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TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

Strategies to Improve Writing Skills in High School  
Students of English as a Second Language

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## ABSTRACT

### SUMMARY

This work is about teaching methods or strategies to make students of English as a second language improve their writing experience in that language. Firstly, in the introduction, I talk about the current situation of English writing in high schools and about some perspectives have more information about the topic. After that, I propose two different methods to try to make English writing more attractive to high school students. These are blogs and creative writing workshops. I develop this idea by giving a definition of each and explaining how those activities would be carried out. The next point of the project shows a survey I created for Spanish students studying English as a second language to have some ideas on what they think about their experience on writing English, and finally I analyze the answers with exposing the data in graphs and I give a conclusion.

### KEY WORDS

Writing, English, Blogs, Creative Writing, Strategies, High School.

### RESUMEN

Este trabajo trata de métodos o estrategias para hacer que estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua mejoren su experiencia escrita en esa lengua. Primero, en la introducción, hablo de la situación actual del inglés escrito en institutos y también de algunas perspectivas para tener más información sobre el tema. Después, propongo dos métodos diferentes para intentar que el inglés escrito resulte más atractivo para los estudiantes de secundaria. Estos métodos son los blogs y los talleres de escritura creativa. Desarrollo esta idea dando las definiciones de ambos términos y explicando cómo sería el desarrollo de las mismas. El siguiente punto del trabajo muestra la encuesta que creé para estudiantes españoles que estudian inglés como segunda lengua para tener algunas ideas sobre su experiencia con el inglés escrito. Finalmente analizo los resultados exponiendo los datos en gráficos y doy una conclusión.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Escritura, Inglés, Blogs, Escritura Creativa, Estrategias, Instituto.

## INDEX

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Perspectives about the acquisition of the writing skills in English as a second language .....	7
2.1. Linguistic point of view .....	7
2.2. Psycho-linguistic point of view .....	8
2.3. Psycho-pedagogic point of view .....	9
3. Teaching methods to improve the writing skills on students of English as a second language .....	10
3.1 Blog writing .....	10
3.2 Creative writing workshops .....	12
4. High school surveys on writing .....	14
5. Conclusions .....	41
6. References. ....	43
7. Appendixes .....	44

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing, in any language, seems to be a fundamental element of communication. At the same time, it is one of the main ways to transmit culture from generation to generation. Oral expression has several registers which allow us to express ourselves in different contexts. This also happens in written communication. There are multiple degrees of formality which can be applied to every sort of ways of writing, from a simple note in a piece of paper to a literary work, which demands an important command of the language.

It is not necessary to know the current education system in depth in Spain to appreciate that the importance given to the written expression of a foreign language in Secondary Education is less than that given to other aspects such as grammar, reading comprehension or oral comprehension (otherwise known as listening). In Obligatory Secondary Education, written expression is, together with oral expression, the forgotten aspect inside the teaching plans of a foreign language. The difference is that in the last years the importance of oral expression is increasing progressively due to the relevance that communicative competence has inside the curriculum of the Obligatory Secondary Education. Writing skills are therefore not being encouraged the same way as oral expression. The reason for this may be that the communicative competence tends to be identified with the oral production, but it also includes the written production. It is true that oral communication in a foreign language is seen as more useful and relevant than written communication to interact with native speakers of that foreign language in a great number of contexts. But we must not forget that written expression makes it possible in writing an e-mail to a friend who does not speak Spanish to writing a formal letter to apply for a job position in a foreign country.

With the previous information, it is not being obviated that in many secondary education establishments, activities to develop written expression exist, including writing workshops or literary contests. But these activities, with the exception of bilingual institutions, are rarely developed in foreign languages such as English or French. Those activities are normally kept in the bounds of a *Plan de Fomento de la Lectura*, because the skills to produce written texts are inevitably connected to the capacity to read and to comprehend those written texts. A foreign language student who

enjoys reading literary works, magazines or newspapers in the language he is studying will enrich his vocabulary, learn new structures and fixed expressions, and apply that new knowledge to the production of any new written text he will produce; whether it is inside an academic context or outside it. This process can also occur in the case of one's mother tongue.

Focusing on the area of the English language, it would be very convenient that the English Departments of each establishment would encourage activities inside and outside the classrooms to foment written expression in English. Writing exercises which are contained in text books are insufficient and besides, they are very repetitive. However, they can be useful for the student starting to learn how to express English at a basic level. There is also a list of justifications that can be put forward when it comes the time to defend the importance of stimulating the written expression in English.

Firstly, it is convenient to refer to the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (BOE), and particularly to the *Real Decreto* 1631/2006 of the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, by which the minimum education that corresponds to the Obligatory Secondary Education is established. Inside the first appendix which refers to the basic competences in this education, we can find the competence in linguistic communication.

Leer y escribir son acciones que suponen y refuerzan las habilidades que permiten buscar, recopilar y procesar información, y ser competente a la hora de comprender, componer y utilizar distintos tipos de textos con intenciones comunicativas o creativas diversas. La lectura facilita la interpretación y comprensión del código que permite hacer uso de la lengua escrita y es, además, fuente de placer, de descubrimiento de otros entornos, idiomas y culturas, de fantasía y de saber, todo lo cual contribuye a su vez a conservar y mejorar la competencia comunicativa. (BOE, R.D. 1631/2006)

As cited above, the creative component is fundamental when producing written texts, as we will see in the section about teaching strategies of written expression in English. In the same appendix about the competence of linguistic communication it is also claimed that:

Con distinto nivel de dominio y formalización –especialmente en lengua escrita- esta competencia significa, en el caso de las lenguas extranjeras, poder comunicarse en algunas de ellas, y con ello, enriquecer las relaciones sociales y desenvolverse en contextos distintos al propio. Asimismo, se favorece el acceso a más y diversas fuentes de información, comunicación y aprendizaje). (BOE, R.D. 1631/2006)

It has to be taken into account that the aspect of creativity mentioned above, has to do with different levels of command and formalisation, especially in the case of the written expression. Communication also happens through writing, as mentioned previously. If students are able to write simple texts in English, they will be capable of communicating through social networks or e-mail with countless people who are learning the same language or who already have certain knowledge of it. This can open a huge world of possibilities to become imbued with other cultures and ways of thinking. Naturally, we cannot expect the students to write perfectly coherent and cohesive texts from the beginning or to dominate the different degrees of formality. The process is slow, just as the acquisition of a foreign language, and it is necessary to learn gradually.

Paper stopped being the most extended medium for the diffusion of writing years ago. Currently, the massive development of electronic and virtual ways of communication enables activities such as writing a personal blog and sharing it with everyone with just a click. On the other hand, in an increasingly globalised world, it seems essential to know more languages than one's own mother tongue in order to interact with people from other countries, orally or in a written form. Regarding the cultural and artistic competences, the fact that little by little a person starts dominating a foreign language allows that person to write not just a simple text, but also complex ones, or even literary works. Many people write short stories in their mother tongue that they themselves invent as an entertainment, and some of them even write some more elaborated texts, such as tales, short stories or complete novels. Why not write these stories in a foreign language too?

Finally, it is necessary to comment on the fact that writing texts in a foreign language does not have to be seen by the students as an obligation imposed by the teacher, but as a choice that students have, so they can write whatever that comes to their mind. Besides, if their creativity is encouraged they may keep writing.

## 2. PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE ACQUISITION OF THE WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

There are different approaches to deal with the necessity of giving more importance to the written expression in English. These perspectives are collected in a book written by Francisco Salvador Mata called *Dificultades en el aprendizaje de la expresión escrita. Una perspectiva didáctica*. According to this book, there are three main perspectives that help with this issue. These are the linguistic, the psycholinguistic and the psycho-pedagogic perspectives.

### 2.1. LINGUISTIC POINT OF VIEW

From the linguistic point of view, Salvador Mata claims that the written expression has been considered as just a variation of the oral language, and he describes the differences between both oral and written expression. Regarding the differences, the author notes out the following ones:

En la lengua escrita, a diferencia de la oral, predominan: 1) las estructuras sintácticas y semánticas elaboradas; 2) la voz pasiva; 3) ciertas formas verbales y otras formas gramaticales: gerundio, participio, adjetivo atributivo; 4) una información más completa; 5) una mayor organización de las ideas; lo cual implica la utilización por el sujeto de ciertas estrategias cognitivas (Salvador Mata, 1997:20).

The author explains that these differences are provoked by a longer time to process and think about the information. That is why in oral expression, as speakers have less time to think, they have a tendency to commit more mistakes such as repetitions of words. From this information, we can assume that the written language is more elaborated than the oral language and that it demands a larger domain. This is why, even the oral competence must be reinforced in high schools to make students improve the simpler structures of the language, the written language must be even more practiced since it is more complex.

## 2.2. PSYCHO-LINGUISTIC POINT OF VIEW

The second point of view explained by the author is the psycho-linguistic view. According to Salvador Mata<sup>1</sup>, more differences can be established between written and oral expression in relation with the psycho-linguistic point of view. These differences are the following ones:

1) The way of acquisition: While the oral language is learned spontaneously, the written language is learned consciously and with the effort from the student, normally at school.

2) Graphics: The student here faces a double difficulty; to find the letters that constitute a word and to make the necessary moves to write it. This is difficult even in the mother tongue of the student, so in the case of a second language, this difficulty is increased.

3) The communicative situation: While in the oral form, communication is easier due to the presence of an interlocutor, in the written form, this communication is distant and transcends the space and time factors.

4) The way of production: The production of a written text requires the use of a physical item. This makes this production longer in time and slower as the writer has to think before writing. The positive aspect of this is that the organization of ideas is much clearer and effective. This situation does not happen when we talk about oral communication. The thought and the oral production are made almost simultaneously so some mistakes may be made during the conversation.

5) Specific conditions: Linguistic requirements in written expression are more than in oral production, so this makes it much more difficult to develop.

6) Content: The topic that the students have to write about will determine the time they will take to finish it, its complexity of the text and its structure. The themes proposed must be adequate to the knowledge of the students and if possible, it should be a topic they may like or that they are familiar with. This will increase their interest. This

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<sup>1</sup> - Salvador Mata, Francisco. *Dificultades en el aprendizaje de la expresión escrita. Una perspectiva didáctica*. Archidona, (Málaga): Ediciones Aljibe, 1997



situation often happens with the writing exercises proposed in workbooks, where the topics are related to well-known people or cultural elements which are not of the interest of the students.

### 2.3. PSYCHO-PEDAGOGIC POINT OF VIEW

From a psycho-pedagogic point of view, the process of learning of the written language “supone la culminación del aprendizaje lingüístico.” (Salvador Mata, 1997:35). The author explains that when writing a text, the interpersonal, the conceptual and the linguistic knowledge of that person are involved. It is not enough to have notions of literary composition or to dominate the basic principles of textual coherence and cohesion; the capacity to imagine new situations and the student’s own experience are very important factors. Besides, there exists a relationship between the command of a written language and academic and socio-cultural factors. The degree of command of a written language that a person shows is a sign of their cultural and social level. It could be said that, in any language, the more one reads, the better one writes. This may suggest that a student who reads as an entertainment is more likely to be a better writer compared to a student who does not practice reading. Regarding socio-cultural factors, a good command of the written expression in English can give the students a vast range of different possibilities in their future workplace.

I would like to finish with this section by citing the concluding paragraph of the first chapter from the book by Salvador Mata:

An English teacher “debe guiar al alumno en el proceso de verbalización de la experiencia estética y en la percepción de la belleza literaria. La lectura creativa y la composición aparecen, así, como medios privilegiados en la tarea de ayudar al alumno a asimilar el contenido cultural y expresar eficazmente su mundo interior” (Salvador Mata, 1997:38).

### 3. TEACHING METHODS TO IMPROVE THE WRITING SKILLS ON STUDENTS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

There are a series of new teaching methods that can be applied by teachers in high schools in order to improve the writing skills of students whose mother tongue is not English. Some of these new teaching methods involve the use of the new technologies for their accomplishment, which may be an incentive for students as they are more and more influenced and surrounded by them.

In the following section, I propose two different techniques that could be used inside a classroom to help students improve their written expression in English. These two techniques that I present are proposed in a way the student will enjoy, and not as an imposition from the teacher, just as a way that students, little by little, start improving their skills and at the same time enjoy those activities.

#### 3.1 BLOG WRITING

”A weblog (or 'blog') can be thought of as an online journal that an individual can continuously update with his or her own words, ideas, and thoughts through software that enables one to easily do so.” (Campbell, 2003).

Some years ago, blog writing experienced a huge growth due to the massive use of new technologies and the Internet. This has occurred as a consequence of how easy is to write and publish a blog on the web. Almost everybody who knows how to surf the Internet and who has an idea on a topic to write about can create a blog in a completely free way. Besides, they allow the person to express their ideas freely and they make possible for many people to read them and comment with the author their points of view, learn something new or simply read the new post published about a topic of their interest.

