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FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

Learning Strategies Used to Put off Misspelling: Selected Vocabulary for
Seventh Graders at “Juan Montalvo” Elementary School

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Educación en la Especialización de
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RESUMEN

El presente documento de investigación fue realizado en la escuela fiscal Juan Montalvo, en la ciudad de Cuenca, en donde se encontraron problemas de escritura del idioma Inglés en los alumnos de séptimo año de educación básica. El objetivo principal de esta investigación fue disminuir notablemente este problema. Para ello, fue necesario aplicar ciertos requerimientos como entrevistas acerca de dicha materia, una evaluación inicial y luego una evaluación final que permitió analizar el progreso o la efectividad de la investigación planteada.

Esta investigación se refiere a las estrategias usadas en el aula con la finalidad de evitar las faltas de ortografía en la escritura del idioma Inglés en los niños del séptimo año de educación básica, mismas que fueron aplicadas con el consentimiento del Director de la escuela y del profesor de dicha materia. Las estrategias usadas, tales como: sopa de letras, llenar los espacios en blanco, completar una historia pequeña con las palabras faltantes, permitió en primera instancia la motivación en los estudiantes por participar y luego como tarea final, analizar el porcentaje que dio como resultado positivo la aplicación de las estrategias antes mencionadas.

Así, este trabajo investigativo permitió conocer primero los problemas más comunes que tuvieron los estudiantes del séptimo año en esta escuela al momento de escribir Inglés. Segundo, el interés pero sobre todo el apoyo de los estudiantes en este proyecto, y tercero, el resultado positivo que permitió conocer que es posible evitar los problemas de escritura, si se usa una estrategia de aprendizaje adecuada.

Palabras claves:

Estrategia, Enseñanza, Juan Montalvo, Vocabulario, Errores ortográficos, Escritura

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ABSTRACT

The following project was developed at Juan Montalvo Elementary School with the goal of using some techniques to avoid misspelling. The participants who were involved in this application were the director of the school, a teacher of the English subject, and mainly ten students from the seventh grade. A survey, an interview of an expert, a pre-test and also a post-test were necessary to carry out this investigation. It was clearly found that students had problems when they learnt English through reading, speaking and writing similar as some other institutions where English is taught as a second language. This project may help those students who are shy when they made mistakes in the learning process. It also may make them feel more secure of themselves when they participated in class. Finally, this investigation may help them think about English as one of the interactive subjects and not a boring and unnecessary one as it was taught in the past.

Key words:

Misspelling, Learning, Strategies, Juan Montalvo, Vocabulary, Writing



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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this project to my beloved wife, Paulina. Thank you for all the support you give me every day. I love you!!

Pablo Avilés.

I would like to dedicate this work to God because without him this would never have come true, to my parents Luz and Martín since they always support me in my studies, to my wife Rosita who has shown me that all in life is possible if we do it with effort and sacrifice, and to my daughter Danna and my son Mateito who are my best gifts that God gave me in my life. Thank you so much.

Diego Tigre



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INTRODUCTION

During learning English as a second language, many people try to learn or at least to know what an English word means through translating in their own language. However, this easy way can be misleading because English, as well as other languages around the world, has a structure and even a variety of sounds different from any other language. Most students are obligated to learn English, or because this subject is part of their schedules, and others simply because they like it.

This following project is based on teaching the English language, and related to the problem of misspelling in children from 11 years old at Juan Montalvo Elementary School. According to a professional linguist known as Malmberg, in order to have good learning processes, it is important to bring innovative teaching strategies to class. This will be helpful not only for teachers but also for students (Malmberg 19).

Almost every person who learns a second language has problems in pronunciation, writing and reading, among others. This is because they relate their native language with the second language. This project is written for those teachers who have misspelling problems with their students, and also for those students who need to improve their English learning.

The purpose of this document is to give readers some examples of the most common misspelling problems that children at Juan Montalvo Elementary School make, but also, the advances that a teacher can make by simply using developed strategies such as puzzles, word shapes, word search, among others. It was clearly shown that seventh graders at Juan Montalvo Elementary School had problems with misspelling in the English learning process.



CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM

1.1 Purpose

To help students avoid misspelling vocabulary in the seventh grade at “Juan Montalvo” Elementary School.

1.2 Description of the Problem

The learning of a new language includes skills and different strategies used to master it; however, when students begin to develop different skills, they have other problems when they begin to include a new language with their mother tongue; one of the most relevant problems is misspelling. In this case, there were misspelling problems that students in the seventh grade at Juan Montalvo Elementary School had when they wrote in English. First, they tended to write incomplete words. They saw some words on the board, and they were quickly erased and students had to write what they saw. As a result, many incomplete words were found.

Second, students confused the order of some letters in words, for example, /th/ with /ht/ or /b/ with /d/.

Finally, the number of students in the class was considerably great which did not help with children’s attention. The classrooms were crowded and the students were not paying attention to the teacher.

1.3 Justification

Nowadays, the education in Ecuador has been continuously changing and forces the importance of keeping the learning of English in continuous progress. Many public schools have received new materials, buildings, electronic implements, and a great number of new teachers among others with the intention of creating an education for the millennium. However, it is not enough. Many of these public schools still have necessities in learning. For example; the English language is one of the subjects that are not obligated in



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the first seven grades, but it is optional according to new government regulations. This problem has a big impact in the acquisition of this language due to the fact that children can learn a foreign language during their childhood better than when they become teenagers since the probabilities of acquiring a foreign language is more difficult for them, and also teachers need more strategies and adequate methods to teach it.

This is the case of Juan Montalvo Elementary School, where the English subject is optional and students in the seventh grade have problems with the spelling of words. These negative aspects have to be mainly with the great number of students in a classroom. The teacher usually have problems because not all the students pay attention and it is complicated to control them.

Also, it is important to mention that the age differences of the students should be considered because they are between the ages of 10-13 years old and some of them have come from other schools where they have not been taught the English language at all. There are also some students who are repeating the grade because they failed in their previous school. Finally, the motivation that these seventh graders have is low because they only have one hour of English class per week and they only see the class as a subject they have to pass.

1.4 Research Question

To what extent can learning strategies help to prevent misspelling in a seventh grade class.

1.5 Objectives

General Objective

- To look for specific strategies to prevent misspelling when students write in English.



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Specific Objectives

- To select strategies for children in order to write vocabulary correctly without mistakes.
- To apply learning strategies to prevent misspelling in English class from 11 year old students.
- To analyze the selected techniques and strategies in the class.



CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Learning strategies

There are different meanings of learning strategies that some authors explain as the following: Rubin defines strategies as "... the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge..." (43). Scarcella and Oxford identify learning techniques as "...specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques --such as seeking out conversation patterns, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task -- used by students to enhance their own learning..." (63). Whatever the meaning is, learning strategies are used to acquire new knowledge during the learning process.

O'Malley divided learning strategies into three types. These types are metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies. There is another type of strategy that Oxford and other authors have identified in their research and works. This type is called memory-related strategy. (O'Malley 12).

Cognitive strategies are those strategies that learners use in order to study more successfully. These include repetition, organizing new language, summarizing meaning, guessing meaning from context, using imagery for memorization. All of these strategies involve deliberate manipulation of the language to improve learning (O'Malley & Chamot 144).

Metacognitive strategies go beyond the cognitive mechanism and give learners the chance to coordinate their ideas. This helps them to plan language learning in an efficient way. When new vocabulary, rules, and writing systems confuse the learner; these strategies become vital for successful language learning (O'Malley & Chamot 150).

According to Oxford, social strategies support the students when they are working with others and also these strategies help students to understand the social target as well as the language (14). In other words, social strategies help students to develop good relationships, comprehend different customs and



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personality that each student has and also to develop the language through communication because communication occurs between the students.

All of these strategies are a melding conglomerate of theoretical and practical concerns that contribute to the investigation of mental process and help better understanding of the ESL learning processes. As teachers, it is important to keep in mind that these strategies can be recognized for different age groups, especially if the student is very young. (Drozdziel 49)

2.1.1 Learning styles

Various stimuli that exist such as sounds, movements, pictures, and music tend to be responded to better by students in the learning process than other things. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) supports the idea that students are motivated by visual stimuli; a visual stimulus gives them the chance to memorize things when they see them and if the process is repetitive, their retention of information increases. Kinesthetic activities are also good elements in class because students who have physical activity such as moving around or rearranging things with their hands will be helped in their learning process through this effective technique.

According to Harmer, Multiple Intelligences play an important role in the learning process, and this is because not all students think the same. Intelligences such as mathematical, spatial, emotional, interpersonal, musical, among others are developed by people on different levels. For example, if a student is very smart in mathematics, his level in music may be less, or if a student is very smart in music or even playing any musical instrument, his ability for solving mathematic problems may be low because his intelligence may be musical (19).

The theories above pretend teachers to think that in a group of students in a classroom, every mind is a world on its own. Teachers who have experience in this area recommend applying strategies at the beginning of the school year in order to check the multiple intelligences that are present in their classes. It will



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also help the new teacher to elaborate good lesson plans for the entire year with some activities distributed for all of these intelligences. Thus, all of the students with multiple intelligences will have many activities to do during the school year (Harmer 16).

2.1.2 Responsibility for learning

Nowadays, there are some institutions where students are passive people, recipients of the information that the teacher brings to class. However, this situation is not acceptable because it does not permit students to progress their learning. Also, they still think that the teacher is the person who cares about everything in class. According to Jeremy, there are some situations which can help students to feel themselves that they are able to learn not only in a group but individually (Harmer 24).

First of all, most students from any institution in Ecuador have differences in culture, religion, economic situations, among others. This situation makes the students think they are free and the teacher is the only responsible person in the class. But this can change if the teacher permits the students to create their own role, for example dialoguing after they listen to a model or asking them to investigate individuality about a certain topic they are interested in and then presenting it in front of the class.

Another recommendation is to let them solve puzzles alone and not to give them the translation of a certain word they need to know, but let them look for the meaning in the dictionary. Also, they can use the monolingual learners' dictionaries which contain words, rules, examples, among others. In English are written just for learners.

Finally, a good cue to check the students' level of autonomy is to send them homework and to check it constantly. Thus, students will feel motivated and able to investigate by themselves, creating in their minds good thoughts through the learning process (Harmer 21).



2.1.3 Children's learning of the own language and other languages

There are a lot of legends which talk about the first human language. Some people say that a child was put alone in a determined place with any human relations, and the very first word he pronounced was called language. On the other hand, many people affirm that the first language on earth was Hebrew because Adam and Eve spoke it in paradise where God created them (Malmberg 129).

However, these arguments have been losing strength. Nowadays, it is known that a child produces sounds which are related to his cognitive development. For example, if a child makes a sound and he is caught in arms, he will assimilate that sound as a signal of the environment. Also children produce sounds known as twitters combined with open vocals and consonants, as an example we have pa-pa, ta-ta, da-da, go-go, ga-ga, etc. It is important to recognize that not all children produce the same sounds (Malmberg 131).

According to Gregorie, French children produce nasal vocals as a consequence of a vocal and *ng*, for example bon as bong. Swedish children, however, need more time differentiate between *y* and *u* as their language asks, but soon they can distinguish the open vocals from each other (Malmberg 132).

Saussure said that the linguistic signal has a lineal order, in other words the different elements in a language follow each other in time and space even if it is spoken or written. This order also refers to phonemes and letters which have meaning in the language. Children are going to pronounce twitters, then phonemes and words, and finally they will be able to pronounce sentences. It does not matter if the sentence is not in order, but the most important is its meaning. When children begin to associate an acoustic image to evidence, they do it in a concrete situation. Through repetition, that acoustic image will be a symbol of a concept. For example, a child can clearly distinguish his father from



other men because of the acoustic image and repetition. The child sees his father and associates his image with the affective meanings (Malmberg 133).

2.2 Factors associated with misspelling of words.

There are many factors which are involved in word misspelling in children; however, the most common are word length, irregularity of words, and the same written form of words, but with different meanings. Each one of these is explained in the following paragraphs.

The first factor related with misspelling is word length. This factor states a short word is easier to write than a long word. Even if teachers try to divide a long word into phonemes, it is difficult for students to memorize the written form of that word. On the other hand, short words like sun, sky, dog, red, among others can be easily written by children because they not only relate these words to their world, but they also memorize them.

The second factor is irregularity of words, and it refers to the big group of words which are not common at all for children. They are going to have problems writing them because they do not use them in the learning process. If the teacher uses irregular words to avoid misspelling, that would be a bad decision and a big problem for the students. It is also important to mention that a word is always presented as a code with the aim of clarifying its sound and written form. Hanna and his colleagues applied a study which gave close to 17.000 English words that are commonly misspelled by young learners; these words were considered irregular. The most important factor about this study was that children spell regular words better than irregular ones (Treiman 41-44).

