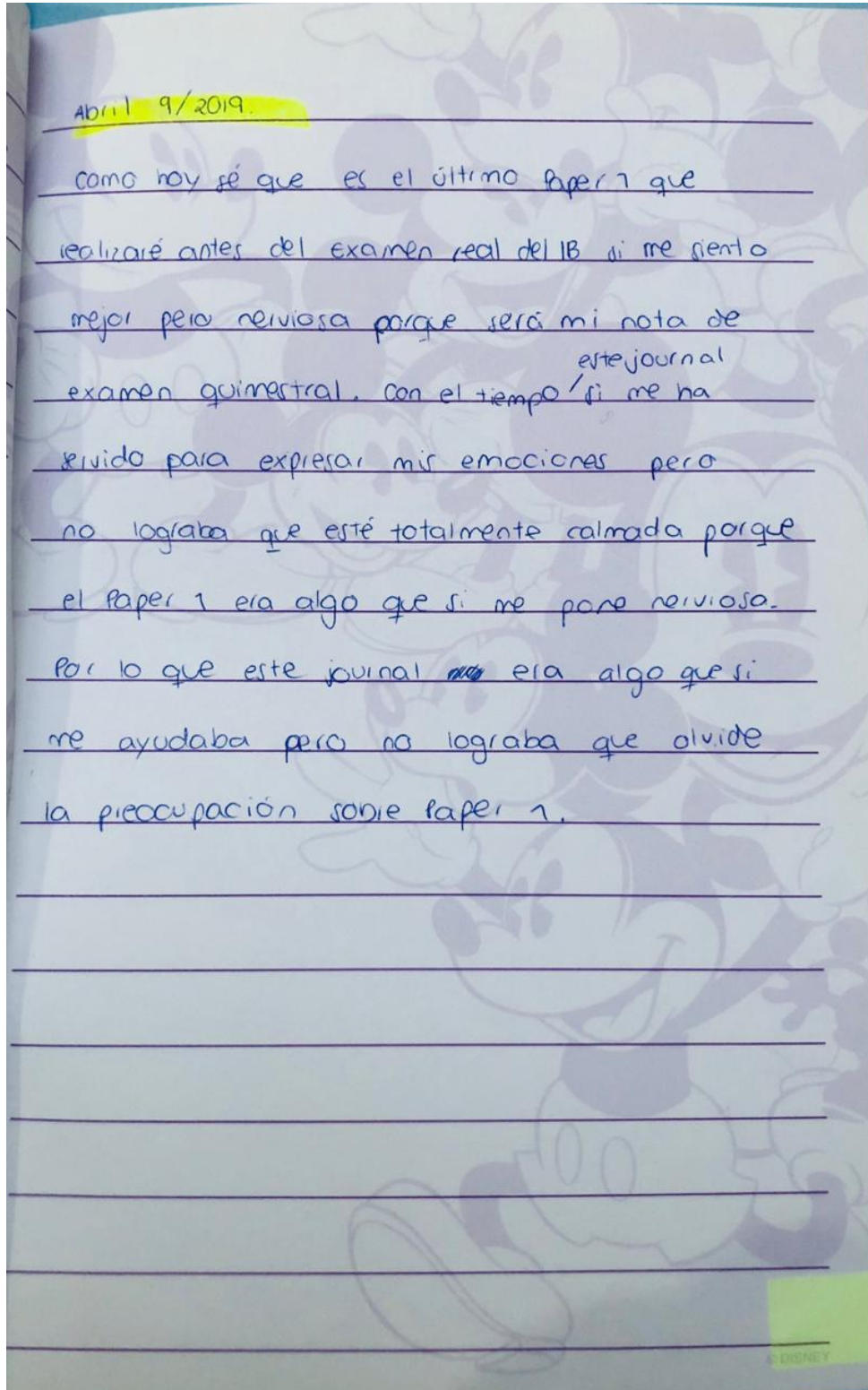
enero 30 / 2019.

Voy a realizar un Paper 1 y me siento demasiado nerviosa porque se que esta será mi nota de prueba de unidad y eso me asusto bastante, porque en verdad quisiera obtener una buena calificación, y a pesar de que hemos practicado estas actividad en bastantes ocasiones no me puedo sentir completamente tranquila sobre esta porque siempre hay palabras o frases que no entiendo y es en lo que muchas veces fallo

y de verdad no me gustaria tener una baja calificación en esta materia.