The idea to introduce this technology to teach English writing in high schools consists on creating a blog. This blog would not be created individually, but collectively, involving the participation of both students and teachers. The best option in the case of English would be to start a blog where aspects of the English subject like English culture, grammar and phonetic exercises or short stories were treated. It would be open to all the students of the same academic year together with the teachers. It could

also be possible that the blog would be made by all the students in the high school, but to start, the first option is more suitable.

The participation of the teacher is extremely important. If students realize that teachers are having an active role in the creation of the blog, they may feel more confident to start writing by themselves about the proposed topic. To guarantee the continuity of the project, it does not have to be seen as a simple way of entertainment and to leave it at the middle of the year. It has to be used as a tool not for individual knowledge and improvement, but collective and cooperative by sharing contents with the rest of the students and contributing to keep it up to date.

Teachers could ask the students to publish their essays or compositions in the blog so the rest of the students can read them and even correct them at the same time. It would allow cooperation and active learning of the students, as they could be able to correct their classmates' mistakes, learn from them and make some new suggestions. Teachers, or even students, could also publish new entries with extra reinforcement exercises or with news related to the blog that may be of interest for the rest of the students.

By publishing short stories, essays or entries about a topic that is interesting for the students or even about everyday's life in the centre, they can improve their written expression in English and their creativity. Besides, we are not only promoting these aspects, but also the use of ICT's (Information and Communication Technologies) whose importance has been growing as well in these past years. On the suggestions' box of the survey I have created (Appendix 1), many students have commented that they would like to be more involved with technologies, not only computers but also digital boards that they have in class, but teachers do not use.

In the I.E.S Emilio Ferrari in Valladolid, students are immerse in a bilingual program, and to develop it further and make it funnier, they have created a blog where they upload videos, writings and exercises related not only to English but also to Science, Geography and History<sup>2</sup>. It is an active example of how to develop this

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<sup>2</sup> <http://ferrariblog.wordpress.com/>

proposal. This activity is quite demanding initially until both teachers and students get used to it. But it may be an enriching experience that could encourage students to continue with their English studies. “The Blog appears to enrich the learning experience and provide an opportunity for learners to shift from surface to deeper levels of learning.”(Zhang, 2006: 3)

### 3.2 CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

Workshops such as these are normally associated to the University context, and they are more frequently offered in Spanish than in English. The cause of this is that students have a better command of their mother tongue, in this case Spanish, than in a foreign language like English. Therefore, their skills to create a literary text in Spanish are more developed than the ones they may have in English. Besides, as I previously mentioned, they are usually offered in Universities. This is because high school students may not have the necessary competences or even the interest to accomplish the task. It is normally exceptional to find a secondary education student that enjoys reading or writing literary texts.

In the case of secondary education, these creative writing workshops could be developed during classes or possibly as an out-of-school activity. There would be a topic to write about given by the teacher or proposed by the students, and every week, each student should write a little part of it, and develop it as the scholarly year continues. They would share their stories and correct the writing among themselves.

In the surveys that I have accomplished, many students suggest that they would like to have an activity like this one, and they propose to write a chapter of a book on a topic every week with the participation of all the students and the assistance of the teacher. (Appendix 2)

Francisco Salvador Mata mentions in his book<sup>3</sup> the “*Taller de escritores*”, a program which was designed by McArthur and others in 1993 and which is structured by the next components which constitute teaching strategies:

1) Daily lesson plan: The strategy consists on dividing the time dedicated to the composition of the text in four different activities. The first one would be to check in a fast way what is every student doing or what is planning to do. By doing this, the teacher would identify the students who may have problems. Secondly, the teacher will show the students some necessary hints for them to be able to write. Thirdly, two thirds of the time would be dedicated to write. The teacher may assist, guide and listen to any student who may have questions or difficulties when writing. Finally, a part of the time would be dedicated to interchange texts and discuss about them.

2) Teacher-student dialogue. This strategy pursues two objectives: 1) To support and increase what students can do by themselves; 2) To help students reflect and become more conscious of their own processes of writing.

In this step, the teacher carefully listens while students read and talk about what they have written.

3) Interchange and publication. When finishing the daily lesson, students interchange their writings and comment on the aspects they like and ask questions. This makes the student develop a criterion of evaluation. When the work has finished, it is shared to be published. This activity promotes a clear writing.

4) Writing for diverse purposes and with different forms. This procedure has three objectives: 1) increase the skills; 2) keep the motivation; 3) incorporate writing to other areas of knowledge.

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<sup>3</sup> Salvador Mara, Francisco. *Dificultades en el aprendizaje de la expresión escrita. Una perspectiva didáctica*. Archidona, Málaga: Ediciones Aljibe, 1997.

#### 4. HIGH SCHOOL SURVEYS ON WRITING

With the ideas that I had in mind about this entire situation, I decided to check if my beliefs about this were correct and to understand the real state of it. Therefore, I designed a survey that would be completed by high school students of every year, from the first to the fourth. After organizing the survey, I contacted some people to help me with this. Luckily some accepted the participation. Therefore, I have to thank the I.E.S Ferrari, its entire department of English and a teacher in particular who helped me with such willingness to perform my task and made everything really easy.

This survey (Appendix 1) is completely anonymous. The only requested personal details were their age, sex, course they were currently in, years of study of English, and if they were part of a bilingual program. I decided to include the sex distinction as it is generally believed that women pay more attention to writing than men. This fact is just a general cliché but I wanted to confirm whether it was true.

The rest of the questions asked are about the student's experience when writing at high school and their interpretation of the learning experience, as well as what they thought about some proposals I made to them. I also asked the students for suggestions and I believe that the vast majority of respondents had really good ideas.

Now I will present and analyze the results of the survey question by question and course by course.

**Question 1:** ¿Formas parte de un programa bilingüe?<sup>4</sup>

Sí

No

1º E.S.O.: In this course, there is a total of 83 students: 32 males and 51 females. Males represent 39% of the course, while the females represent the remaining 61%. Of the male, there are 15 bilingual students (47% of the total of males) while 17 are not part of a bilingual program. From the females, there are 31 bilingual students (61% of

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<sup>4</sup> When analyzing the rest of the questions, the fact that the students were or were not part of a bilingual program was not relevant nor changed the results, so I will not comment on that.

the total of females) while 20 are not part of a bilingual program. In this course we can observe that there is a higher percentage of bilingual females than bilingual males. The total percentage of bilingual students in this course is 55%.

2° E.S.O.: In this course, there is a total of 63 students: 34 males and 29 females. They are almost equal in proportions. From the males, there are 6 bilingual students out of 34 (18%), while from females, there are 11 bilingual students out of 29 (38%). Here we can observe that the difference between bilingual males and females is even higher than in the first course as there are many more bilingual females. The total percentage of bilingual students in this course is 27%.

3° E.S.O.: In this course, there is a total of 52 students: 18 males and 34 females. Females almost double males in number in this course. From the males, there are 12 bilingual students out of 18 (67%) and from the females there are 24 bilingual students out of 34 (71%). In this course, the difference in percentage between bilingual males and females is minor. The total percentage of bilingual students in this course is 70%.

4° E.S.O.: In this course, there is a total of 63 students: 25 males and 38 females. Here we can see again that the number of females is larger than males. From the males, there are 14 bilingual students out of 25 (56%) and from the females, there are 12 bilingual students out of 38 (32%). In contrary to what happens in all the courses, this time, there are more bilingual males than females. The total percentage of bilingual students in this course is 41%.

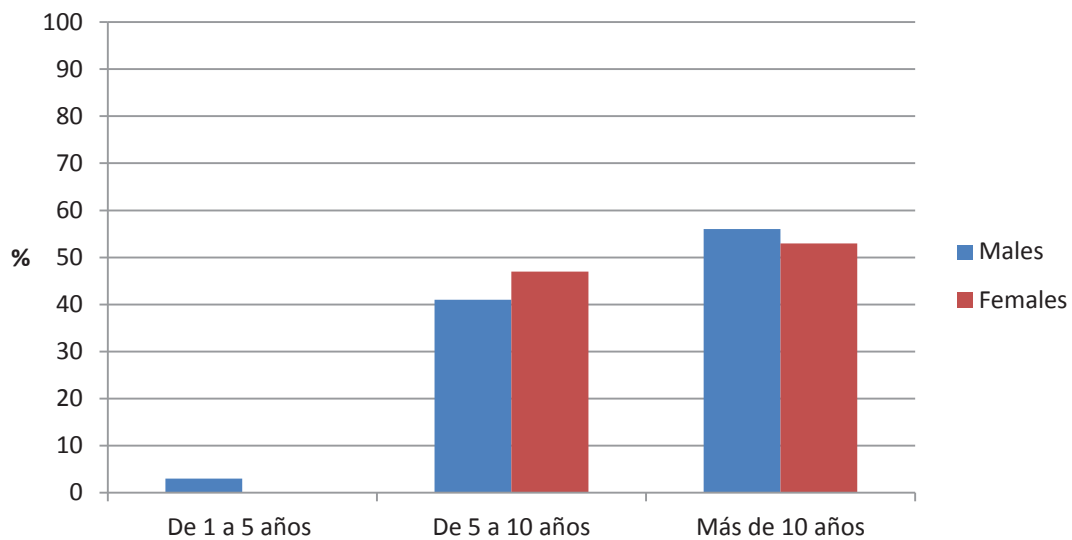
From here, I will explain the data obtained from the rest of the questions and each of them will be represented with a graphic to interpret the data in a clearer way.

**Question 2:** ¿Cuántos años llevas estudiando inglés?

- De 1 a 5 años       De 5 a 10 años       Más de 10 años

1º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 32 males, just one has been studying English between 1 and 5 years (3%). The rest of the males are almost equally divided: 13 have studied English between 5 and 10 years (41%) and 18 have studied English for more than 10 years (56%). In the case of females from a total of 51 females, 24 have studied English between 5 and 10 years (47%) and the rest, 27 students, have done it for more than 10 years (53%). From the total of the course, a 54% chose the third option, a 45% the second option and 1% the first option.

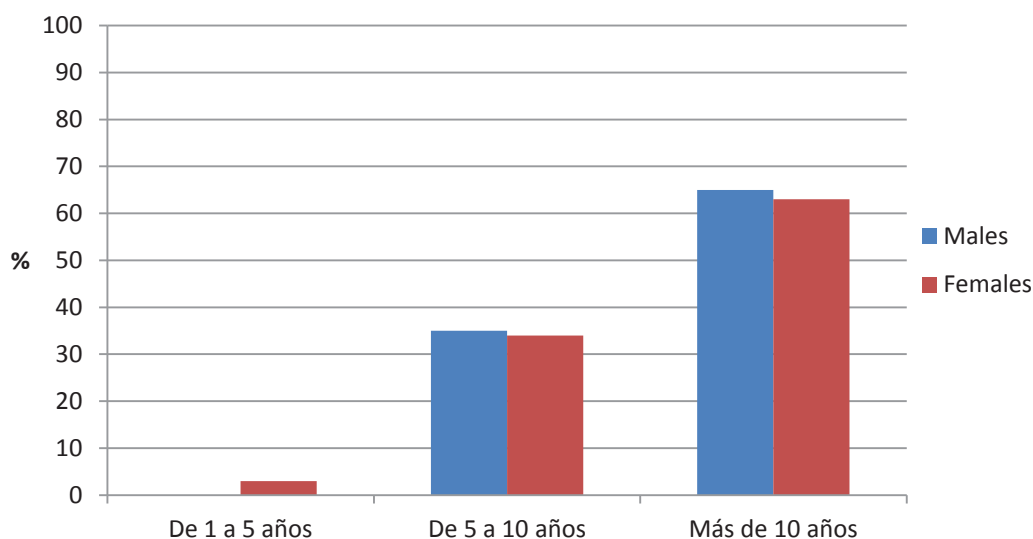
**Question 2 - 1º ESO**



2º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 34 males, 12 chose the second option (from 1 to 5 years) which represent the 35% of the males, and 22 chose the third option (more than 10 years), which represent the 65%. In the case of females, out of 29, 1 student chose the first option (3%), 10 chose the second option (34%) and the remaining 18 females chose the third option (63%). From the total of the course, a 2% chose the first option, 35% the second option and 63% the third option.