Finally, the third factor is the similarity of some words, but with different meanings. There are many similar written words in English, but with different meanings and these resembling appearances can produce confusion for students, especially when they are learning to write simple sentences in English. For example:



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Mary has the control. (Mary's situation)

Mary has the control (the remote control of the TV)

2.3 Strategies for misspelling

There are some students who need additional support to acquire a new language, principally in misspelling. During the development of a clear and organized spelling program, some relevant points should be taken to account:

- The words which are taught must have to do with:
 - ✓ The levels of performance that students have at that moment.
 - ✓ The program of the class and the needs that students have.
- Spelling patterns must be taught clearly.
- The spelling program must be taught in parts.
- Give enough practice and feedback.
- Guarantee the preservation of learned words.
- Highlight that correct spelling is important.
- Recommend skills at the moment of using a dictionary (NSW Department of Education and Training 143).

There are seven important steps that teach students learning strategies and are the following:

1. The strategy should be explained
2. The strategy and the steps should be patterned.
3. Emphasize the combination of effort with the use of the strategy.
4. The steps of the strategy must be repeated by the students.
5. The teacher has to monitor when students use the strategy, and give them relevant feedback if they need to.
6. The teacher should train the students to examine their strategy use with a list of steps if they need to.



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7. The teacher must emphasize that the strategy can be used whenever they want (SW Department of education and Training 161)

For this investigation, some of the steps above will be applied at “Juan Montalvo” Elementary School with the aim of motivating students to learn English and thus begin from the simplest to the most complex.

2.3.1 LSCWC Method

Each letter of this method has the following meanings: **Look**, **Say**, **Cover**, **Write**, and **Check**. This method requires that the students have to look at the word. Then they have to pronounce aloud the word that they looked at. Next, they have to fold the paper, covering the word. Third, they have to write the word. Finally they have to unfold the paper to check if the word was written correctly or not. When an error occurs the incorrect letter is crossed out. Then the correct letters are written above the incorrect ones. Finally the word is written once again next to the incorrect word (NSW Department of Education and Training 162-63).

2.3.2 Word Search

Using this strategy, a student must have a peer tutor or spelling buddy who works with her or him, in this case, Student A and Student B. The teacher gives each one a paper, a grid is drawn, and each student has to write letter by letter in the grid. Students have to write the letter from left to right horizontally, down or diagonally. Then the blank spaces must be filled in with other letters. Finally, the other student has to look for the words in the word puzzle and also they have to do the same with the other words that they have (NSW Department of Education and Training 168).

2.3.3 Word Shape

This kind of technique is very simple and easy for students to understand because it consists of the following. The teacher gives the students a group of



words that they have to write in a grid that has the shape of each letter of the word. The purpose of this technique is to identify whether a word looks right.

2.3.4 Chaining Puzzles

In this strategy students are asked to work in pairs with words that the teacher gives them. Students have to use the words, but they have to rewrite the word with blank spaces to be filled in where letters are missing. Using this strategy, pronunciation is involved as well as the accuracy of each word chain in a left-right progression.

2.4 The teaching of vocabulary

According to John P. Hughes, the most difficult part of teaching a new language in any place is teaching vocabulary, and it is because there are no techniques to support it, and also because the majority of teachers are concentrated on teaching grammar, and its different compositions, among others. One of these techniques is communication. People who have the opportunity to be in contact with any foreign language tend to learn some parts of speech first, and how to use them later. For example, if a person that does not know too much English and learns to pronounce a word related to food, this person can only use this word to get something to eat instead of saying the complete phrase (Hughes 83).

A language can be analyzed as a list of elements, and this list may be considered finite. This list is formed by using phonemes, morphemes, determiners and later nouns and verbs which are clearly manipulated during the development of the language. Between the ages of two and three human beings are considered to be able to obtain this list. This means that before children go to schools, they will have the notion of what the language is and how it is used. But, some teachers are focused on just pronunciation and grammar which creates confusion. Students want to learn topics from the present and for the future but they do not want to learn topics from the past (Hughes 85).



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Students tend to remember words through direct association; this means that if they memorize words without any relation to their world and thus soon forget them. But, if those words are related to images, pictures or even objects that they can manipulate, the memorization of these words will be retained for more time in the students' minds. It is also important to mention that linguistics just offer the teaching of vocabulary through principles, rules, theories, among others but, to have an effective class it is important to create exercises according to the necessities of the students and not only memorization (Hughes 93).



CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Basic Methodology

This work used qualitative methods. The information was obtained from seventh graders at Juan Montalvo Elementary School in Cuenca, Ecuador. Many steps were necessary to obtain the required information and then to do the analysis. This project is also transferable for other public elementary schools with the same characteristics and the same necessities as students at Juan Montalvo Elementary School have. Finally, action research was involved since investigation of the problem is done in the classroom; students can study, learn and practice by using techniques from the research.

3.2 Human resources

The children used for this investigation were students from Juan Montalvo Elementary School in the seventh grade. They were from 11 to 12 years old, and their level of English was very basic since they were in a public elementary school. Also, the director of the school and the English teacher were important since they permitted evaluations of their students. It was necessary to apply a survey with the purpose of knowing the interests of the students (See appendix 1).

It was necessary to interview an expert who could clarify any doubt about the topic. Thus, M.A. Tammy Fajardo was contacted to carry out a personal interview (See appendix 2).

Finally, a pre-test and a post-test were applied respectively. The first one was done in order to have an idea of the students' levels of English at the beginning of the investigation and a post-test was used in order to show the results once everything was concluded (See appendices 3, 4).

3.3 Data-gathering techniques

First of all, according to the necessities of this research paper a survey was given to the students because it was important to know their levels of English. The purpose of this survey was to find the needs that students have



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when they learn in an English class. This survey tried to identify specific strategies that could be used during the class because when students are in a class, there are some things that they do not like and other things that they love to do and enjoy in the class.

Secondly, a personal interview was done in order to know the opinions of an expert. This interview helped clarify some doubts that existed during the investigation of the problem concerning misspelling in seventh grade students.

Then for this project it was necessary to apply a pre-test to the students. The purpose here was to analyze the problem that students had with misspelling and to gather information of the common errors that students made in writing activities. During the investigation, some activities were involved after each class in order to monitor the learning progress and also to see if the strategies and methods worked satisfactorily. At the end of the research, a post test was applied to verify if the selected strategies was acceptable and to see if students received higher achievement levels.