STUDENT C: THIRD ENTRY





## APPENDIX I

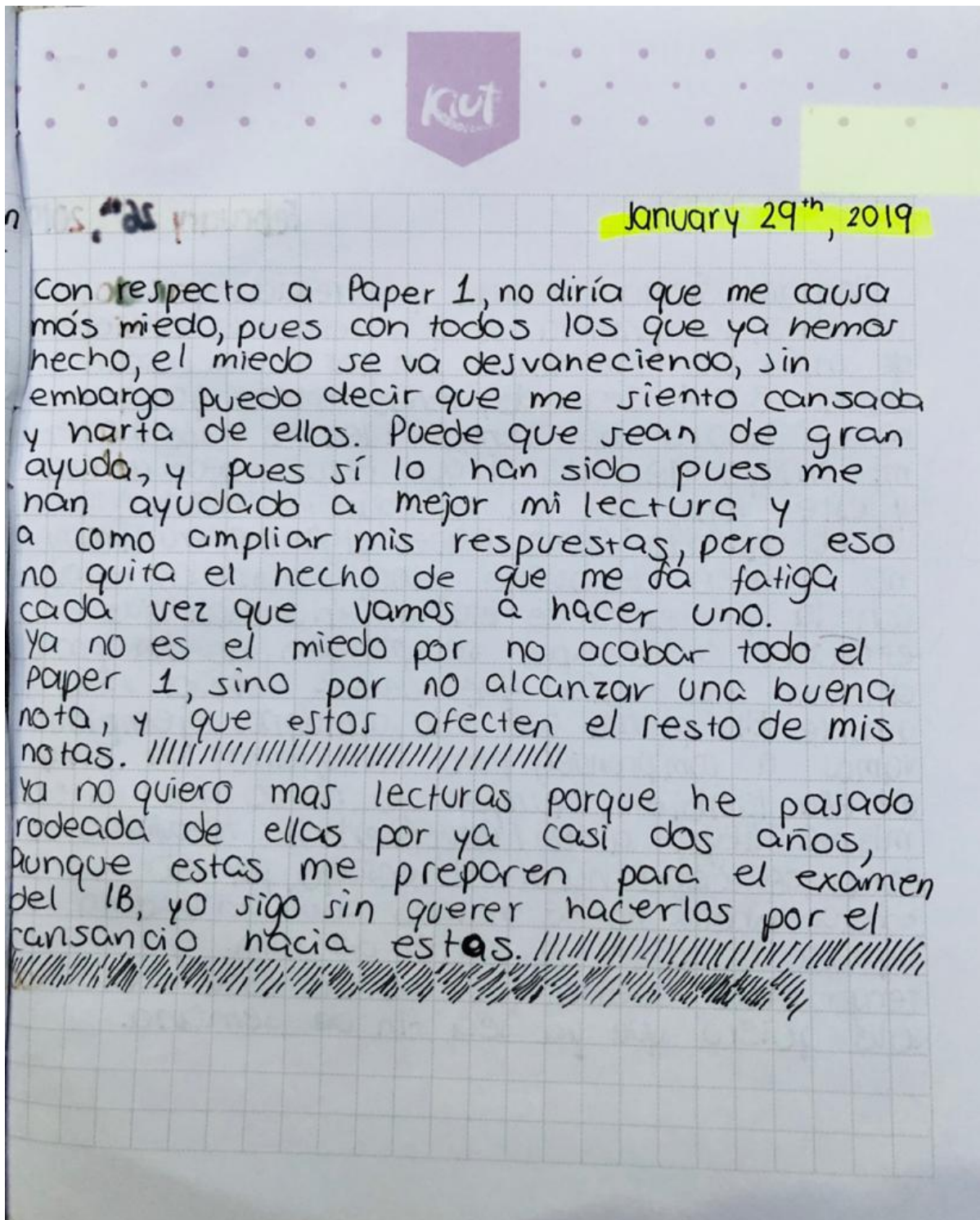
## STUDENT D: FIRST ENTRY

December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Esta semana me he sentido estresada ya que sé que tengo un montón de tareas que hacer / yo sé que esto no hubiera pasado si hubiera organizado bien mi tiempo pero es que cada día hay más cosas por hacer y se me acumulan las cosas. Creo que si fuera un poco más responsable no sucedería esto, es por eso que quiero cambiar mis malos hábitos y sé que eso lo lograré con la constancia. Por ejemplo esta semana haré todas las tareas que tengo y adelantare las que tengo para la próxima semana. Tengo una nueva técnica que la quiero aplicar esta se llama "Pomodoro" es una técnica en la que hago tareas por 25min. y me tomé 5 min. de descanso y así voy completando mis pomodoras hasta terminar con mis tareas. Voy a tomar nota de mis progresos para ver cuánto mejoro pues quiero ser más responsable con lo que tengo que hacer. Tengo que admitir que me he vuelto vaga y dejada en los últimos meses y es por eso que siento era carga y presión del estrés sobre mí.

si dejara de quejarme tanto y pusiera en práctica mis planes se que todo sería más fácil. Todas deberíamos hacer lo mismo, dejar las quejas de lado y empezar a ver soluciones. !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Todas, hasta yo pensamos que tenemos estrés por culpa del IB pero si lo vieramos desde otra perspectiva como manejar nuestro tiempo con las tareas del IB, nos daríamos cuenta que nos ha traído tantos cambios positivos como negativos pues la presión que sentimos ahora en la universidad puede llegar a ser mucho peor. Así que ya nos estamos acostumbrando a esa vida.