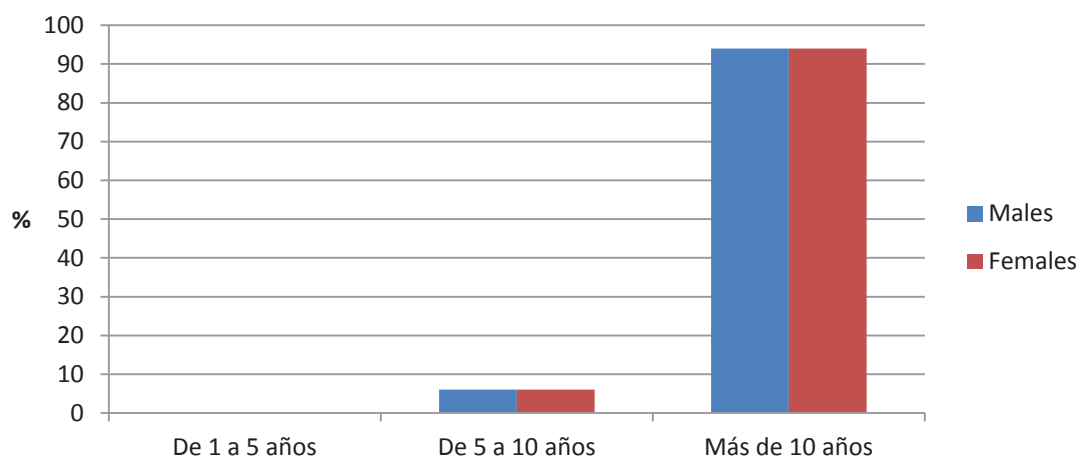


## Question 2 - 2º ESO

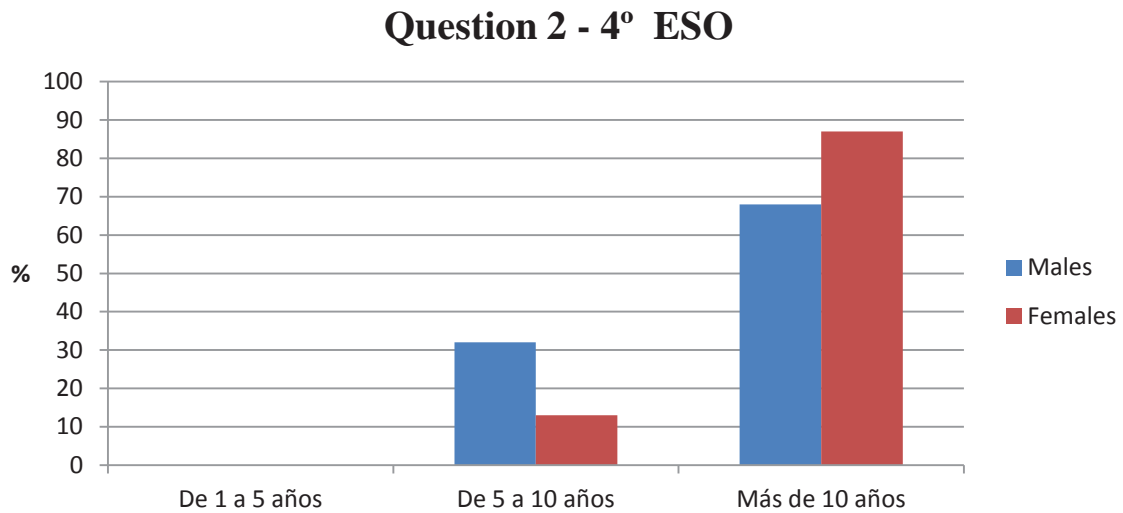


3º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 18 males, just one chose the second option (6%) and the rest of the students, which were 17, chose the third option (94%). In the case of females, out of 34, 2 chose the second option (6%) and the 32 left chose the third option (94%). We can observe that the percentages in this case are equal. From the total of the course, a 6% chose the second option while the 94% left chose the third one.

## Question 2 - 3º ESO



4° E.S.O.: In this course, out of 25 males, 8 of them chose the second option (32%) and the 17 left chose the third one (68%). In the case of females, out of 38, 5 chose the second option (13%) and the 33 left chose the third one (87%). From the total of the course, a 21% chose the second option while the 79% left chose the third one.



We can observe from these numbers, that throughout the years, the third option is chosen more and more frequently, as it is logical. This indicates that a huge majority starts studying English when they are in and age between 3 and 6 years old.

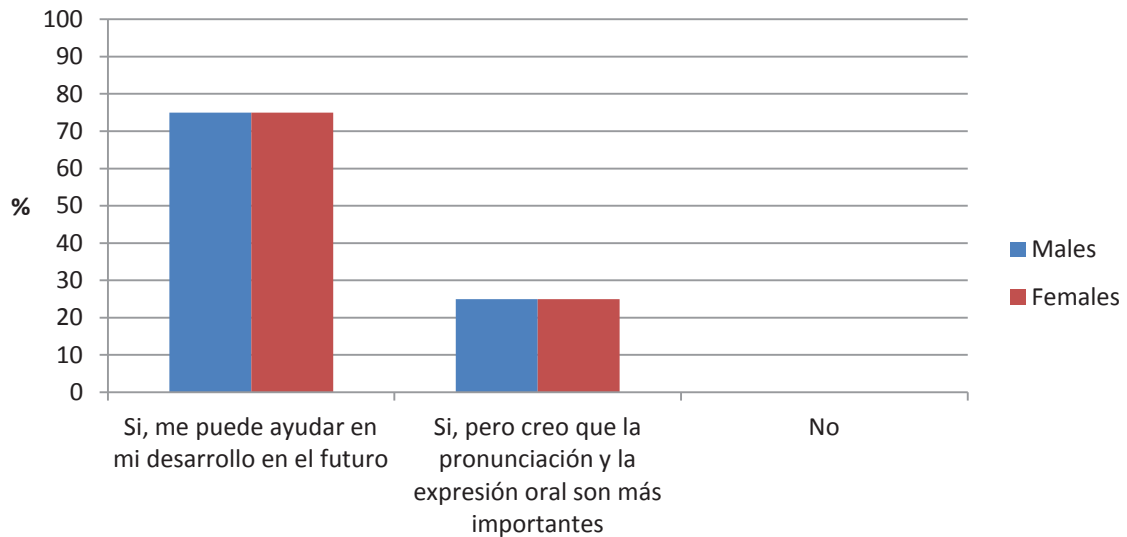
**Question 3:** ¿Consideras que la expresión escrita en inglés es importante?

- Sí, me puede ayudar en mi desarrollo en el futuro (e-mails formales para pedir trabajo en el extranjero, becas, etc.) y también a nivel personal
- Sí, pero creo que la pronunciación y la expresión oral son más importantes
- No

1° E.S.O.: In this course, out of 32 males, 24 think that writing in English can be helpful for them in their future (75%), while the other 8 left consider that pronunciation and speaking are more important than writing (25%). In the case of the females, their perception is exactly the same than males. Out of 51, 38 agree with the first option

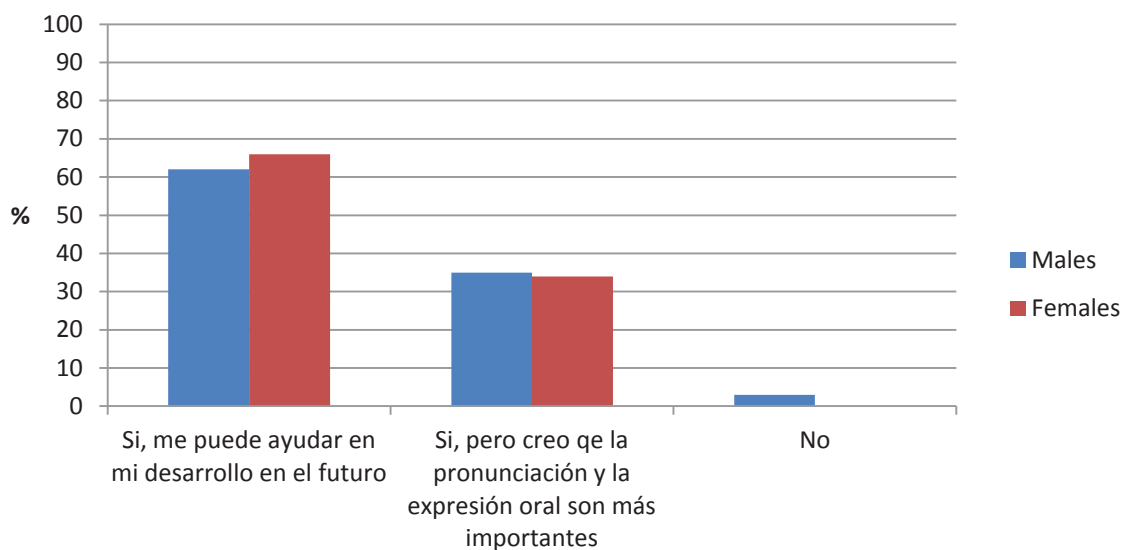
(75%) and the 13 students left agree with the second one (25%). None of them, both males and females, consider that writing skills are not important for the development of their English experience.

### Question 3 - 1º ESO



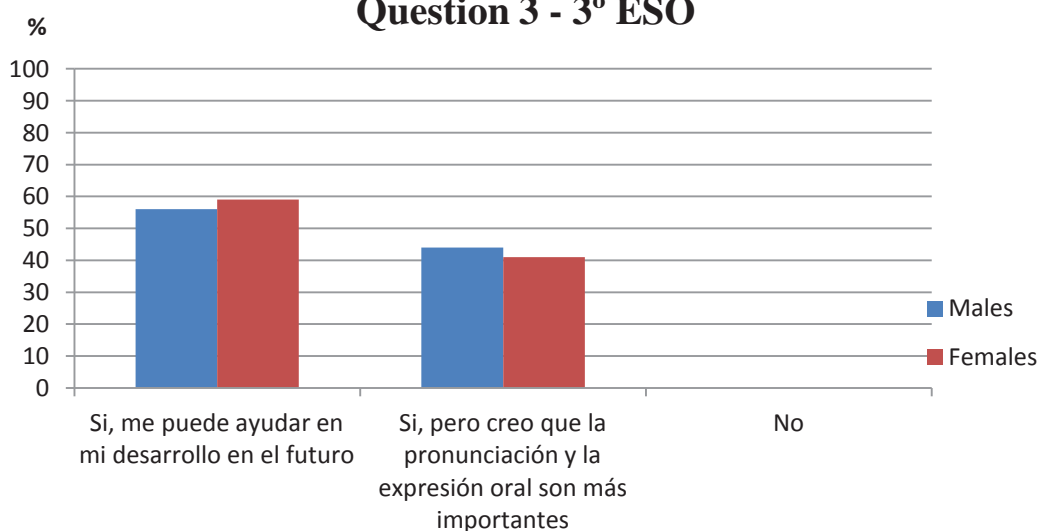
2º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 34 males, 21 agree with the first option (62%), 12 agree with the second one (35%) and just one thinks that writing is not important (3%). In the case of the females, out of 29, 18 think that English will be helpful for them in their future (66%), and the 10 left think that pronunciation and speaking are more important (34%). From the total of the course, 63% chose the first option, 35% the second and just a 2% corresponding to one student out of 63 of the total chose the third option.

### Question 3 - 2º ESO



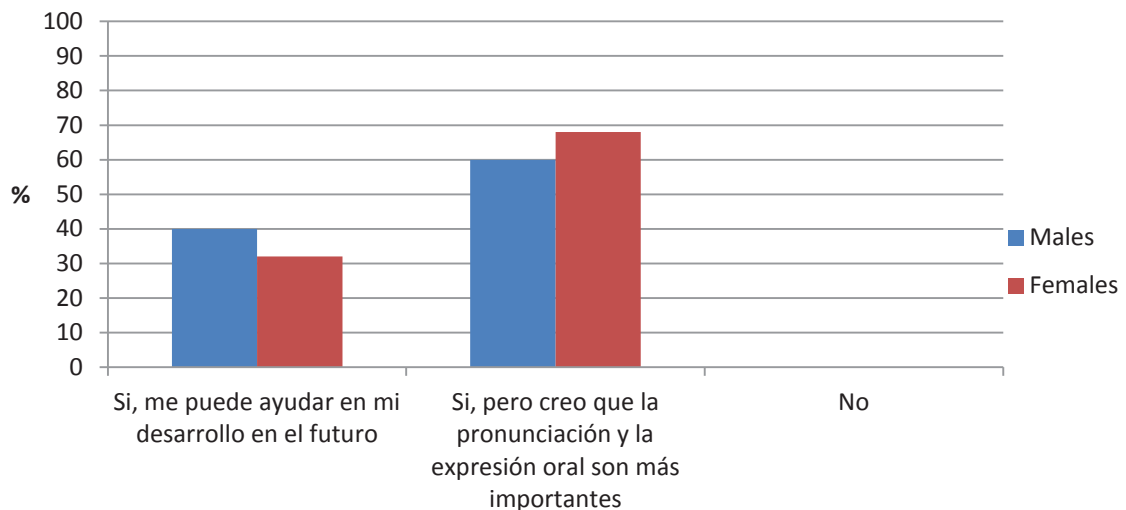
3º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 18 males, 10 chose the first option (56%) and 8 chose the second one (44%). In the case of the females, out of 34, 20 agreed with the first option (59%) and 14 agreed with the second one (41%). Again in this case, none of the students, either male or female, chose the third option, so they all consider that, in more or less degree, writing in English is important. From the total of the course, (52 students), 58% of them chose the first option while the 42% left of the students chose the second one.

### Question 3 - 3º ESO



4º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 25 males, 10 agree with the first option (40%) and 15 with the second one (60%). In the case of females, out of 38, 12 chose the first option (32%) and 26 chose the second option (68%). From the total of the course (63 students), 35% chose the first option and 65% chose the second one. In this case we can see a change in the pattern. While in the rest of the courses the most frequent answer was the first one, in this course the favourite one is the second, so this means that more students think that pronunciation and speaking is more important than the written expression.