Some materials were used in order to get enough information and to demonstrate that this project can work with the selected students. The collected information was based on books, articles, and blogs. Some of them were found on the internet, others were printed and there was also the use of flash cards, short stories, and audio-visual materials. All of these resources helped us to know more about the topic and also to make it clear to students.

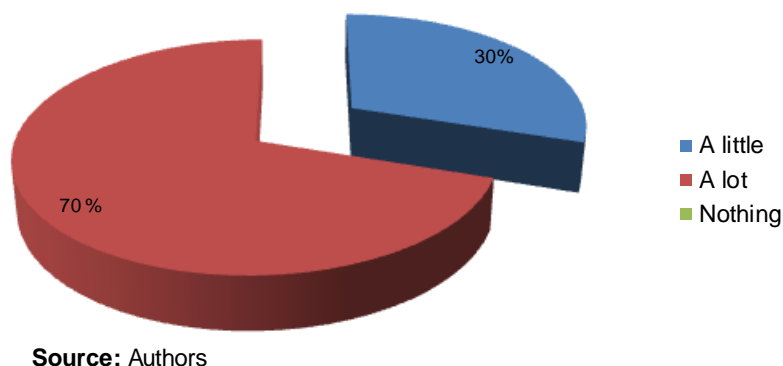


CHAPTER IV: RESULTS –ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 THE SURVEY

Question #1: How much do you like English?

Chart #1 Interest in English

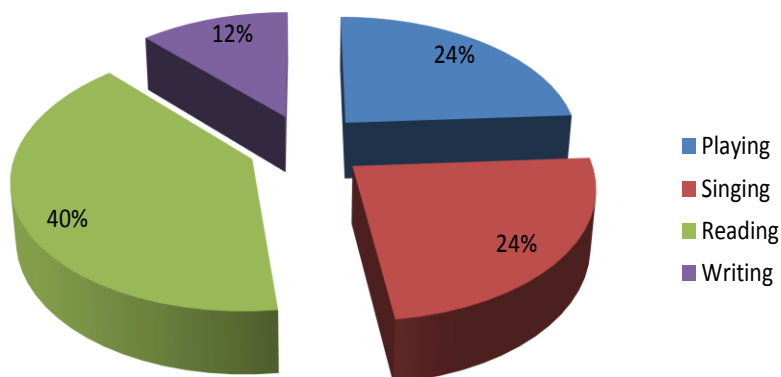


According to the chart, 70% of students who were analyzed liked English. This is significant for teachers at the beginning of class because they can find out how many students like English and how many do not like English. The purpose of this is to work better with students knowing their likes and dislikes. Conversely, a minimum percentage did not like English; in this case it would be best to encourage the use of learning this language because it is a necessary communication tool.



Question #2: How do you like to learn English?

Chart #2 Preferred ways of learning English



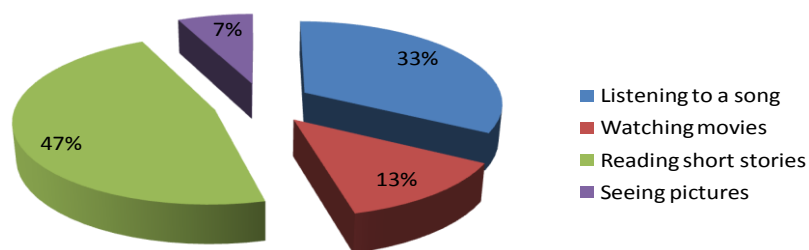
Source: Authors

The results of this question show that 40% of students like to learn English by reading. Reading is a skill that students can approach by using methods and techniques according to their level of learning. However, there are other kinds of skills and methodologies that will be used during the investigation because some results also show that 24% of students prefer to learn English by playing. When students learn while they are playing, this combination facilitates meaningful learning in the class. Another 24% of them prefer songs. The use of songs is another method that many teachers use during an EFL class in order to teach students the target language. The next percentage in the chart shows that 12% of students prefer to learn English by writing. This is one of the most important skills that students need to acquire in their English Foreign Language (EFL) classes since this investigation has to do with the writing process and problems with misspelling.



Question #3: Which methods do you think will be appropriate ways to learn vocabulary?

Chart #3: Ways of learning vocabulary



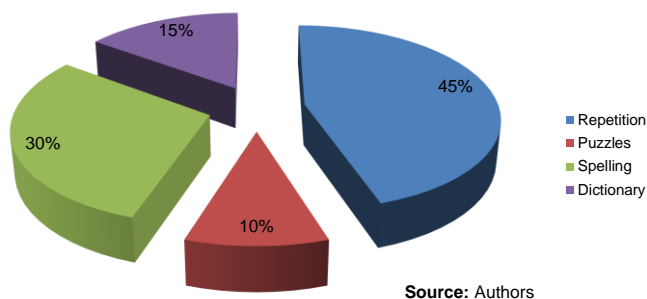
Source: Authors

It can be seen in this chart that 47% of students preferred reading short stories as a way of learning vocabulary. When they read a sentence or a passage they are really relating with the foreign language and they can practice it by noticing how words are written. There are 33% of students that had a preference of learning vocabulary through listening to a song. This is another technique that some teachers apply during class to practice pronunciation of the new vocabulary. On the other hand, some students preferred to learn vocabulary through watching movies. The use of movies is also another method used to improve specific vocabulary because when they watch a movie they are involved with English and can practice new vocabulary with correct pronunciation spoken by a native speaker. They do this by listening to specific vocabulary and then practicing with specific activities that help them to write the vocabulary correctly. Finally, 7% of the students preferred to learn vocabulary by seeing pictures. The use of pictures is another way to improve vocabulary because in this case the student relates the word with a picture and visually shows the meaning making it easier to understand vocabulary.



Question # 4: Which ones do you think will be appropriate ways to write in English?

