

USEWRITE: Useful Writing Techniques to Improve High-School Students' Descriptive Writing¹

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RESUMEN

Se analizan y recomiendan algunas técnicas de redacción, para promover la escritura de párrafos descriptivos, entre estudiantes de secundaria o principiantes. El estudio parte de los resultados obtenidos en una investigación llevada a cabo en un colegio del distrito de Pérez Zeledón (Costa Rica). Se propone una secuencia de técnicas fundamentadas en el enfoque de escritura equilibrada, el enfoque de escritura guiada, la redacción como proceso, las estrategias del aprendizaje, los estilos de aprendizaje y la teoría de inteligencias múltiples.

ABSTRACT

Composition techniques designed to promote the writing of descriptive paragraphs by high school students are analyzed and recommended. This study is based on the results gathered from research conducted in a high school located in the district of Pérez Zeledón (Costa Rica). A proposal of a sequence of techniques has been developed, applying the Balanced Approach, the Guided Writing Approach, Process Approach, Learning Strategies, Learning Styles, and Multiple Intelligences Theory.

Palabras clave: enseñanza del inglés, enseñanza de la escritura, técnicas de escritura

Keywords: English teaching, teaching writing, writing techniques

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Introduction

The English language plays an important role worldwide. Its use in different fields like business and education has made it a necessary tool to contribute to the social changes caused mainly by the globalization process. Globalization is a socio-economic movement that involves many countries all over the world. Costa Rica has entered this transformation process, but its participation is disadvantageous in comparison to other countries. Due to the challenge that globalization has imposed on Costa Rican society, the government has established policies to work toward becoming completely integrated into the global process. Among these policies, it is essential to point out “The Educational Policy Towards the 21st Century”; this policy embraces two significant needs. It is essential to (1) offer students a second language to communicate with people from other countries in Costa Rica as well as in foreign countries; and (2) provide students with a tool to access the scientific, technological, and humanistic knowledge directly.

The main objective of teaching English in Costa Rican public education is oral and written communication. In the case of writing, its role is as important as the other linguistic skills. As stated in the English program of the Ministry of Education (*Ministerio de Educación*, MEP), this skill “emphasizes the formal expression of thoughts through written language.”⁴ Writing “must be taught by practicing different techniques and pieces of writing.”⁵ According to this methodology, the teacher should guide the students in the understanding and use of patterns of sentence organization in coherent texts. The constant practice of different types of writing should be enhanced. At present, high school students must pass the national standardized English test (in eleventh grade). This test is

4 Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Programa de Estudios de Inglés. III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada* (San José: MEP, 2005) 7.

5 Ministerio de Educación Pública, 8.

composed of different reading comprehension exercises. Because this test is highly associated with the achievement of secondary school studies, instructors have been forced to modify the curriculum and devote their classes mainly to reading comprehension. Therefore, it is justifiable to see how teachers feel pressured for their students to succeed in that test. The students finish their secondary education with a basic knowledge of grammar structures, reading comprehension and vocabulary; they cannot express themselves either orally or in writing, as stated in the MEP English program. This article describes the implementation of a set of writing techniques designed to reinforce students' writing ability. It was applied to tenth graders in a rural public institution in Perez Zeledón.

Why Teach the Descriptive Paragraph?

The importance of teaching how to write descriptive paragraphs can be analyzed from two viewpoints: inside the classroom and outside the classroom. High school students are faced with the need of describing events, experiences, areas, and objects inside the language classroom. No matter what the level is, students will always be asked about what they did during vacation, last night, in the morning or about their plans. They are also requested to provide a physical description of themselves and others.