### Question 3 - 4º ESO

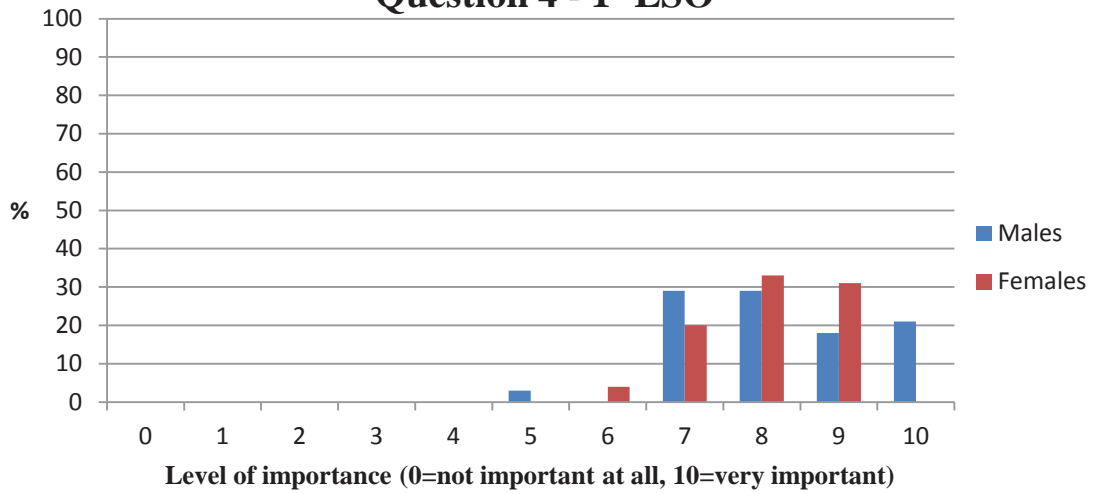


**Question 4:** ¿Cuánta importancia le darías a la expresión escrita en inglés para el desarrollo del idioma? (0=ninguna importancia; 10=mucha importancia) (Rodea el número)

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

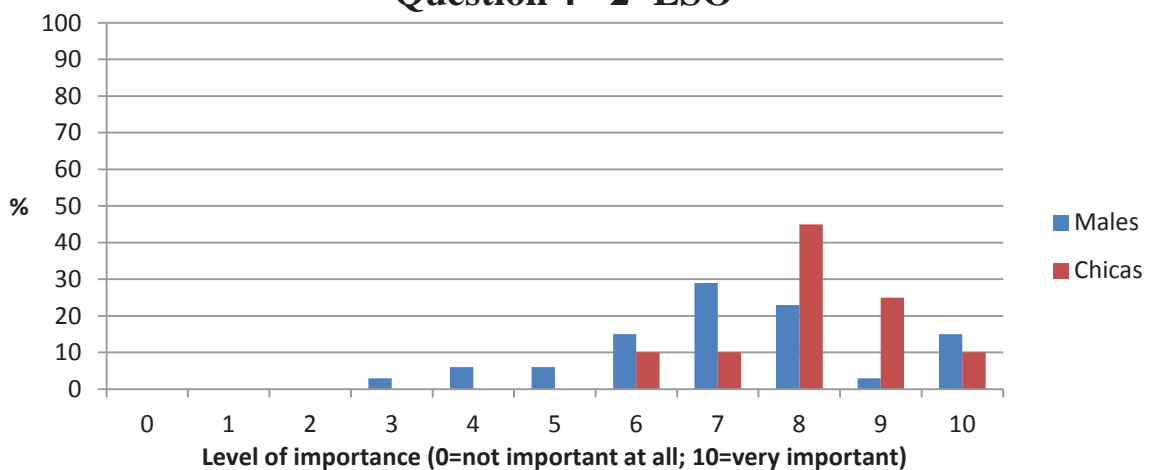
1º E.S.O.: In this course, when talking about male students, out of 32, 9 chose to give a mark of 7 to the importance of writing (29%) and other 9 students graded an 8 (29%). In the case of the females, out of 51, 17 graded an 8 (33%) and 16 graded a 9 (31%). None of them gave less than a 5 of importance to writing in English. From this, we can deduce that all of them consider writing in English important.

### Question 4 - 1º ESO



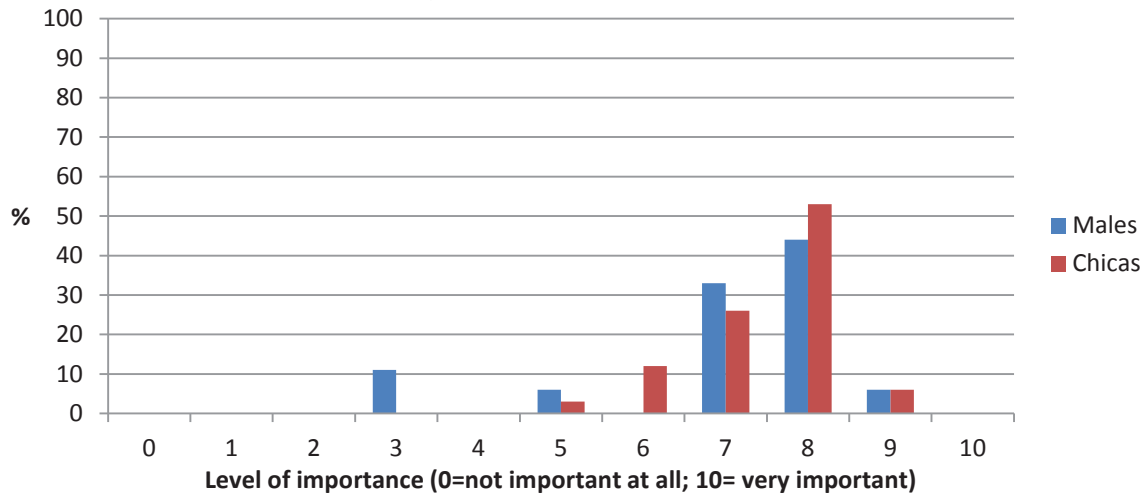
2º E.S.O.: In this course, happened almost the same than in 1º E.S.O. Out of 34 males, 10 graded a 7 of importance (29%) and 8 gave an 8 (23%). Just 3 of the total of male students graded less than 5. In the case of female students, out of 29, 13 graded an 8 (45%) and 7 gave a 9 (25%). It is remarkable to point out that none of the girls graded less than 6.

### Question 4 - 2º ESO



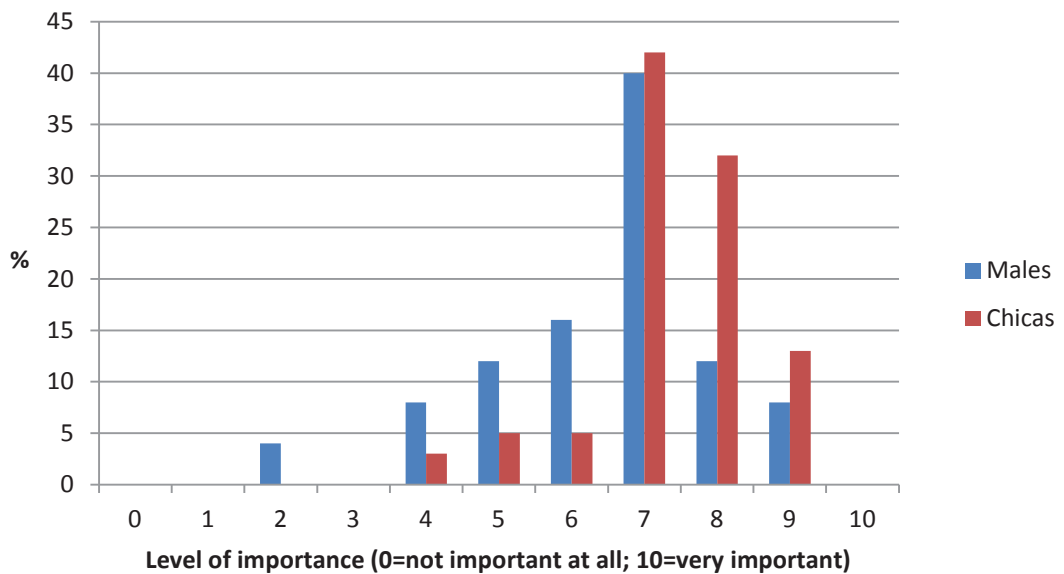
3° E.S.O.: In this course, 26 students out of 52 (50%), 8 males (44%) and 18 females (53%), agreed to grade with an 8 the importance of writing in English. The next most chosen grade was 7, with 6 males (33%) and 9 females (26%). Just two male students graded below 5 and none of the female students graded below 5

### Question 4 - 3° ESO



4° E.S.O.: In this course, out of 25 males, 10 graded 7 (40%) and 4 graded 6 (16%). Those were the most chosen options. In the case of female students, out of 38, 16 chose to grade a 7 (42%) and 12 chose to grade an 8 (32%).

### Question 4 - 4° ESO

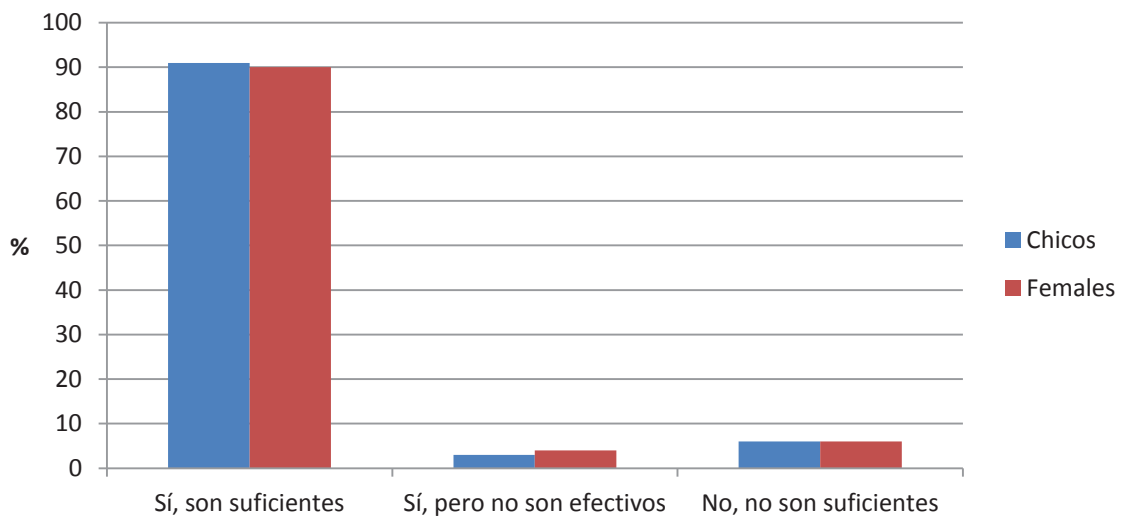


**Question 5:** ¿Crees que los ejercicios de expresión escrita en inglés que se hacen en clase son suficientes?

- Sí, son suficientes
- Sí, pero no efectivos
- No, no son suficientes

1º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 83 students, 75 think that the exercises done about writing in English in class are enough (90%), 29 of them are males (91%) and 46 of them are females (90%). Only 3 students in total think that the exercises they do are not effective (4%), one male and 2 female; and just 5 students (2 males and 3 females) think that what they do in class is not enough (6%).

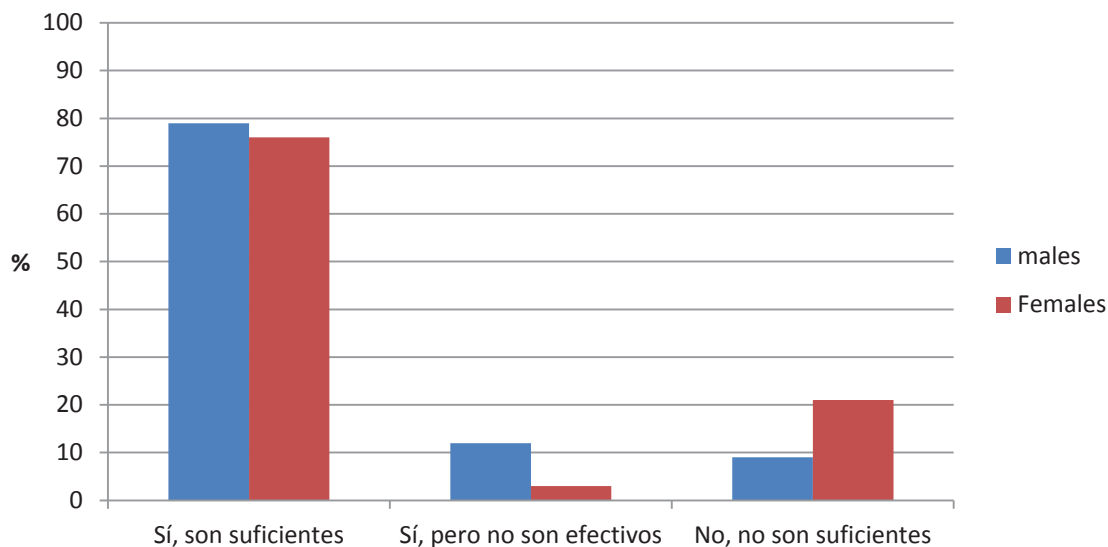
### Question 5 - 1º ESO



2º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 34 males, 27 think that the exercises they do are enough (79%), 4 think they are not effective (12%) and just 3 think that they are not enough (9%). In the case of females, out of 29, 22 chose the first option (76%), just one chose the second option (3%) and 6 of them agreed with the third one (21%). This indicates that female students are more aware that they need more exercises that have to do with writing.