Chart #4: Writing words

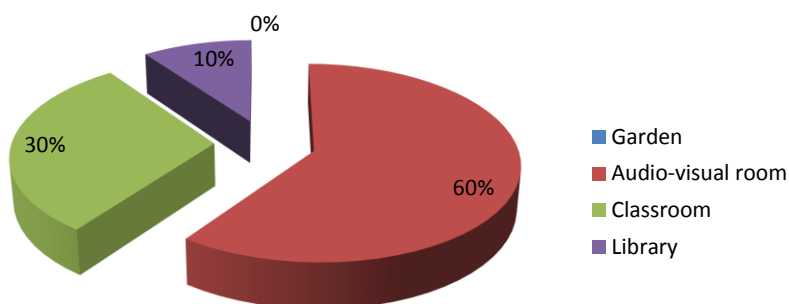


According to question #4, the results show that 45% of students preferred repetition. In this case repetition was the technique that many students responded to most because this method is used as an activity with the aim of retaining new vocabulary. Nevertheless, the rest of the students chose other ways of learning vocabulary, for instance, spelling was preferred by 30% of students to write in English. Also 15% of the group had a preference to use dictionaries to look for the correct writing of a word in their new vocabulary. On the other hand, the last 10% of students preferred the use of puzzles as a tool for writing since this kind of activity permits them to think how a word is written correctly.



Question # 5: Where do you like to attend classes?

Chart # 5: Preferred places to attend classes



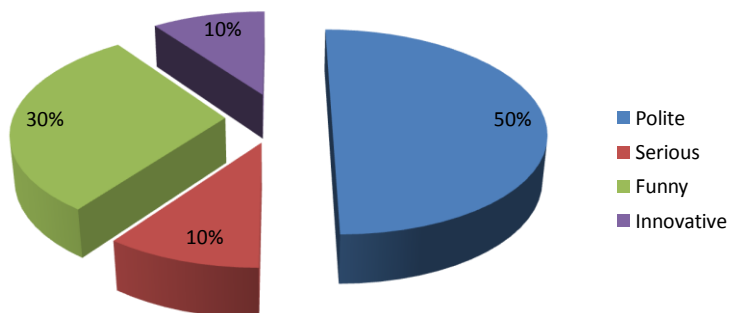
Source: Authors

In this question 60% of the respondents preferred an audiovisual room to work in since they enjoy a class where technological materials are involved during the activities. Juan Montalvo Elementary School had an audiovisual room where students attended classes. The use of an audiovisual room in a class helps the teacher create an interesting and enjoyable atmosphere since nowadays many public schools have one of these rooms. Another 30% of students like to work in the classroom. They feel relaxed in their classroom working in their own place with their own materials. Conversely, 10% of the participants prefer to attend classes in a library because they said libraries are quiet and they can concentrate during their assignments.



Question # 6: What is your ideal teacher?

Chart # 6: Ideal teacher



At Juan Montalvo Elementary School, there is a variety of teachers' temperance. Some of them are polite and they treat the students with kindness. Other teachers were funny during their classes. They used games, songs, among others, to improve the learning process. However, there are some teachers who were serious in their classes and with their students. They had a dense atmosphere in their classroom where students and the teacher just work in silence.

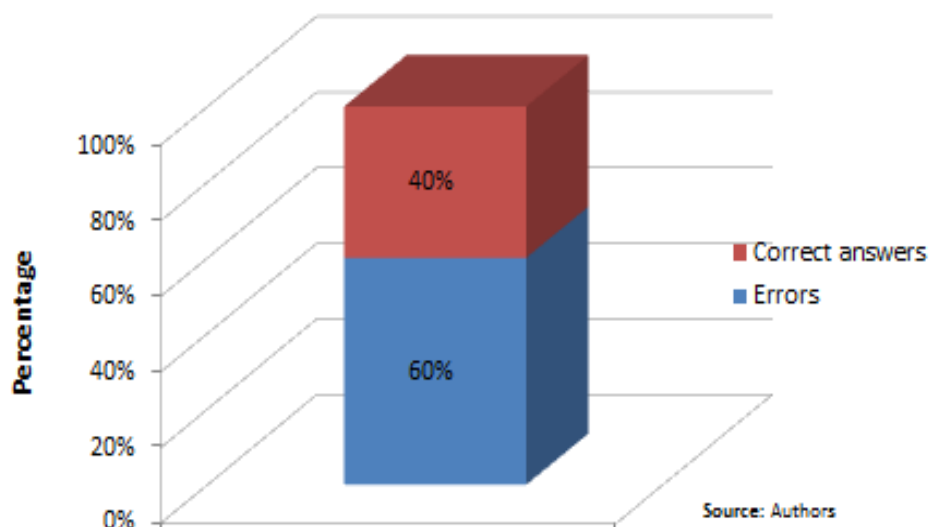
According to the question, 50% of students preferred a polite teacher who can help them with kindness and respect. Also some of them, 30% specifically, preferred to have a fun teacher because fun activities allow a great atmosphere. An equal percentage of students liked innovative teachers and serious ones. Nowadays, technology is always being updated and also teachers must be updated. The teacher has to use methods and ways of teaching an English Foreign Language class with innovated materials that capture the attention of students.



4.2 THE PRE-TEST

Question #1: Unscramble the scrambled words.

Chart #7: Scrambled words

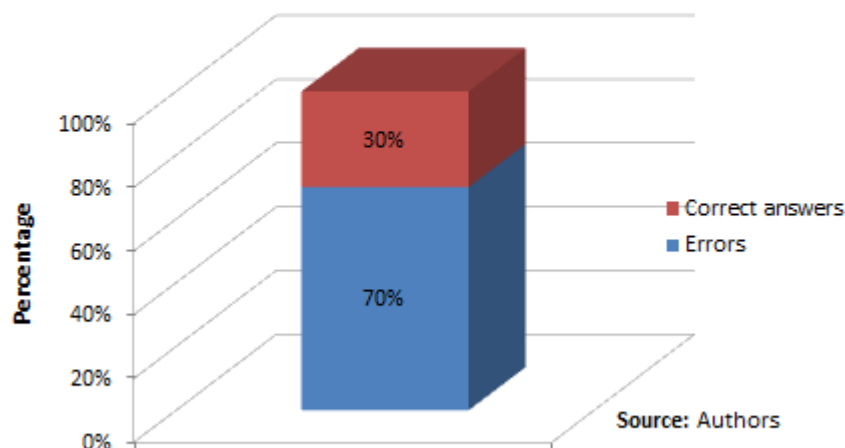


In this activity the words such as *pencil*, *book*, *teacher*, *nurse* and *secretary* were taken into account in order to check the misspelling problems with the participants. As the results show in this question, 60% of students committed errors when they did this activity. The most common misspelled word was *pencil* since students tended to unscramble the word, but they put the letters in the incorrect order. In this case students demonstrated that they need more practice recognizing each place of each letter in the word and to recognize how the word is written. On the other hand, 40% of students wrote some words correctly. The most relevant word is *book*. When students tend to be familiarized with some words, they do not have problems in the writing process because they know how to write it.