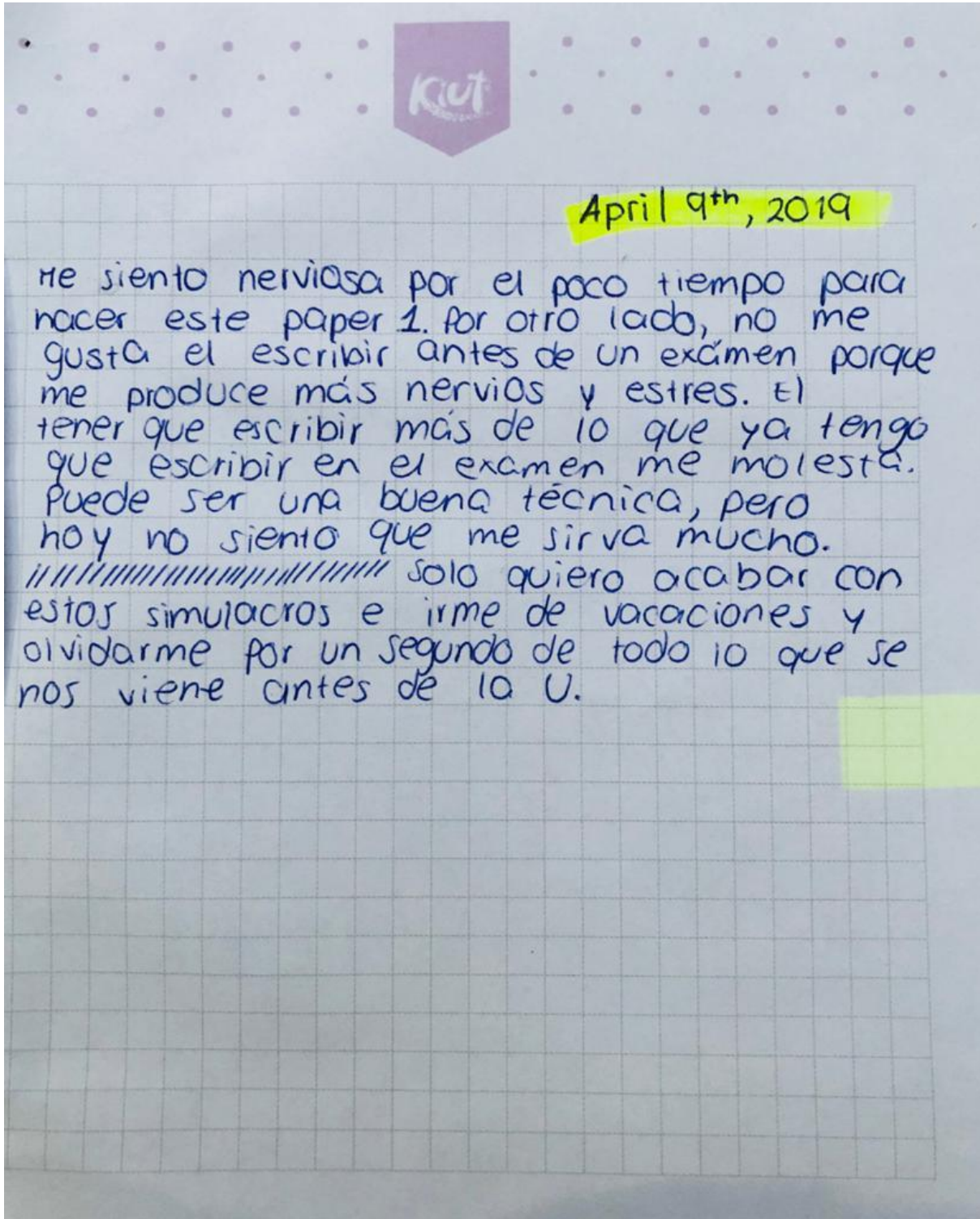
## STUDENT D: SECOND ENTRY







STUDENT D: THIRD ENTRY



## APPENDIX J

## STUDENT E: FIRST ENTRY

Fecha: Diciembre 04 / 2018

El día de ayer me sentí muy estresada porque estoy organizando un evento académico en donde tenemos que manejar varias cosas como dinero, personas, cosas que necesitamos para seguir haciendo este evento. Ayer tuve que faltar todo el día a clase y eso me retira mucho en continuar con las materias que tenemos. Aún así me siento contenta porque nos fue bien. Pero no dejo de estresarme por la forma en la que pienso que el tiempo se me va de las manos, así sepa que lo que tengo que hacer es organizarme y relajarme, el saber que tengo que hacer varias actividades en tan poco tiempo me abruma. Además no es la única cosa que tengo que hacer, debo hacer los deberes, ~~se~~ igualarme y atender/entender las cosas

Fecha: / /

que me dan en el preuniversitario. siento que este evento me va a hacer perder muchas horas valiosas de clase y no me va a dejar tiempo para otras actividades académicas o deportivas. Es un evento de gran magnitud y debe estar bien hecho, y yo mismo me comprometí a hacerlo, pero nunca tuve en cuenta el tiempo que consumirá este tipo de actividades en donde mi imagen y la imagen del colegio se ve perjudicada. Siempre intento hacer lo mejor de mí, pero el tiempo no me da y me siento cada vez más cansada y estresada.





STUDENT E: SECOND ENTRY

Fecha: 29 / Enero / 2019

Escribir me ha ayudado a relajarme antes de hacer la prueba pero eso no quita la ansiedad que muchas veces me da cuando no entiendo lo que me pide la pregunta. Me ayuda a relajarme porque las últimas veces escribí lo que me tenía estresada o angustiada, por lo que sacarlo me hacía sentir mejor, pero en realidad siempre me pongo nerviosa, así no lo demuestre en realidad.

Es más fácil para mí realizar este tipo de lecturas tipo BI porque me resultan más comprensibles, las anteriores siempre me iba mal y con suerte llegaba al 7 en total. Aún así me esforzaba para entender que me pedía la pregunta pero casi nunca pensaba lo correcto, por eso me siento más cómoda con estas nuevas lecturas.

Fecha: 01/01/19 PS

Espero que en estas lecturas me vaya igual que la anterior, que hasta saque 10 y como es prueba de bloque y no hay recuperación o no se prome día me hace sentir más angustiada que las otras veces.