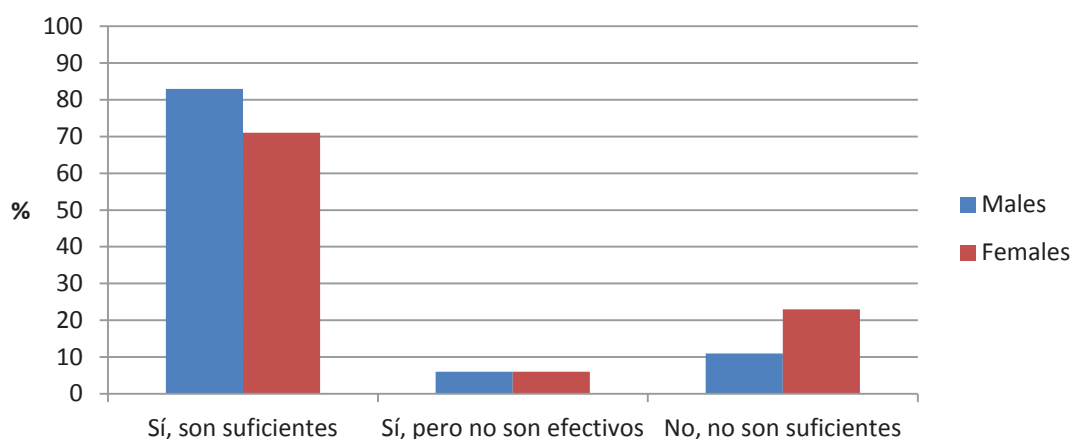


### Question 5 - 2º ESO



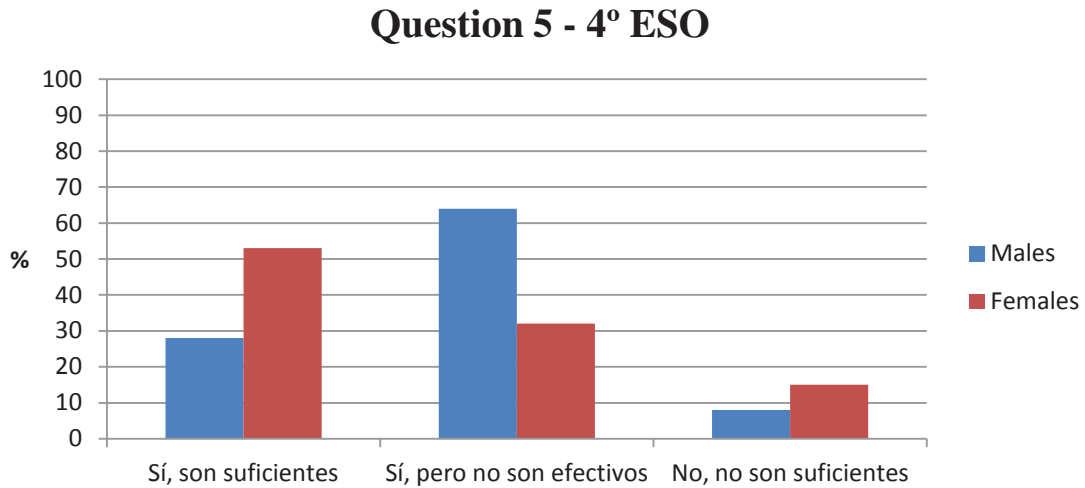
3º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 18 males, 15 think that what they do in class is enough (83%), just one thinks that the exercises in writing are not effective (6%) and 2 of them think that they are not enough (11%). In the case of female students, out of 34, 24 agreed with the first option (71%), 2 with the second option (6%) and 8 thought that what they do is not enough (23%). In this course, the tendency that appeared before increases: girls are more aware that they need to practice more writing.

### Quesiton 5 - 3º ESO



4º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 25 males, 7 chose the first option (28%), 16 chose the second option (64%) and just 2 chose the third one (8%). Here, the pattern followed by males in the previous courses changes. In the case of females, out of 38, 20

chose the first option (53%), 12 chose the second option (32%) and 6 chose the third one (15%). In this case, the tendency mentioned before also changes.

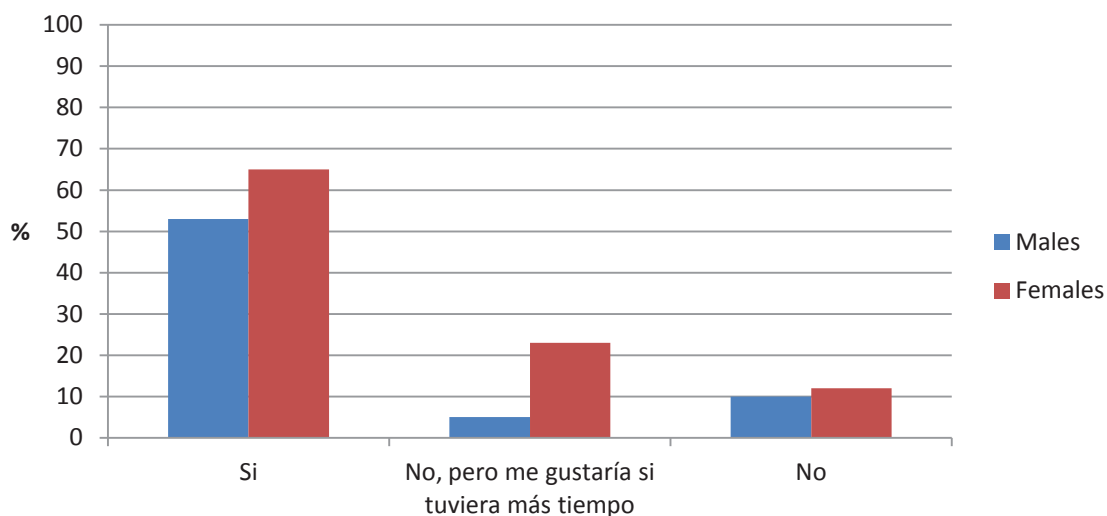


**Question 6:** ¿Te gusta escribir en castellano en tu tiempo libre?

- Sí
- No, pero me gustaría si tuviera más tiempo
- No

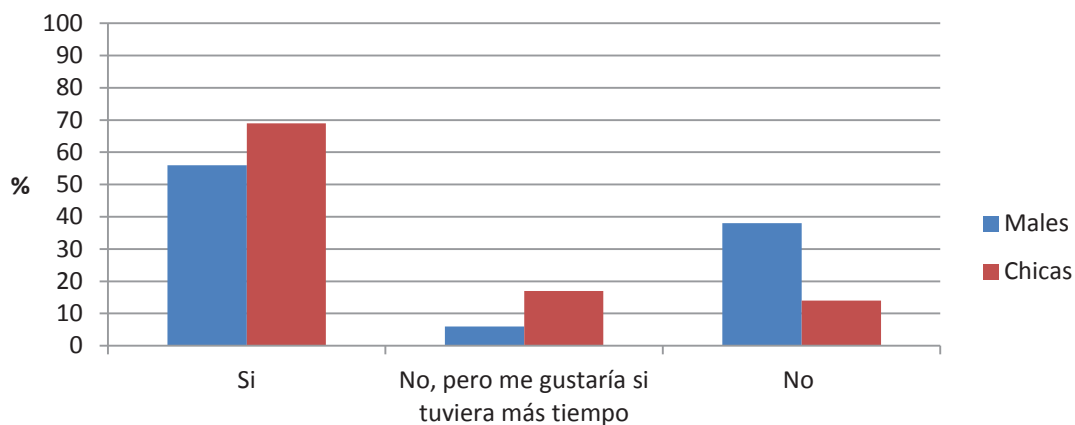
1º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 32 males, 17 claim that they like writing in Spanish when they have free time (53%), 5 chose the second option, that they would do it if they had more time (16%), and 10 recognizes not to write anything (31%). In the case of females, the results change. Out of 51, 33 chose the first option (65%), 12 would like to write in Spanish if they had the time (23%) and 6 do not write anything (12%). I was surprised with these results as I thought that girls would write more than boys, but the results show the opposite situation.

### Question 6 - 1º ESO



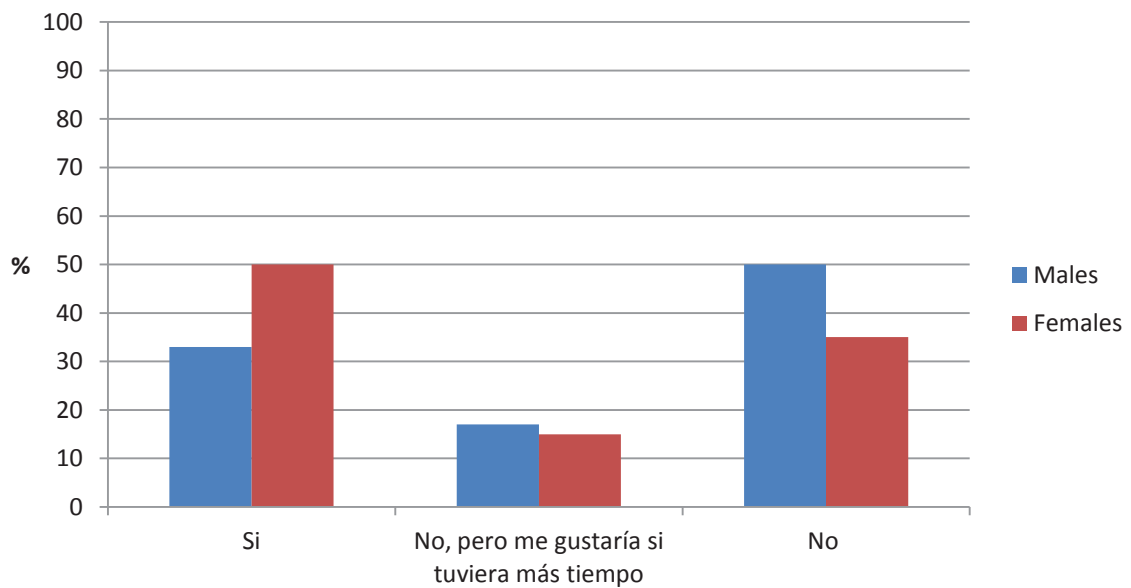
2º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 34 males, 19 chose the first answer (56%), 2 chose the second (6%) and 13 do not write anything in Spanish (38%). In the case of females, out of 29, 20 chose the first option (69%), 5 chose the second one (17%) and 4 chose the third one (14%). Here, what happened in the first course changes, and now it girls who write more than boys, although more males than females admit that they would write in Spanish if they had the time.

### Question 6 - 2º ESO



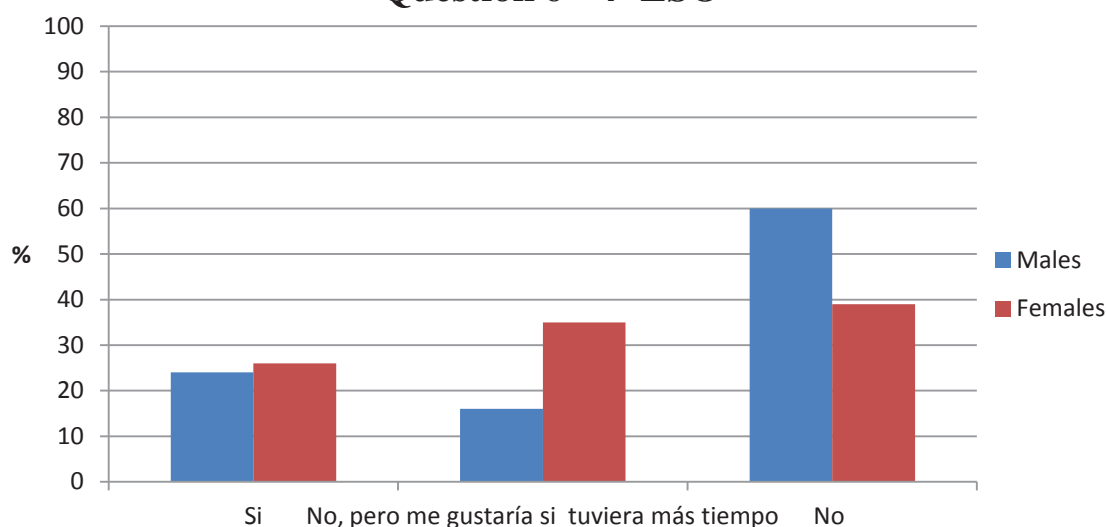
3° E.S.O.: In this course, in the case of the male, the tendency changes radically. Out of 18, just 6 write something in Spanish (33%), 3 chose the second option (17%) and 9 do not write in Spanish at all (50%). We can appreciate that the majority of males do not write. In the case of females this situation is similar. Out of 34, 17 chose the first option (50%), 5 chose the second one (15%) and 12 chose the third one (35%). We can see that the change is not as remarkable as in the case of males.