Question #2: Fill in the blanks.

Chart #8: Fill in the blanks

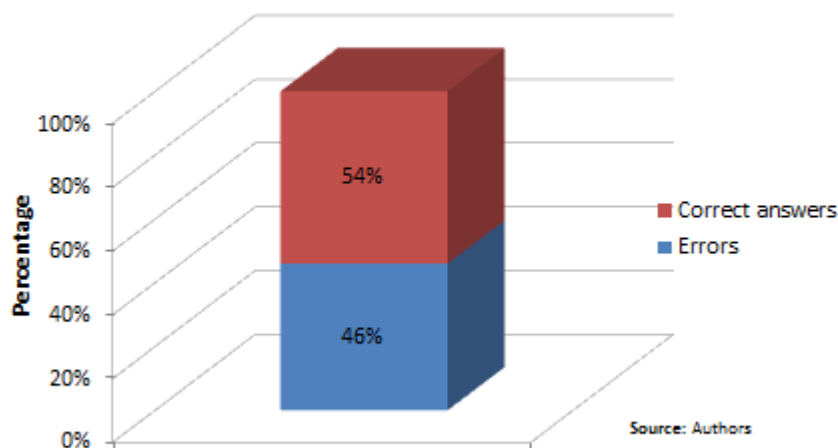


According to this activity students show they need more practice with the alphabet because errors are predominant in this part. It showed 70% of the students with errors. Many of the students commit the error of writing the word as they heard it or the way it is pronounced. In this case, students need to know more about the alphabet and its sounds. The most relevant misspelled words were *three* and *eraser*. Conversely, 30% of students demonstrated that they could achieve this correct spelling because they know what letter they had to write in the blanks. Another point related to guessing correctly in this activity is the fact that some words that are written in English are similar in Spanish with a few changes in some vowels. For students it is easy to write these kinds of words because they are familiar with the Spanish words or also when they hear, read or pronounce them, they know the meaning and how to write them correctly. In this question the used words were *computer*, *desk*, *three*, *cook* and *eraser*.



Question #3: Find the words in the puzzle.

Chart #9: Puzzles

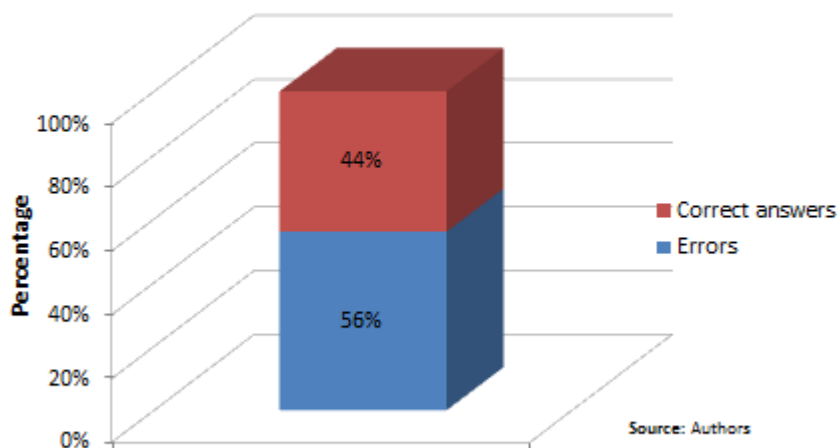


In this question, the results illustrate that 54% of students can do this kind of exercise. The purpose of this question is to prove if students are able to scan the words that were hidden in the letter soup. When they found the words they then had to write letter by letter and form the whole word. However, the rest of the students, 46% of them, could not do this exercise. Here, the problem with this method was that students during the scanning of words found the word, but they wrote it missing the first or the last letter of the word.



Question #4: Look at the picture and write the name.

Chart #10: Matching



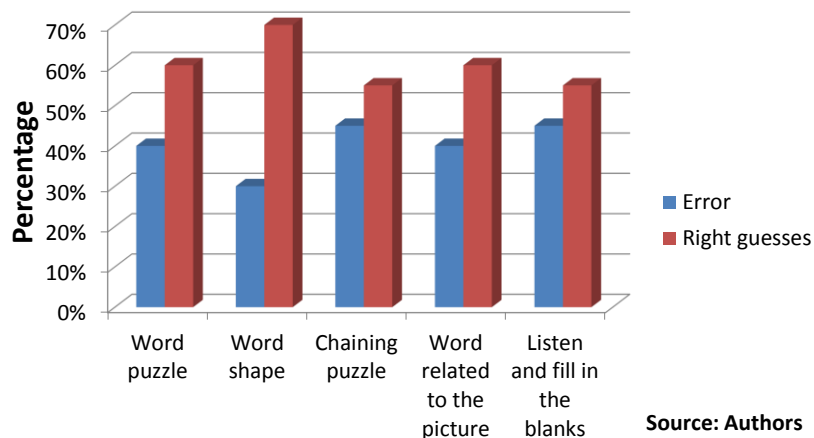
In this question most of the errors are phonological errors due to the fact that students relate the English sounds with Spanish sounds. For instance, in the word *elephant* some students confuse the English phoneme /ph/ with the Spanish phoneme /f/. The same occurs with the words *flower* and *apple*. All these errors represent 56% of the students in the class. The other 44% of students demonstrate that they can relate the picture and write the word without mistakes. The use of visual images represents a cognitive strategy in which students transform target information by creating meaningful visual, auditory, or kinesthetic images of the information.

In conclusion, the research showed that 60% of the students had a problem with misspelling. They demonstrated some problems which had to do with the order of the letters in some words, with the correct pronunciation of the letters of the alphabet, and also with the confusion in recognizing some phonemes that they did not know.



4.1 THE POST-TEST

CHART #11: The Post-test



Question #1: Word puzzle

During the development of this strategy, most of the students demonstrated positive results. As the chart shows, 60% of students had correct answers. They can write the words correctly that the activity used. In this case, during the development of activities, the students worked in pairs in order to help each other. The use of social strategy made the students feel secure because they had the chance of interchanging information with their classmates and vice versa. Some Cognitive strategies such as repetition and imagery were involved in order to teach the students techniques to avoid misspelling. The use of an audiovisual room was fundamental in this investigation because many of the activities involved videos and songs to reinforce the target vocabulary.