Outside the classroom, most high school students are supposed to put into practice all the knowledge that they have acquired in the English lessons. Nowadays, knowing how to write in English has become a transcendental feature of a 21st-century citizen. Students have to express themselves in English in writing to establish relationships with foreigners and people outside the country. Most of the time, students write e-mails to describe events, experiences and so forth. For this reason, students need to use techniques, strategies, and the mechanics of writing (such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization), use vocabulary and be familiar with the structure of

descriptive paragraphs. If students apply for a job in a corporation in which English is a requirement, they are required not only to speak it but also to write it. Therefore, students must know, at least, the basics of writing that may enable them to compose a paragraph.

Relevance and pertinence of the study

There are important reasons to justify the need students have to write in English. Technology plays a fundamental role in the development of any society; namely, day after day people must accept the relationship between technological advances and the English language. English is necessary to handle instructions of common technological devices, to use software and to surf the web. Nowadays, the constant use of English in different fields has pervaded Costa Rican society.

As members of this society, the students have the need to understand spoken and written English to respond to current social demands. This includes the mastering of writing, as well. Concerning this issue, a variety of uses of the language may be highlighted. For instance, the use of the Internet may a problem for those who do not have knowledge of English. One of the advantages of the web is that it is a means of communication with people around the world, including English-speaking people. Young people have the possibility of maintaining direct conversations, and sending messages or letters just for fun. They may communicate with relatives or friends. Another possibility the Internet offers is the filling out of employment application forms. In many of these cases, the applicant must provide information in writing. The need to look for information about any subject or issue for academic motives is another reason reinforcing the importance of having the students write in English.

The Internet makes it possible for them to expand their knowledge. It is like opening a huge encyclopedia in which writing in English has become the key to opening up informational sites. Many

foreign companies offer job opportunities for the young. However, the mastery of English is one of the main requirements. As an initial requirement, companies need the applicant to be able to fill out questionnaires and other forms with personal information.

For these reasons, educators, as well as high school students, should be concerned about reinforcing writing skills in the process of learning a second language. In other words, students need to be equipped with a fundamental tool for their social development. For the effective teaching of this ability, instructors must develop their creativity and make an effort to involve students in the writing process. Learning English depends on the previous preparation students have, their interests, needs, and motivation. The resources used by teachers play an essential role. Thus, it is the responsibility of every educator to look constantly for innovative techniques to generate successful results in the learning process.

In Costa Rica, the teaching of a foreign language responds to the demands of a globalized world. Such demands make education shed light on the preparation of students, and thus, satisfy the expectations of society. According to the MEP's objectives, after five or six years of secondary education, students should be able "to apply their knowledge of English to accept and adapt to constant changes confidently"; in addition, "through the learning of the language, the learner can compare and apply different registers (formal and informal) and recognize expressions in other varieties of English."⁶ The MEP's expectations regarding the teaching of English are ambitious; the problem lies in the fact that students are not taught the appropriate techniques to help them develop strategies for communicating. The following research proposal is focused on the writing ability as an important component of language competence.

6 Ministerio de Educación Pública, 17.

Including the Skill of Writing in the Syllabus

The writing skill promotes the expression of ideas to be read by others; therefore, at the end of the process, learners will be able to express knowledge of a specific topic, create their own paragraphs, use punctuation rules properly, complete sentences, and so on. For doing so, students take advantage of authentic texts such as newspaper ads, letters, notes, magazines, books, pamphlets, brochures, and menus.

For the development of this proposal, the teaching approach that will be used throughout the process is the Communicative Approach. The following information depicts the features and principles to be applied in a classroom.

The Communicative Approach

The Communicative Approach entails all expectations of the MEP with regard to learning English in a class. Its main goal is to enable students to become communicatively competent. In addition, students are expected to handle language according to their social context and to negotiate meaning. This approach stimulates real-life situations through classroom activities in which students can communicate. The Communicative Approach provides the basis for the methodology used in the English classroom. According to the MEP's syllabus, this approach aims to foster communication, gain transferable skills, concentrate on meaning and process, and focus on fluency. In addition, learners are active/participative members who are responsible for their own learning while teachers are facilitators, guides and experts. The materials teachers use must be authentic, real-world significant, related to learners' needs, interests and culture, flexible, motivating and interesting. The learning environment should provide a real-world context, and it must be process-oriented

and continuous. It should also profile skills and promote self- and peer-assessment.⁷

Theoretical Considerations

For a deeper analysis of the implications of a specific set of techniques, learning styles, strategies and intelligences should be acknowledged and developed in any area of foreign language instruction. The following is a brief description of those key aspects considered for the purpose of this design.