### Question 6 - 3° ESO



4° E.S.O.: In this course, the situation that started to happen in the previous course increases and if we compare the results from 1° E.S.O. with the ones from this course, the numbers are almost the opposite. It is true that it is not so accused in the case of the girls, but it also happens. Out of 25 males, just 6 write something in Spanish (24%), 4 would like to write if they had the time (16%) and 15, which is the 60% of the total males, do not write in Spanish. In the case of the females, out of 38, 10 chose the first option (26%), 13 chose the second one (35%) and 15, which is the 39% of the total females, admits that they do not write in Spanish.

### Question 6 - 4º ESO

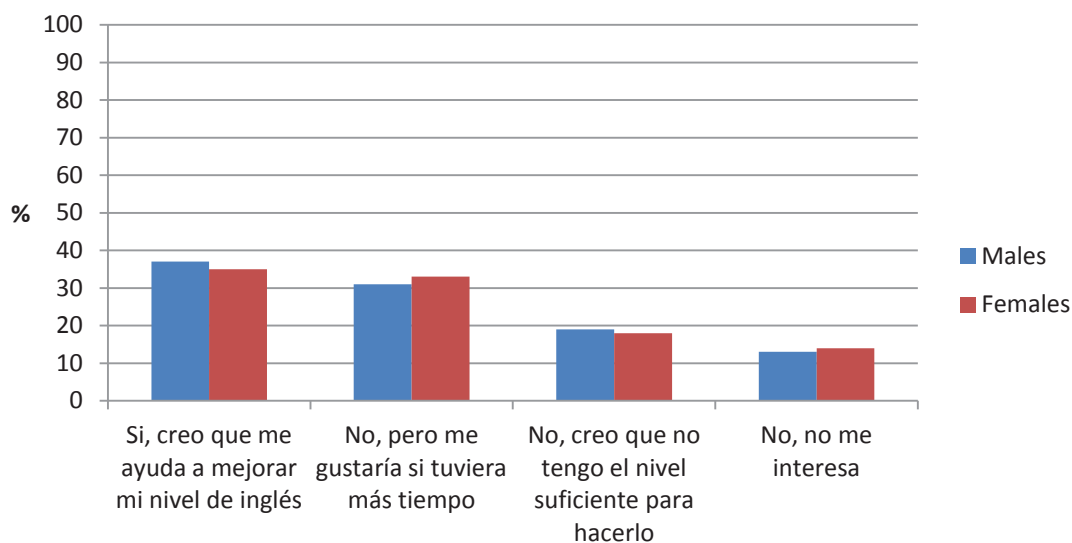


### Question 7: ¿Escribes en inglés en tu tiempo libre?

- Sí, creo que me ayuda a mejorar mi nivel de inglés
- No, pero me gustaría si tuviera más tiempo
- No, creo que no tengo el nivel suficiente para hacerlo
- No, no me interesa

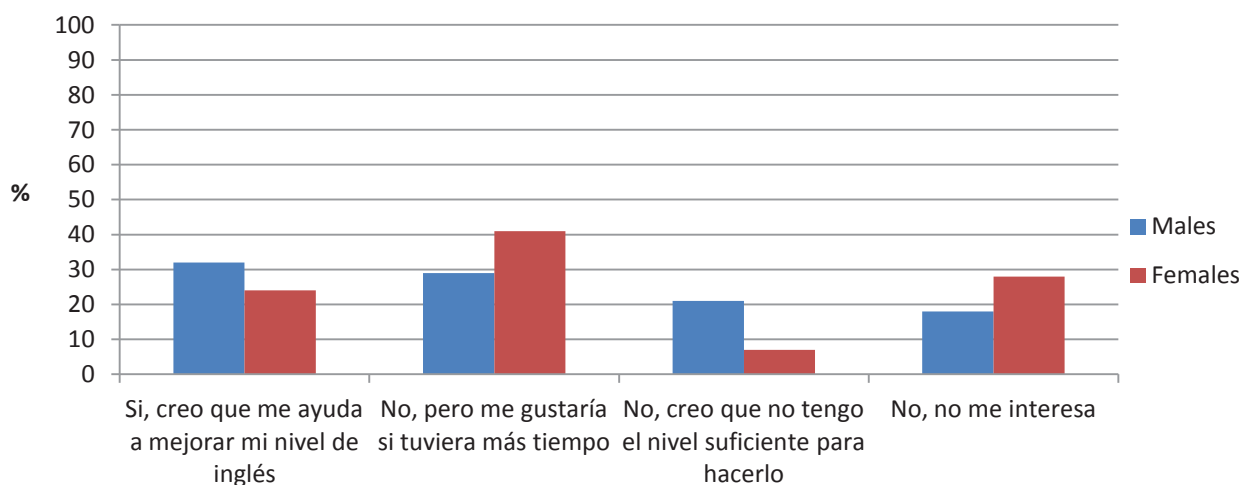
1º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 32 males, 12 admit that they write in English in their spare time (37%), 10 say that they do not do it but they would like to if they had more time (31%), 6 chose the third option; they think they do not have the level needed to write something in English (19%). The 4 students left chose the last option; they are not interested in writing in English (13%). We can observe that the majority of them either write or would like to. We will see in the next courses how this tendency evolves. In the case of the girls, out of 51, 18 actually write in English (35%), 17 would like to write if they had the time (33%), 9 think that they do not have the necessary level to write in English (18%) and 7 are not interested (14%). We can see that the results of both males and females are quite similar.

## Question 7 - 1º ESO



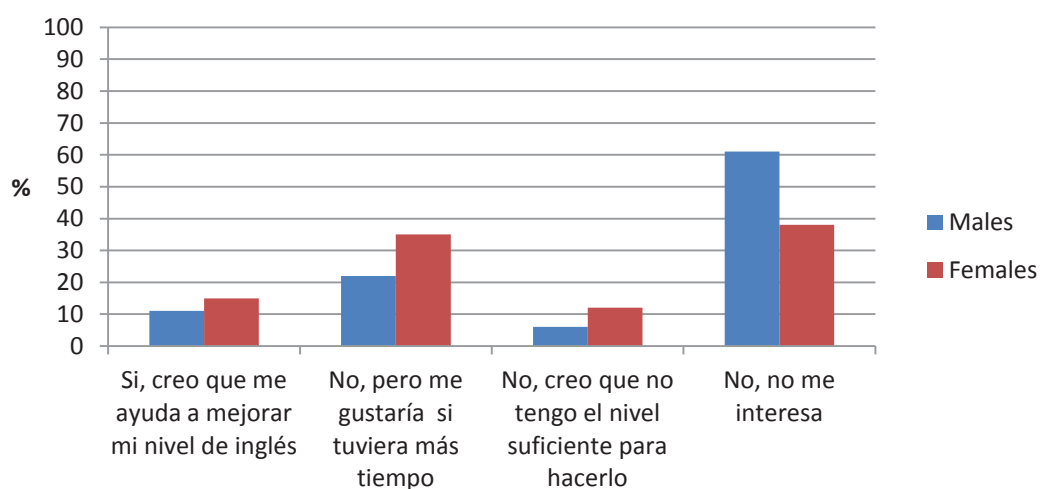
2º E.S.O.: In this course, out of 34 males, 11 chose the first option (32%), 10 the second one (29%), 7 the third option (21%) and 6 the last one (18%). In the case of the female students, out of 29, 7 chose the first option (24%), 12 chose the second option (41%), just 2 of them chose the third option (7%), and 8 admit that they are not interested in writing in English (28%). The results in the case of the males are almost the same in the first and second course of the secondary education. The change comes when we talk about the females. The percentage of girls who chose the last option in this course doubles when compared to the one in the first course (from 14% to 28%).

## Question 7 - 2º ESO



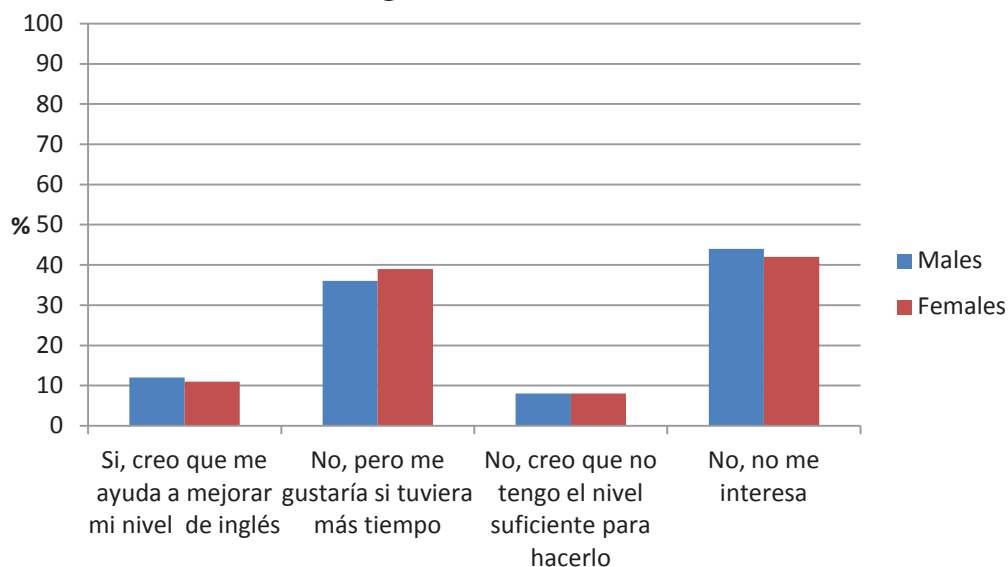
3° E.S.O.: In this course, out of 18 males, just 2 write in English (11%), 4 would like to do it if they had the time (22%), 1 chose the third option (6%) and 11 of them are not interested in writing in English (61%). Here we encounter a radical change of the results. While in the two first courses the percentages of male students who chose the last option was 13 and 18%, in this course, this number increases up to 61%. In the case of the females, out of 34, 5 chose the first option (15%), 12 chose the second option (35%), 4 chose the third one (12%) and 13 chose the last one (38%). The tendency that started in the previous course (2°) is still increasing, from a 28% to a 38% in the case of girls who chose the last option.

### Question 7 - 3° ESO



4° ESO: In this course, out of 25 male students, 3 chose the first option (12%), 9 chose the second option (36%), 2 chose the third option (8%) and 11 chose the last one (44%). Here we appreciate that the percentage of males who chose the last option has decreased from a 61% to a 44% but it is still a very high percentage of boys who are not interested in writing in English. In the case of females, out of 38, 4 write something in English (11%), 15 would like to do it if they had the time (39%), 3 think that they do not have the necessary level to do it (8%), and 16 admit not to be interested in writing in English (42%). In this case, the percentage of girls who chose the last option keeps increasing from a 38% in the third course to a 42% in this one.

### Question 7 - 4º ESO



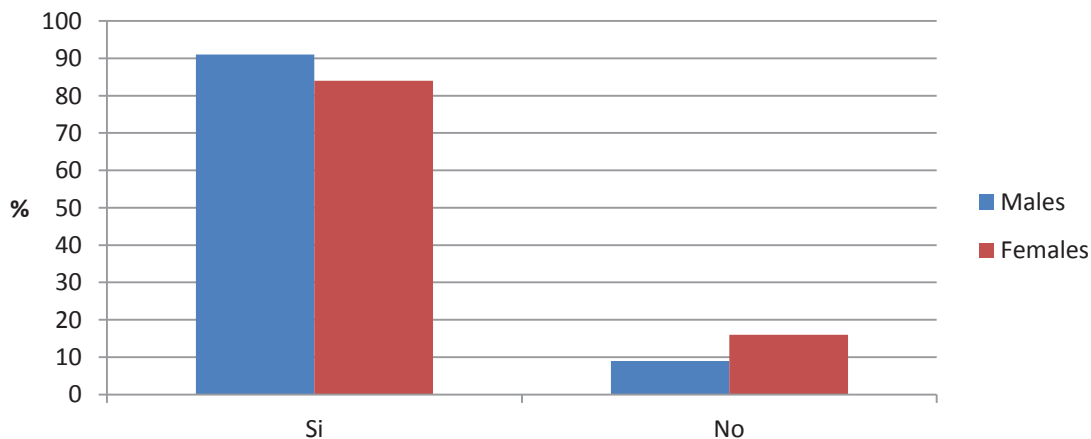
**Question 8:** ¿Te gustaría que se hicieran otras actividades para mejorar la escritura en inglés, como blogs o talleres de escritura creativa?