Nevertheless, there are 40% of students that had some mistakes in this activity due to the fact that they continued having some problems with their writing. Some words were found without one and two letters. This was helpful to the research because it showed that the strategy used during the activities



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was taught correctly, but some of the students needed more support to achieve it. Lack of communication could have been the problem because some of them were shy as at the beginning of the research. In this case, the use of social strategies would have helped the students feel more secure and have better relationships among their classmates.

Question #2: Word Shape

While using this method, many of the students could write words correctly. During the development of this strategy positive results were found because students found this method very interesting. At the moment of teaching this method, most of the students understood the purpose of the strategy and they achieved it without any problem. The results of the post-test demonstrate that 70% of the students write the words correctly according to their shape. They can assimilate each shape of the letter and put each letter of the word in the correct order. The rest of the students, 30%, constitute students who had some errors with the words because they could not recognize some shapes of the words. In general, students were benefited from participating in this learning activity to support the understanding and the use of this visual strategy which helped them identify whether a word looks correct.

Question #3: Chaining puzzle

According to this exercise, the results illustrate that 55% of students do not have a problem with writing the missing letter in the word. The purpose of this activity is guessing what letters are missing in the word and complete the word. In this part, students demonstrated advanced skills in this exercise since in the pre-test 30% of the students accomplished the activity. The results are significant since they represent a 25% progress, demonstrating that this strategy will be helpful for teachers to use in class with their students to avoid spelling problems.



Question #4: Word related to the picture

In this question, the chart demonstrates that 60% of students reached positive results. In this activity, vocabulary is presented with pictures so students have to recognize the picture and relate words that the teacher taught at the beginning of the class. It is important to mention that each word of vocabulary that the teachers used in this activity is presented to them with just the first letter of the word. Imagery and memory-related strategies were involved in this activity. Strategies such as the use of flash cards, body movements, combination of sounds and images were useful to do this technique. The students did not have any problem and they participated in class. The students demonstrated that this strategy was accomplished by using the correct materials and methods that were developed in the class. On the other hand, 40% of the students had some problems with the relation between the picture and the word. They knew how to write the word correctly, but they put the word with the incorrect picture. So in this case there is need to relate the image to the picture because spelling of the words used in this activity were written correctly; however the margin of error in this exercise has to do with the relation of the pictures with the images.



Question #5: Listen and fill in the blanks

In this case, 55% of students showed optimistic results. They listened to a short passage and they recognized the missing word and they also wrote that word correctly. It should be noted that this type of method has its degree of difficulty because the student has to recognize the word that is missing by listening to a recording which is played a certain number of times with purpose of the recognizing the word and then check whether the correct word was correct or there is any change that they have to do. Nevertheless, 45% of the group could not do this exercise since they had to listen to the passage and when they listened to the missing word they wrote them with errors that had to do with phonetics. In this case, they wrote it like they heard it with the same errors they had in the pre-test, but there were fewer students that committed that error. Other errors had to do with the order of the letters, for instance, some students wrote laywer instead of lawyer.

It could be concluded that, this post-test demonstrated positive results because in the pre-test, 60% of the group had misspelling problems. But using strategies and techniques, some of these students were able to solve the problem. After the post-test, the results showed that 40% of the students continued with misspelling problems, but with some more practice, they could eventually write the English words correctly.



CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Nowadays, English language is everywhere, in commercials, technology, products, factories, and of course in education making the learning of it necessary for the development of aptitudes and new vocabulary. This amazing world of teaching has many processes, and it would be impossible to mention all of them. However, this project tried to clarify some of these processes with strategies that could be used to avoid misspelling in seventh graders at Juan Montalvo Elementary School. It is known that students are the most willing subjects who understand any information wherever they are, however, this information is not always positive. Another aspect in teaching English is that not all students learn the same way. Some of them have unique needs in order to approach learning. Also, teachers have to keep in mind that students will be always people able to develop some skills, and these skills would be developed correctly if the teacher applies good strategies in class.

As was shown in this project, there are a variety of strategies which can be used in order to avoid misspelling in students in the seventh grade. They could be considered beginners and a beginner always needs help.

Finally, to conclude this project, the teacher is going to have the hard assignment of guiding the students and also impart the importance of learning English and how to make use of it in daily life in order that they are committed to learn it.

5.2 Recommendations

This following project was developed with the intention of showing selected strategies which can be used to curtail misspelling, and of course any of these strategies are recommendable to bring to class and create a good atmosphere. It would also help when they make mistakes in class that they should not be afraid because everybody makes mistakes. It is also important to mention that these strategies were applied to students from the seventh grade at



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a public elementary school where the level of learning is always debatable, and this is because public schools have different systems than private ones.

Teachers also have to keep in mind that students and especially children are fragile. They learn better if they feel secure about the teacher. Patience, kindness, love, among others coming from the teacher helps the pupils feel motivated in the learning process. Also good and correct strategies applied in class would help the teacher to capture students' attention, making the class interesting, available, and practical at any public elementary school in Ecuador where misspelling problems are present.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey

1.1 Tentative Survey Template

The following survey intends to collect information related to the topic Learning strategies used to prevent misspelling of English. Selected vocabulary for 7th graders at Juan Montalvo School will be used. The results will be used as a basis for a thesis investigation

Age: _____

Class: _____

1. How much do you like English?

- a. A lot b. Few c. Nothing

2. How do you like to learn English?

- a. Playing b. Singing c. Reading d. Writing

3. Which ones do you think will be appropriate ways to learn vocabulary?

- a. Watching movies
b. Listen to a song
c. Reading short stories
d. Seeing pictures

4. Which ones do you think will be appropriate ways to write in English?

- a. Repetition of the word by writing.
b. By looking for the word in puzzles
c. Spell each letter of the word
d. By looking for the word in a dictionary

5. Where do you like to attend class?

- a. In the garden
b. In an audiovisual classroom
c. In the classroom
d. In your house

Autores: Pablo Iván Avilés Narváez
Diego Fernando Tigre Tacuri



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6. What is your ideal teacher?

- a. Polite
- b. Serious
- c. Fun
- d. Innovative



Appendix 2: Interview Transcript

The following personal interview was given to M.A. Tammy Fajardo, a teacher of International Studies at Universidad Del Azuay. It was taken on April 11, 2013 at 9:12 am.

1. What do you think about teaching phonetics to children? Is it easy for them to understand?

Oh!! Well good morning. I believe, I strongly believe that yes, it is easy for children to understand phonetics as they study, mmm, what we call in Spanish phonemes. They also need to learn phonetics when they are children. We know that as long as they learn a new language in a natural way, they will be able to manage it, and if they are used to learning phonemes in Spanish, they can also learn them in English.