Learning Strategies

Every human being is characterized by a unique set of traits that affect the way each person learns in a specific learning setting. Strategies are the different ways or mechanisms a learner uses in order to deal with the knowledge obtained. Those strategies are described as the planned process learners follow when facing a specific learning situation. Douglas Brown defines strategies as “specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information.”⁸ Rebecca Oxford defines Direct strategies (Memory strategies, Cognitive strategies and Compensation strategies) and Indirect strategies (Metacognitive strategies, Affective strategies and Social strategies).⁹

Learning Styles

Learning styles deal with the fact that there are significant differences within the same classroom. Each student represents a challenge since satisfying his/her need of comprehension in every

7 Ministerio de Educación Pública, 24.

8 Douglas Brown, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000) 113.

9 Rebecca Oxford, *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know* (New York: Newbury House, 1990) 16.

class is an issue that every instructor should consider. Teachers must identify the individual differences and remain aware of those differences in order to take advantage of them, and subsequently, enrich the learning process by providing students with a gratifying and respectful environment. According to Elizabeth Bogod, the variety of students in a classroom can be classified as follows:

1. *Visual learners*: Students learn by seeing. They need to see the teacher's body language. These learners prefer to sit in front with no visual obstructions. They learn best from visual aids. During lectures, these learners prefer to take notes.
2. *Auditory learners*: Students learn through verbal lectures and discussions. These learners interpret meaning through listening to tone, pitch, and speed of voice. Written information may have little meaning unless it is heard. Reading aloud and the use of tape recorders will help them.
3. *Tactile/Kinesthetic learners*: Students learn best by using a hand-on approach. It may be hard for these learners to sit still for long periods and they may be easily distracted by the need to explore.¹⁰

Multiple Intelligences Theory

Along with the importance of knowing about learning strategies, instructors should be familiar with the Multiple Intelligences Theory in order to focus on the students' abilities and types of learning. This theory heightens teachers' awareness of learners' differences when dealing with a second language. Howard Gardner is the author responsible initially for the Multiple Intelligences Theory. His definition of this theory leads to a clear understanding of this way of thinking about intelligence: "Every human possesses several intelligences in greater or lesser degrees. Each person is born with a

10 Elizabeth Bogod, "What Are Learning Styles?", Sept. 26, 2004, <<http://www/dpride.net/learning-stylesML.htm>>.

unique intelligence profile and uses any or all of these intelligences to acquire knowledge and experience.”¹¹ Hoffman and Thoman have listed eight of Gardner’s different intelligences:

- Verbal-linguistic: word intelligence
- Logical-mathematical: number and reasoning intelligence
- Visual-spatial: picture intelligence
- Musical-rhythmic: music and rhythm intelligence
- Bodily-kinesthetic: body intelligence
- Interpersonal: social intelligence
- Intrapersonal: self intelligence
- Naturalistic: natural environment intelligence.¹²

Approaches to the Teaching of Writing

Writing has evolved to be taught as a skill by which much communication is fulfilled. When teaching it, instructors look for an approach that is suitable for their students’ needs. Of the many traditional and modern approaches existing at the present time, consideration will be given here to the balanced approach. Most writers are acquainted with the idea of using features from different approaches. As Ann Raimes points out, “A teacher should be eclectic, drawing from all methods available.”¹³ Thus, a balanced approach should integrate most of the factors included in good writing. According to Raimes, the following elements must be included in a balanced approach:

Purpose: the reason for writing

11 Barbara Hoffman and Kim Thoman, *Multiple Intelligences 3: Teaching the Kids the Way They Learn* (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, 1999) 1.