Sí

No

1º ESO: In this course, out of 32 males, 29 said they would like to have some other activities such as blogs or creative writing workshops (91%) and 3 would not like to have them (9%). In the case of the girls, out of 51, 43 chose the first option (84%) and 8 chose the second one (16%).

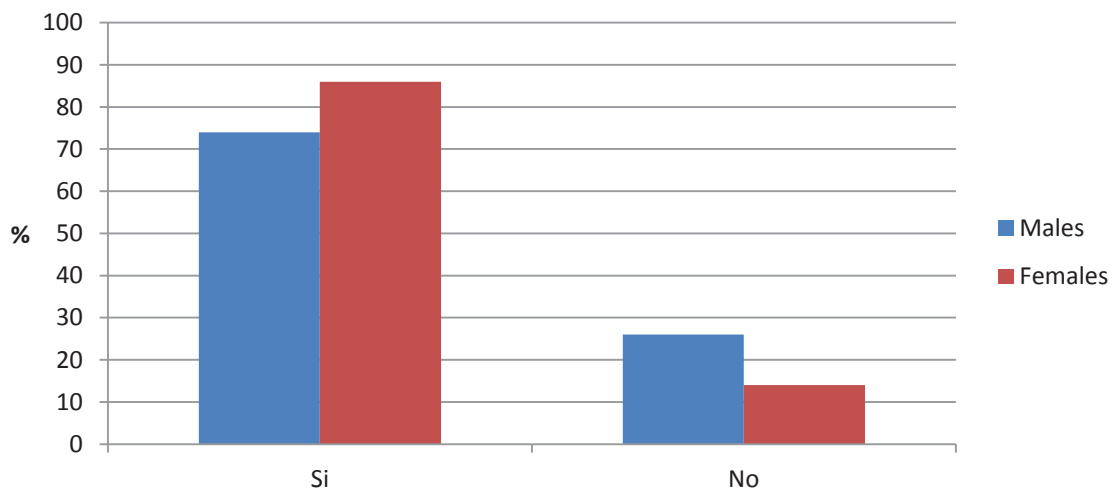
### Question 8 - 1º ESO





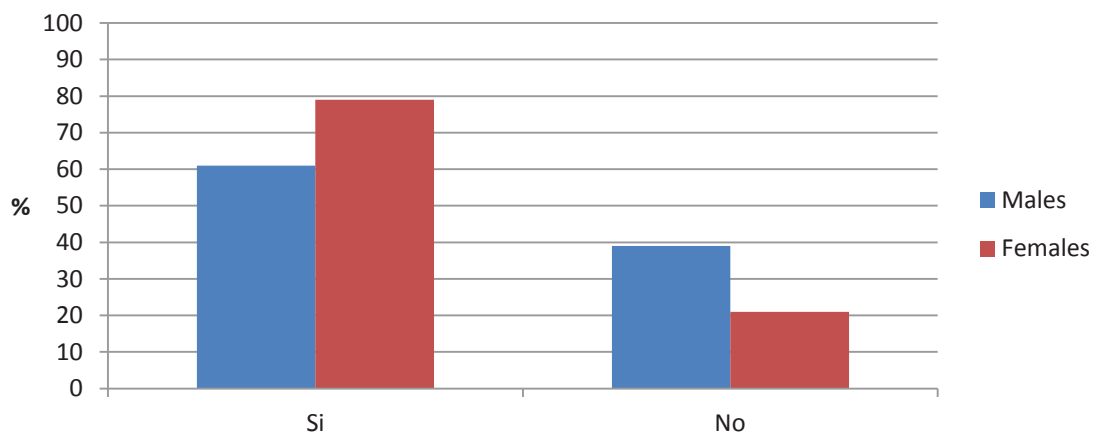
2° E.S.O.: In this course, out of 34 males, 25 chose the first option (74%) and 9 chose the second one (26%). The interest in the case of males to perform some of this activities decreases in this course. In the case of female students, out of 29, 25 chose the first option (86%) and 4 chose the second one (14%). Contrary to what happened with boys, the interest of the girls for this kind of activities increases.

### Question 8 - 2° ESO

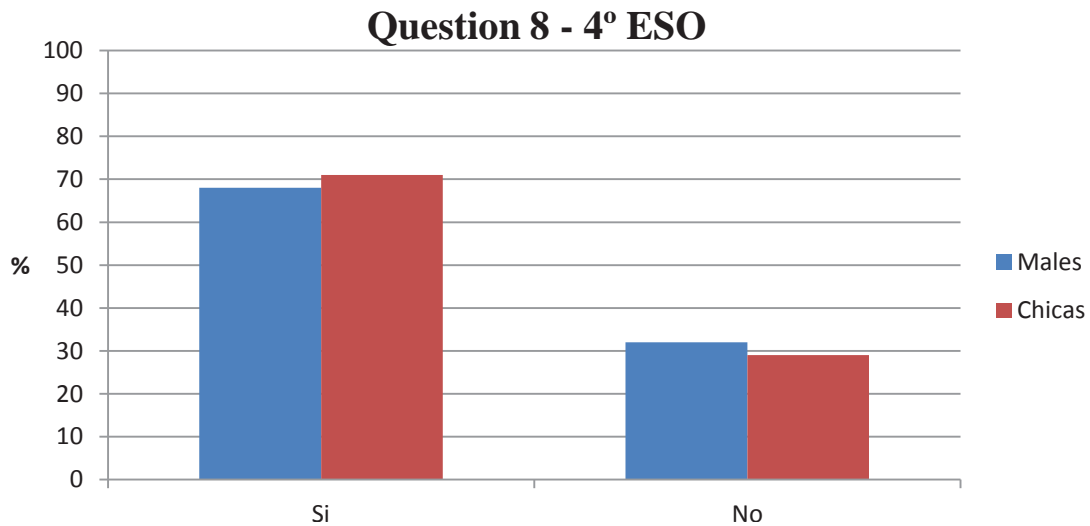


3° E.S.O.: In this course, put of 18 male students, 11 chose the first option (61%) and 7 chose the second one (39%). We can appreciate that their interest keeps decreasing. In the case of the female students, out of 34, 27 chose the first option (79%) and 7 chose the second one (21%). Now the situation changes. Just as what happens with males, females start decreasing their interest.

### Question 8 - 3° ESO



4° E.S.O.: In this course, out of 25 males, 17 chose the first option (68%) and 8 chose the second one (32%). In this case, the interest of the males increases in 7%. In the case of females, out of 38, 27 chose the first option (71%) and 11 chose the second one (29%). The tendency in the case of the girls remains the same as before: their interest for this kind of activities keeps decreasing.

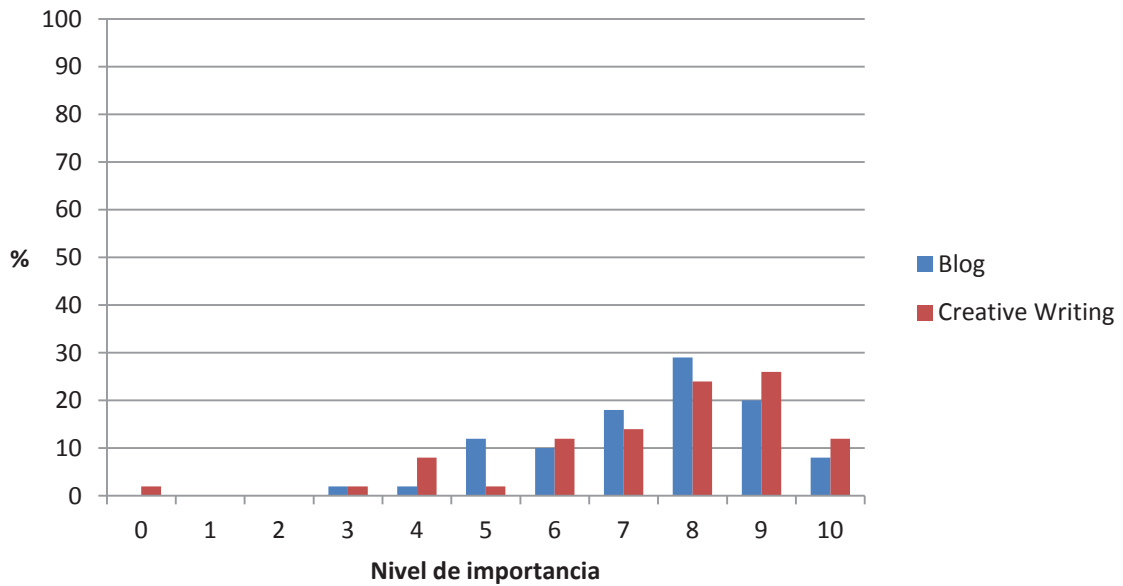


**Question 9:** ¿Cuál de las siguientes te gustaría realizar y en qué medida? (Rodea el número)

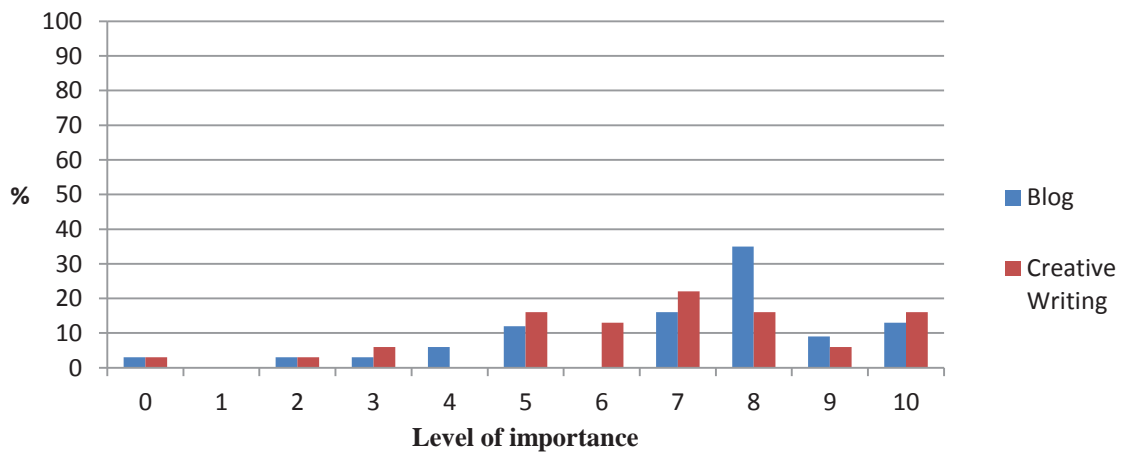
ACTIVIDAD	INTERÉS DEL 0 AL 10 (0=nada; 10=mucho)
Escribir un blog	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Taller de escritura creativa	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1° E.S.O.: In this course, out of 32 males, the most common grade in the case of blogs was an 8 which was chosen by 11 students (35%). In the case of female students, out of 51 females, the majority (15 students) chose the grade 8 (29%). It is remarkable to say that only 5 male students and 2 females rated their interest for creating blogs below 5 points. In the case of creative writing, the most common mark chosen by males was 7, chosen by 7 students (22%). Females (51 en total) mostly chose grade 9 (13 students, 26%) Here, 4 male students and 6 female students graded less than 5. This information reflects that their interest is pretty high regarding these activities.