## STUDENT E: THIRD ENTRY

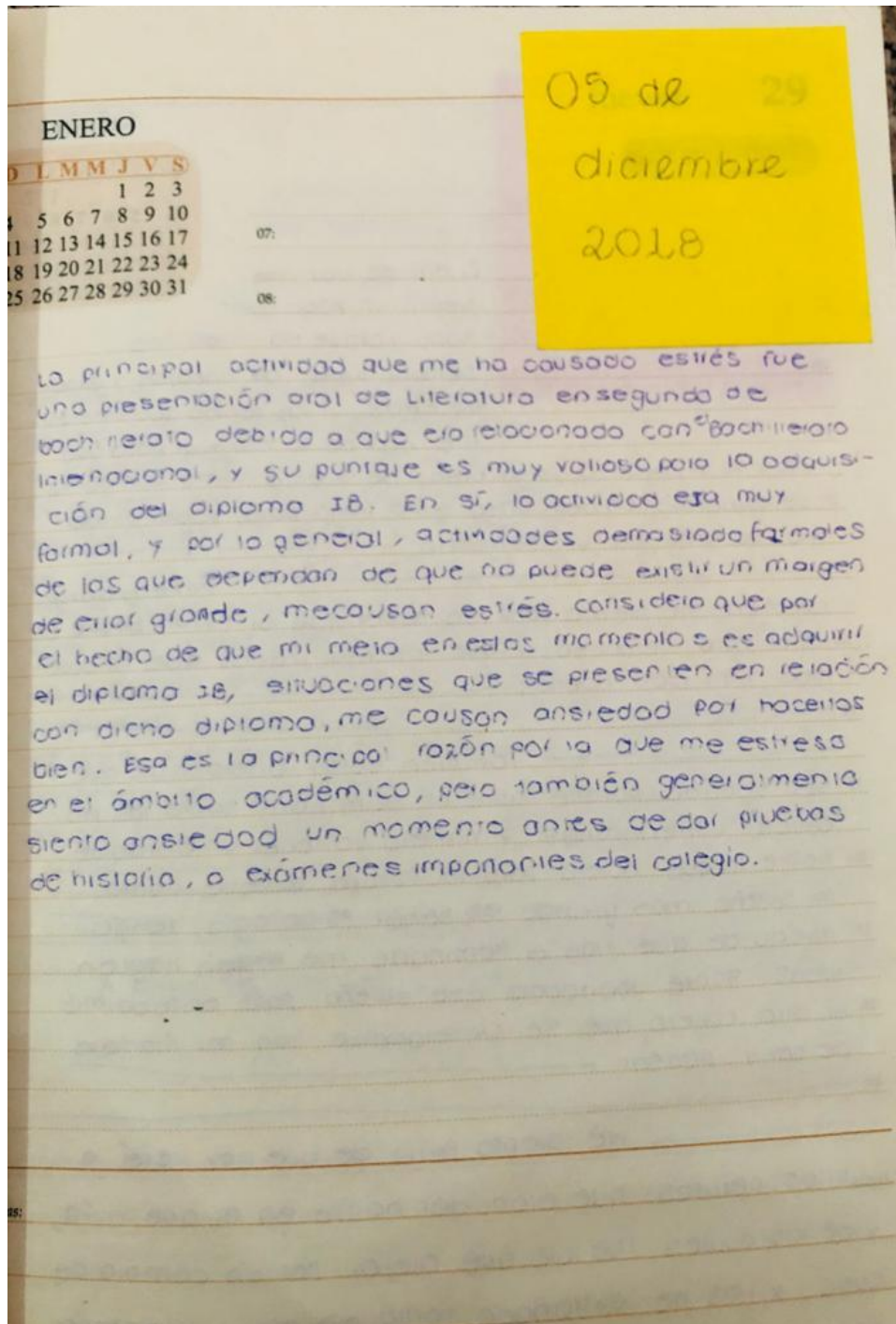
Fecha: 09 Abril 2019

Para esta prueba final, me siento realmente preparada gracias a los otros paper 1 que hemos realizado en clase.

Este tipo de escritura me ha servido mucho para ya no estresarme más de lo debido, me ha ayudado a dejar en palabras escritas lo que me preocupaba y esto ha hecho que al momento de dar la prueba este tranquila.

## APPENDIX K

## STUDENT F: FIRST ENTRY



## STUDENT F: SECOND ENTRY

30 enero  
2019

siento bastantes nervios en este momento, porque además de que es un reading (lo cual no mismo me gusta), es la prueba de bloque, y tengo miedo de que por nervios o falta de concentración no conteste bien las enunciadas o preguntas. Además, justo en estos momentos

10: estoy recordando que en el examen quimestral del anterior año me fue muy mal solo por el reading, ya

11: que en el writing me fue super bien, y por esa razón me preocupó de ahora me suceda lo mismo. Me

12: da mucho miedo sacar mala nota.

13:

14:

FEBRERO

D	L	M	M	J	J
1	2	3	4	5	6
8	9	10	11	12	13
15	16	17	18	19	20
22	23	24	25	26	27





STUDENT F: THIRD ENTRY