12 Hoffman, 1.

13 Ann Raimes, *Techniques in Teaching Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 123.

Organization: paragraphs, topic and support, cohesion and unity
Syntax: sentence structure, sentence boundaries, stylistic choices, etc.
Content: relevance, clarity, originality, logic
Grammar: rules for verbs, agreement, articles, pronouns, etc.
Word choice: vocabulary, idiom, tone
Mechanics: handwriting, spelling, punctuation, etc.
The writer's process: getting ideas, getting started, writing drafts, revising
Audience: the reader(s)

Used together, they contribute to a “clear, fluent and effective communication of ideas.”¹⁴

Writing as a Process

It is necessary to take into account the fact that forcing students to write long compositions with no previous training is not beneficial for them. Students should be exposed to a specific treatment focused on writing techniques beforehand. It is essential to consider certain levels of learning (beginner, intermediate and advanced) before expecting positive results. The teaching of writing is a process because it is developed by stages. In *Teacher's Handbook: Contextualized Language Instruction*, Judith Shrum and Eileen Glisan propose three stages for this process: pre-writing, writing and re-writing.¹⁵

During the pre-writing stage, students organize their ideas through brainstorming. It helps them identify a topic as well as build the necessary vocabulary. In the second stage, students write their first drafts by following the ideas acquired during the first stage. They should also be provided with a booklet about organization and punctuation. During the last stage, students write their final drafts and the instructor comments on possible corrections and ways to

¹⁴ Raimes, 123.

¹⁵ Judith Shrum and Eileen Glisan. *Teacher's Handbook Contextualized Language Test* (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1994).

improve. Leading students to know how effective it is to follow the writing process through all its stages builds up their confidence when producing written pieces. A description is given below of the stages of the writing process.

The Writing Process

The concept of writing process requires an understanding of why certain procedures should be followed. Sokolik, cited by Nunan, notes: “[Writing] is both a process and a product. The writer imagines, organizes, drafts, edits, reads, and rereads. This process of writing is often cyclical, and sometimes disorderly.¹⁶” Four stages can be identified initially: planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Three more stages can be added: responding, evaluating, and post-writing. This writing process approach does not separate writing from its product, nor does it ask students just to follow the stages.

A New View of Guided Writing

Three different types of writing exercises may be identified: controlled, guided and free. All three of them are essential for the development of the students’ writing ability. Baskoff states, “Controlled writing exercises are those where both the content and the language are determined.”¹⁷ In guided writing exercises, the content is controlled and the language is free, while in free writing exercises both the language and the content are free.

The Structure of the English Paragraph

Unity and coherence are two basic characteristics of the English paragraph. A paragraph cannot be defined as a group of isolated sentences but rather as a unit. As Natsumi Onaka says in her article

16 David Nunan, *Practical English Language Teaching* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003) 88.

17 Florence S. Baskoff, “A New Look at Guided Writing,” *Forum Anthology* (Washington: English Language Programs Division, 1996) 174.

on “Developing Paragraph Organizational Skills at the College Level,” a paragraph is “a unit involving a single topic.”¹⁸ In order to maintain paragraph unity, it is important to organize the ideas by following certain rules. The students should decide on a topic and develop it through supporting details. A paragraph is coherent as long as all of the sentences are relevant. Each paragraph develops one main idea, which is linked to supporting sentences. These sentences should provide for a logical arrangement of ideas, and the sequence should form a connected unit. The English paragraph can be developed with three main sections: introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction is a view of the topic to be developed. It presents the gist of the general idea. The body is identified as the most important part of the paragraph since it consists of a sequence of details, which together, give meaning. The conclusion includes a summary of some of the ideas already presented. Paragraphs also require a topic sentence and supporting details.