2. With all the experience you have, which do you think are the most common mistakes students make in pronunciation and writing?

Well, mmm, I think that we have to think about what is really important, is mmm, we are Spanish speakers or students are Spanish speakers so we need to know what the problems are that Spanish speakers face when pronouncing or writing in English, mmm pronouncing the most common mistakes would be /b/ and /d/, would be the pronunciation of the /th/, also the pronunciation of the letter /s/ like in the word student because we tend to say “*estudent*” right? And usually the most common problem on writing is because, as you know, Spanish has a one to one corresponding, we have one letter one sound, but English is different so that is the mistake children make when they write because they will write it down as they hear the word because that is the way they write in Spanish.

3. Is it possible for children to learn the target language with some specific rules? If yes, which ones are the most important?



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Well, mmm, I think that it is very important to consider the age of children. When they are at a really young age like from 0 to 8 according to an expert said, mmm, they do not really need actual rules, mmm, they can learn with the rules embedded in the language in class. It can be full games, songs, or different techniques. When they are a little bigger like in the case of the students you are working with seventh graders, I think they do need a few rules and ah mmm the most important I do not think it would be grammatical rules, but I consider eh it would be the pronunciation rules, teaching them how some sounds make together and what are the sounds they make in different cases.

4. What are the principal difficulties during the children's learning development about phonetics?

Well, ah I think the first difficulty in this situation would be pronunciation; mmm most of the time children tend to pronounce words in English as they see them in the written form. Also, another problem in children is that they are in a young age to understand some specific rules. For example, the use of the /a/ and the use of the /gh/.

5. Is it important to teach phonetics to children in order to prevent misspelling or these kinds of errors are related to the development of their intelligence or other issues?

As you know everybody makes mistakes in learning a new language and of course children. Their capacity of understanding is not completely developed to retain information about phonics. However, yes, uh! I think that it is absolutely important to teach phonetics to children because some common errors can be avoided in a prompt intervention.



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- 6. Would it be possible to relate the Spanish sounds with phonemes with the aim of acquiring a specific strategy? Is this kind of procedure confusing? What do you think about it**

Well, it could be possible, but the results would be confusing for the children. As I told you before, mmm Spanish has one sound for one letter, but English does not have this particular at all. Eh mmm however, if there could be a strategy which defends this, it would be very interesting to see the application and the results. It would not be easy of course!!!



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Appendix 3: The Pre-test

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ESCUELA DE LENGUA INGLESA

CURSO DE GRADUACIÓN

Pre-test

Grade: _____

Date: _____

Age: _____

1. Write in order the following unscramble words.

koob _____

licnep _____

chereat _____

esrun _____

yraterces _____

2. Listen to your teacher the words he pronounces and fill in the blanks with letters that are missing

C _ m p _ t _ r

d _ sk

t _ r _ e

c o _ k

_ r a _ e _



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3. In the following puzzle there are some words. Find them

e	A	g	I	E	c	e	r	T	y
e	V	b	d	N	h	m	m	U	y
q	G	i	o	U	i	t	e	R	d
e	I	t	c	Y	I	i	k	M	b
q	R	y	t	U	d	i	i	O	p
e	L	r	o	T	r	y	u	I	o
r	T	y	r	U	e	o	b	O	y
a	S	d	f	G	n	h	j	K	I
z	x	c	v	C	v	v	b	N	m
q	w	e	r	T	y	u	u	I	o

4. Write the word according to the picture.











Appendix 4: Post-test



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ESCUELA DE LENGUA INGLESA

CURSO DE GRADUACIÓN

Post-test

1. Look for the following words in the word search.

Lawyer

Engineer

Vet

Postman

Dentist

Nurse

Tennis player

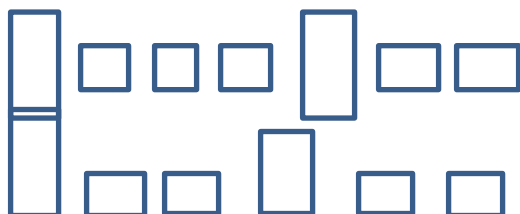
Doctor

t	w	d	F	r	e	g	D
e	e	e	C	f	g	n	E
n	v	n	H	f	h	u	N
n	e	f	D	v	h	r	T
i	t	g	O	c	b	s	I
s	h	t	C		q	e	S
				o			
p	o	s	T	m	a	n	T
l	i	o	O	p	o	p	T
a	p	i	R	c	k	h	Y
y	l	i	Z	x	j	i	G
e	n	g	I	n	e	e	R
r	q	i	X	c	b	n	F



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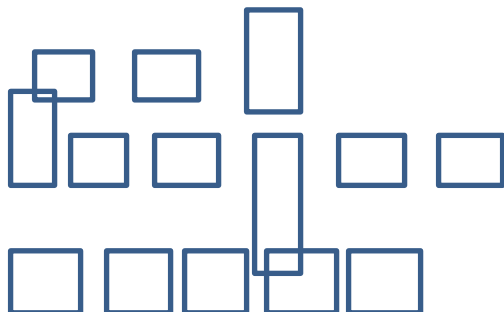
2. Write the following words according to their shape.



doctor



vet



lawyer



nurse



teacher

3. Fill in the blanks

t_nni_ p_ay_r
_ngin__r

j_dg_
j__rnali_t

ar__itec__



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4. Complete the passage according to the picture

Last Sunday, Carlos was playing soccer with his friends. He was the



g..... Unfortunately, he felt a toothache, so he stopped playing and he asked his mother to take him to the



d..... When he was at home, he noticed that his dog Snoopy did not want to play with him. Snoopy was also sick, so his



father took Snoopy to the v..... At home, his mother



had a headache so they have to go to see the d.....



Finally, when Carlos went to school the next day, he told his t..... what happened to him.



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5. Listen to the following passage and complete with words that are missing.

My family

Hey, my name is Danna. I live in Cuenca with my family. My father works as a defending people when they are in jail. I do not like that job. I love my mother's job. She works at Saint Mathew elementary school. She is a My sister Letty works in a clinic for animals, she is a She likes her job and she told what important to take care of animals is. Also, my brother Julian is a He works at a military hospital. He enjoys his job. Finally, when I finish my studies, I want to be an to design a lot of houses where people can live.