Methodology

The techniques included in this proposal are divided into individual units as follows¹⁹:

USEFUL WRITING TECHNIQUES	
1. STARTING TO THINK!	Brainstorming about different topics
2. AN INTERESTING INVENTORY!	Building up unknown vocabulary
3. FUN WITH GRAMMAR!	Applying grammar structures in context

18 Natsumi Onaka, “Developing Paragraph Organization Skills at the College Level,” *Forum Anthology* (Washington: English Language Programs Division, 1989) 72.

19 See Appendix for sample practices from the booklet designed for this research.

4. WRITING TS!	Writing appropriate topic sentences
5. GIVING SUPPORT!	Writing appropriate secondary ideas
6. LINKING SENTENCES!	Using connectors and punctuation marks
7. PUTTING IT AN END!	Creating suitable concluding sentences
8. DRAWING ON A CATCHY TITLE!	Creating titles based on paragraphs given
9. LET'S ASSESS!	Assessing one's own work and other person's paragraphs

STARTING TO THINK! It is based on students' active participation in brainstorming activities about different topics.

AN INTERESTING INVENTORY! Once a topic is chosen, students recognize unknown words and phrases related to the topic. This technique is a database used by students throughout the process.

FUN WITH GRAMMAR! Students solve a set of grammar-in-context exercises with the purpose of practicing grammatical patterns effectively. Some of the topics are the use of adjectives, *there is* and *there are*, and simple present tense. These grammatical aspects are useful tools when writing descriptive paragraphs.

WRITING TS! This technique is based on enabling students to write appropriate topic sentences that are later used to develop a paragraph.

GIVING SUPPORT! Using this technique, students will be able to write about secondary ideas and details to support the main idea.

LINKING SENTENCES! This technique consists of teaching students the correct use of connectors, transition words, and punctuation marks required when writing paragraphs.

GIVING IT AN ENDING! Throughout the application of this technique, students will create concluding sentences for their paragraphs.

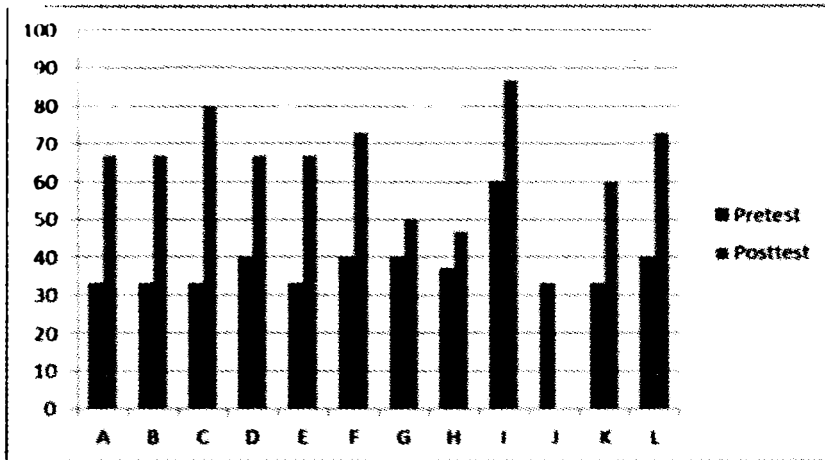
DRAWING ON A CATCHY TITLE! Students will recognize the importance of creating a title that is not only appropriate but also catchy for their readers.

LET'S ASSESS! Learners were supposed to write titles, topic sentences, secondary ideas and concluding sentences throughout the process according to the technique under study. As a final technique, learners use all the writing they have produced during the application of USEWRITE. They will write ten-line paragraphs about topics assigned. Both the students and the teacher will be able to assess the paragraphs written during the whole process by using checklists.

In order to select the most appropriate writing techniques for this investigation, the students were given a pretest and a posttest to detect their weaknesses when producing a descriptive paragraph. In addition, a questionnaire was also applied to both instructors and students to find out the topics students like to write about. The techniques were then created considering students' real interests and weaknesses. The instruments were applied to a group of 23 students attending the high school *Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana Arias*. There were 14 boys and 9 girls, ranging from 14 to 16 years old.

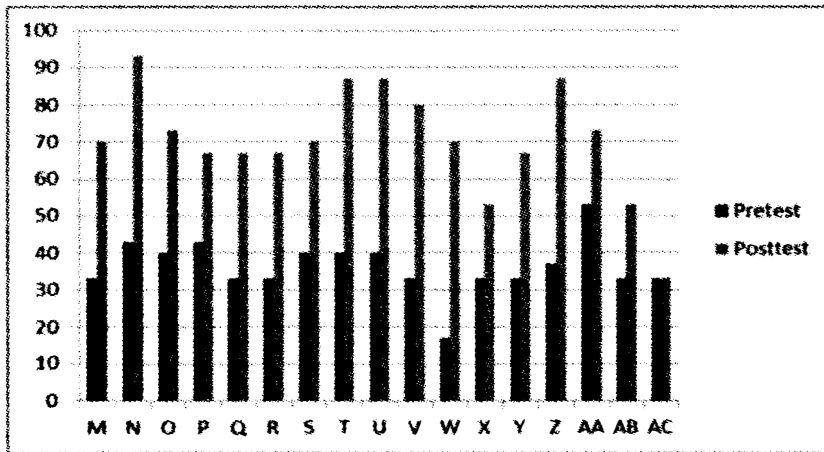
Results

As shown in Graph 1, the majority of the students took advantage of the techniques taught since they improved their descriptive paragraph writing. Of a total of 12 students, 11 received higher scores on the posttest. Student J was the only one who obtained a lower grade. He obtained a 33 on the pretest, followed by a 20 on his posttest; and student H showed no significant improvement when comparing his scores (37 and then 47).

Graph 1: Male Pretest and Posttest Analysis

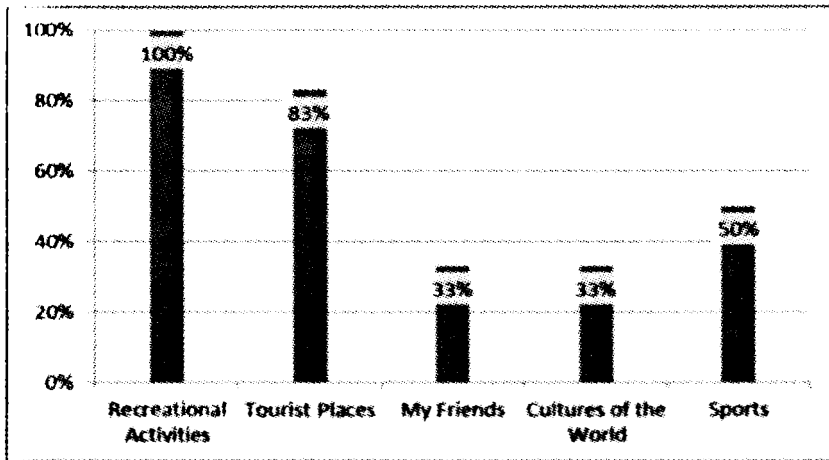
From the statistical data displayed in Graph 2 below, one may conclude that nearly all female students that were administered the posttest improved their descriptive paragraph writing. Student AC did not show improvement; she received the same grade. This fact may be attributed to social and psychological factors such as motivation and personal problems. Inconsistent attendance is another possible reason why students show no progress.

Grades achieved on the posttest are higher than those obtained on the pretest. This suggests that USEWRITE may be a successful set of techniques for teachers who hope to improve students' descriptive paragraph writing within their English classes.

Graph 2: Female Pretest and Posttest Analysis

In item 7 of the survey, instructors chose possible topics that their students would like to write about when doing writing exercises. They were given a list of 10 topics: My Friends, My Family, Recreational Activities, Food, Sports, Touristic Places, History, Cultures of the World, Occupations, and Technology. Graph 3 reveals instructors' opinions about students' preferences. All of the teachers responded that students would like to write about Recreational Activities. In addition, 83% agreed that students would like to write about Touristic Places. Another possible topic is Sports (23% in favor). Finally, 17% of teachers believe that their students would enjoy writing a paragraph about Friends and Cultures of the World.

Graph 3: Topics students would like to write about



The information displayed in Graph 3 above was important as a basis for the exercises of the USEWRITE techniques. The three main topics (that is, of those analyzed) which these students would like to write about are: Recreational Activities, Touristic Places and Sports.

The data gathered from students show that the writing skill is very important for them. The majority of students like to write in English. However, they do not frequently practice writing in their English classes, and few students have ever worked on any writing technique. All of the students are willing to learn new writing techniques to apply them when writing a paragraph and to improve their English. Students prefer to write about touristic places and recreational activities among others. These preferences were taken into account when selecting the topics for the booklet and designing the material.

Conclusions

This research suggests that it would be worthwhile to conduct similar studies with other groups as well. Writing has become an important skill to teach to high school students in Costa Rica. Actually, it is also useful when working with beginning levels because of its flexibility and coverage. Due to this changing society (in terms of technology and science), students need to receive emphasis on the writing of paragraphs to express themselves in many different situations. Instructors should be innovative as well as up-dated to introduce new techniques and strategies to improve the teaching/learning process. Teaching students how to write descriptive paragraphs will enable them to succeed in common tasks such as filling in application forms for jobs, writing e-mails, writing letters, etc. Finally, the sequence of techniques discussed above (*Starting to Think!*, *An Interesting Inventory*, *Drawing on a Catchy Title!*, *Writing TS!*, *Writing Supporting Sentences!*, *Giving It an Ending!*, *Let's Assess!*, along with *Fun with Grammar!*) are suitable ways to teach not only descriptive paragraphs, but also other types. This provides students with a series of techniques which may they may apply whenever they have to write in English.

Appendix: Sample Units²⁰

I. USEWRITE Technique Sample—Unit: *Starting to Think!*

<p>Exercise # 4</p> <p>STARTING TO THINK!</p> <p>Step B: Write down words or phrases about the following topic: PHYSICAL APPEARANCE</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Step C: Add more items to your list. Answering the following questions can help you generate more vocabulary about the topic given.</p> <p>What? _____</p> <p>When? _____</p> <p>Where? _____</p> <p>Why? _____</p> <p>Who? _____</p>

²⁰ Each of the sample units provided is illustrated appropriately and an attractive font was chosen for the material used with the students. The original font and illustrations have not been reproduced here.

II. USEWRITE Technique Sample—Unit: *An Interesting Inventory!*

Exercise #4 AN INTERESTING INVENTORY!

Look up new words in your dictionary related to the following topics:

FAMILY: _____

NATURAL BEAUTY: _____

MUSIC: _____

SPORTS: _____

III. USEWRITE Technique Sample—Unit: *Writing TS!*

Exercise # 1 WRITING TS!

1. Circle the best topic sentence (TS) for a paragraph about herbs.
 - a) People often make mint teas for breakfast.
 - b) People in my country use herbs to treat many different diseases.
 - c) I don't like herb teas.
2. Circle the best topic sentence for a paragraph about traditional treatments for colds.
 - a) Lemon juice is a traditional treatment for colds.
 - b) I had a terrible cold last week.
 - c) You can treat a cold buy using traditional treatments.
3. Circle the best topic sentence for paragraph about holidays.
 - a) My mother gave me a watch last Christmas.
 - b) I like the New Year's Eve celebration.
 - c) Different holidays are celebrated in Costa Rica throughout the year.

IV. USEWRITE Technique Sample: Unit *Fun with Grammar!*

Exercise # 11 **FUN WITH GRAMMAR!**

Practice with “there” + forms of the verb “be”:

- Work with a classmate.
- Every person will be given a different picture.
- Analyze your picture very carefully.
- Your work is to imagine your classmate’s picture and write questions about it: For example: Are there any elephants?
- Once you have enough questions, start asking questions using “Are there” or “Is there”. When you receive a “yes” for answer, you score one point.
- The person with the most points wins.

V. USEWRITE Technique Sample—Unit: *Giving Support!*

Exercise #5 **GIVING SUPPORT!**

Read the title and the incomplete paragraph. Then, write ideas that can be added to complete the paragraph.

Stanley’s International Restaurant

Stanley’s International Restaurant is a very special place in town. Stanley is a famous chef who studied in France. He was born in Italy. That is why he loves Italian food. Besides, he likes _____. Usually he _____. He cooks a different kind of food every day. On Mondays, he cooks Italian food and he invites his family. His special dish is _____. On Tuesdays, he cooks Greek food and he _____. His restaurant is very famous because of _____. I like to go to Stanley’s International Restaurant on Fridays because he cooks Japanese food. Also, my friend Mary likes _____. As a conclusion, this restaurant is popular thanks to its variety of food.
(Adapted from *Side by Side 1*)

VI. USEWRITE Technique Sample—Unit: *Linking Sentences!*

Exercise # 5: LINKING SENTENCES!

Group activity: Game

- Make groups of four to start this game.
- Your group will be given some strips of paper with phrases written on them.
- At the sign given by the teacher, combine the phrases to form coherent statements.
- The group with the most correct statements wins.

Phrases (cut into strips):

Johnny was late for class
I always eat breakfast.
Also, she went to Florida.
Bob ate a large dinner,
I was tired,
I wanted a cup of tea,
The phone rang,
I collected shells and rocks on dominical beach.
Because he missed the bus.
My daughter went to Chicago last summer.
Nevertheless, I still get hungry.
But he is still hungry.
So I went to bed.
So I heated some water.
But I didn't answer it.
Finally, collecting things is one of the most exciting hobbies one may have.

Keep in mind!

Write a **comma** after the words **finally, therefore, as a matter of fact, to conclude, and in brief.**

VII. USEWRITE Technique Sample—Unit: *Giving It an Ending!*

Exercise # 2: **GIVING IT AN ENDING!**

Read the following paragraphs carefully. Write an appropriate concluding sentence for each paragraph.

A. **Go Green in Your Garden This Dry Season**

The selection of plants you grow in the dry season is important. Tomatoes flourish during these dry months, as do onions, chives, Chinese cabbage, collards, kale, radishes, mustard and chili peppers. Lettuce, carrots, peas, cabbage, beans and cucumbers, however, grow poorly during the dry season.

(Adapted from *The Tico Times*)

VIII. USEWRITE Technique Sample—Unit: *Drawing on a Catchy Title!*

Exercise # 5: **DRAWING ON A CATCHY TITLE!**

Rewrite the following titles and capitalize them correctly.

adventures of today _____

the world we lost _____

i want a wife _____

library: the buried treasure _____

the man who wants an orchestra _____

chicano poetry: the voice of culture _____

IX. USEWRITE Technique Sample—Unit: *Let's Assess!*

Peer Assessment Guide	LET'S ASSESS!			
THIS STUDENT:	NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALWAYS
1. Wrote a suitable title	1	2	3	4
2. Stated his/her topic sentence properly	1	2	3	4
3. Developed good secondary ideas	1	2	3	4
4. Used appropriate vocabulary	1	2	3	4
5. Placed connectors and transition words adequately	1	2	3	4
6. Wrote an appropriate concluding sentence	1	2	3	4
7. Used grammar appropriately	1	2	3	4