### Question 9 - 1º ESO-FEMALES

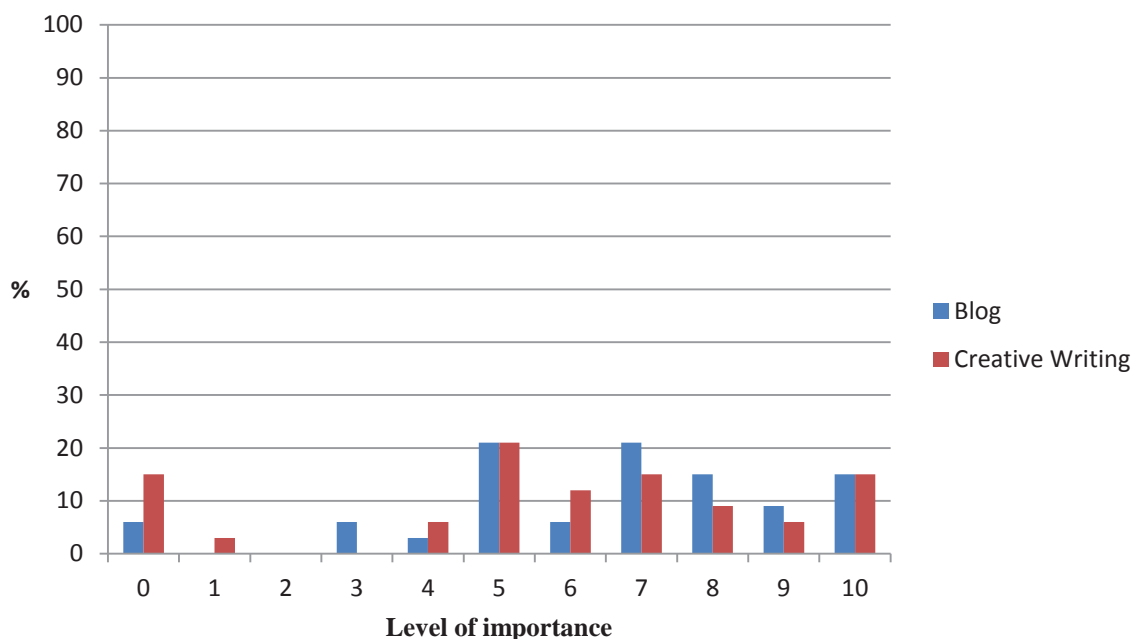


### Question 9 - 1º ESO-MALES

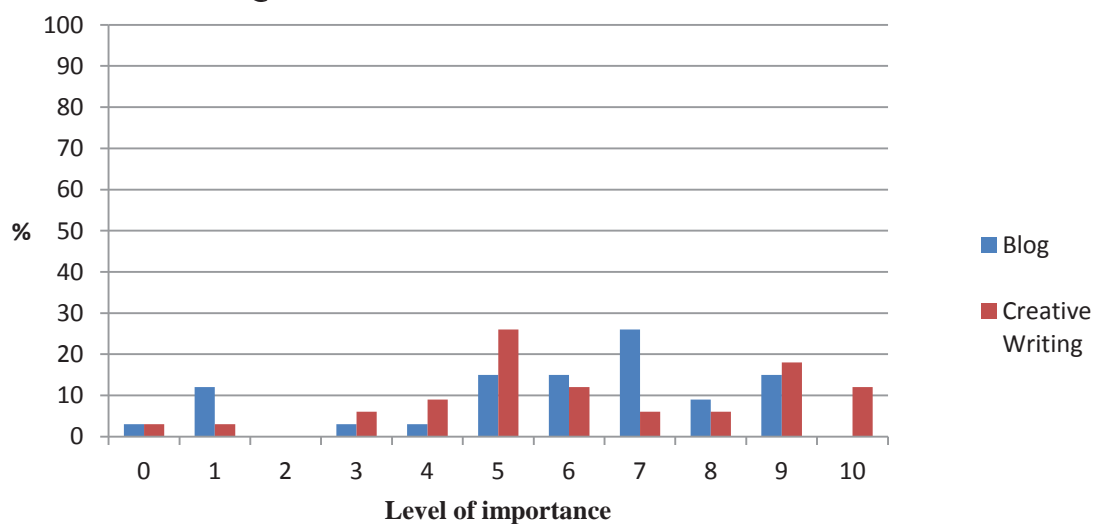


2º E.S.O.: In this course, when talking about blogs, out of 34 male students, there is a tie between grade 5 and grade 7, both chose by 7 students each (21% each). Out of 29 females, 6 chose the grade 9 (20%). Just 5 males and 5 females graded their interest for blogs below 5. In the case of creative writing, the most chosen mark by males is a 5, with 7 students too (21%). Out of 29 females, 7 chose to grade an 8 (24%). In this case, 8 males and 5 females showed that their interest was below 5.

### Question 9 - 2° ESO-MALES



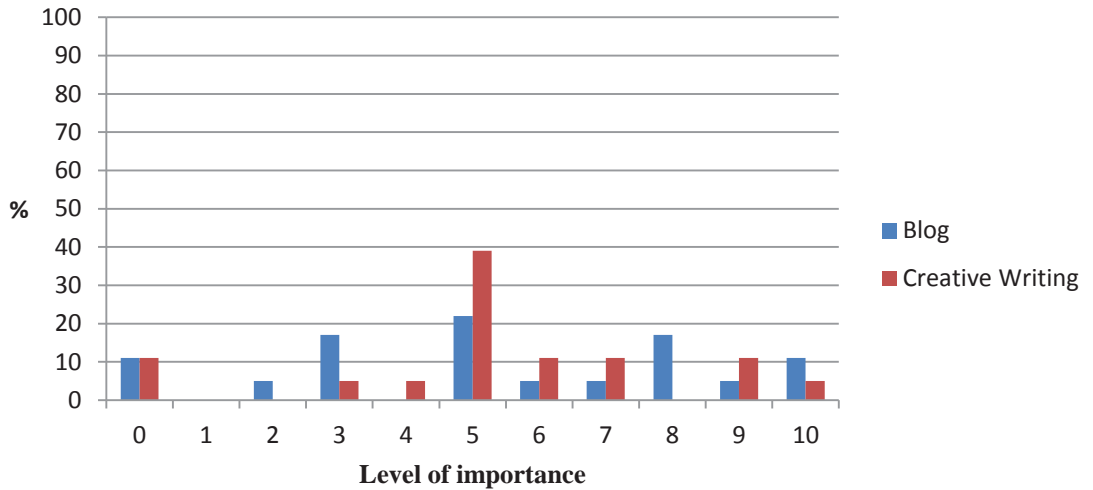
### Question 9 - 2° ESO-FEMALES



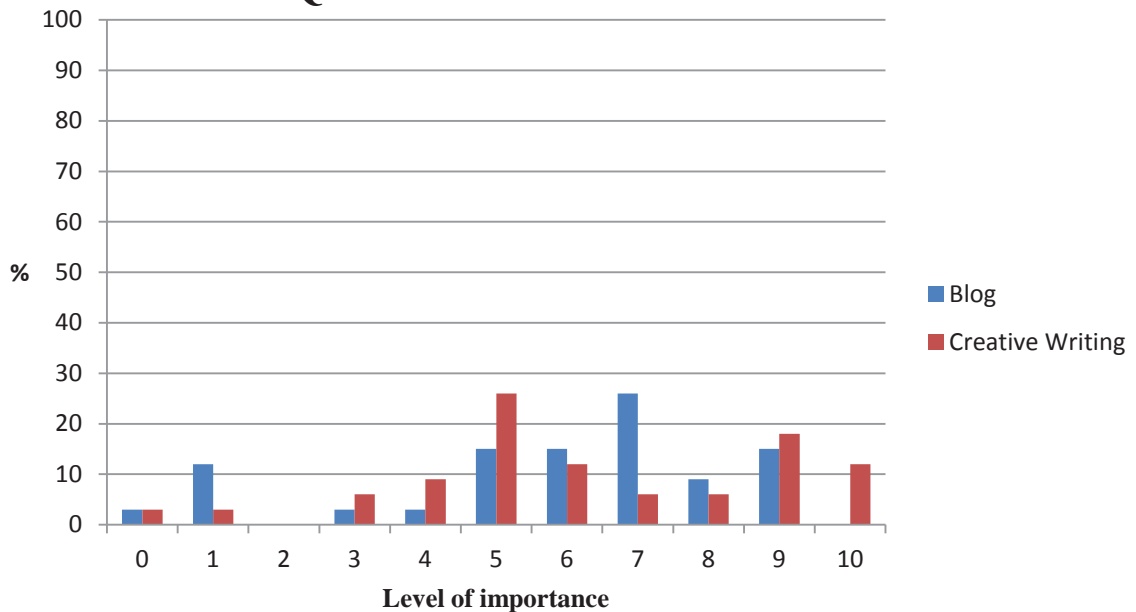
3° E.S.O.: Here, in the case of blogs, males chose mostly 5, 4 out of 18 (22%). Females, on the other hand chose 7 (9 out of 34, 26%). Here, 6 males and 7 females admit that their interest for blogs is below 5. When talking about creative writing, both males and females chose as their most voted grade 5: 7 out of 18 males (39%) and 9 out

of 34 females (26%). Just 4 males and 7 females rated their interest for creative writing below 5. The interest for blogs and creative writing at this point keeps high although it seems to be decreasing.

### Question 9 - 3° ESO-MALES

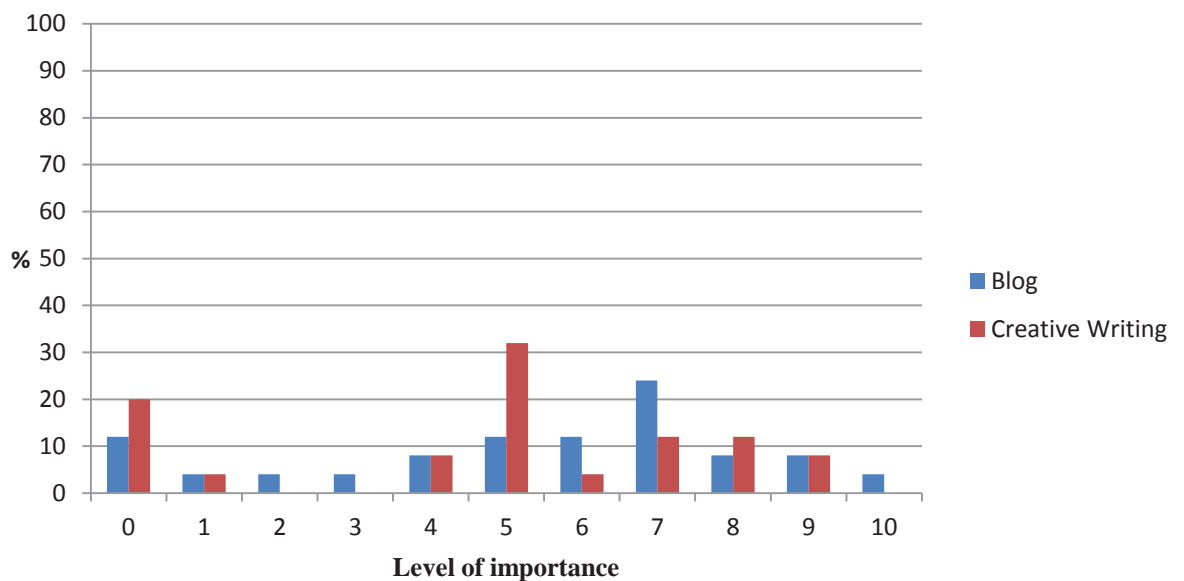


### Question 9 - 3° ESO-FEMALES

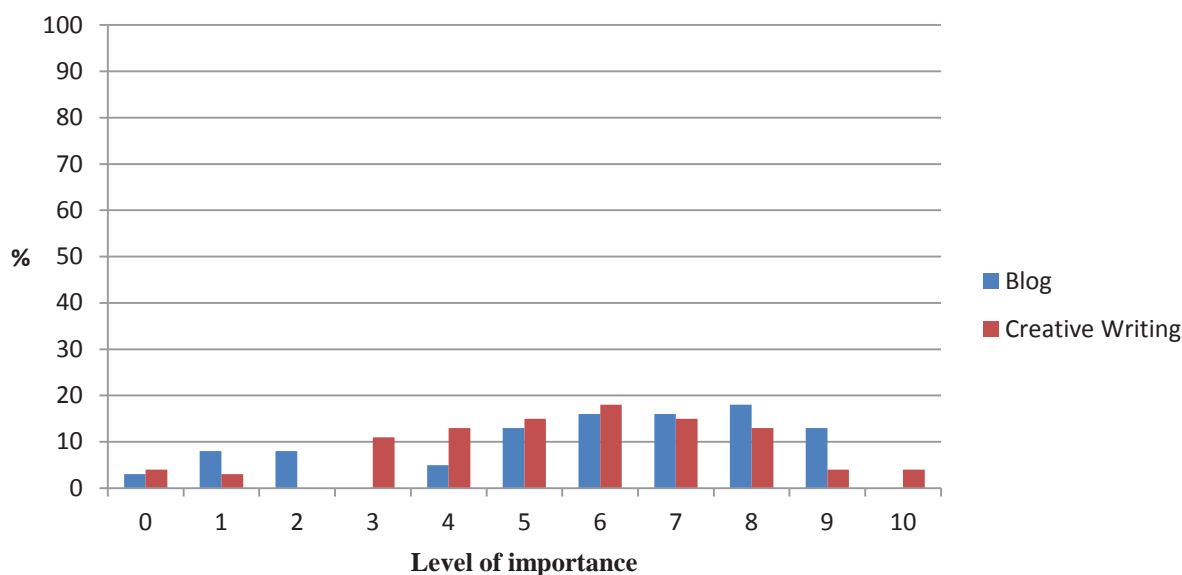


4° E.S.O.: In this course, when talking about blogs, out of 25 male students, most of them (6) chose the grade 7 (24%). It is remarkable to say that there is a tie among grade 5, grade 6 and, surprisingly, grade 0. In all these cases, 3 students chose each of these grades (12% each). Out of 29 females, 7 chose grade 8 (18%) and there is also a tie between grade 6 and 7, chosen by 6 students each (16% each). 8 males and 8 females graded their interest for blogs below 5. We can appreciate that the change that happened here among males was not expected by me as the results were very similar in all the courses. When talking about creative writing, out of 25 males, the most voted answer is grade 5 with 8 votes (32%), but again, the second most frequent answer is grade 0 (5 males chose it, 20%). In the case of females, out of 38, the most voted answer is grade 6, chosen by 7 students (18%). Here, 8 males and 12 females rated below 5 their interest for creative writing.

### Question 9 - 4° ES-MALES



## Question 9 - 4º ESO-FEMALES



**Question 10:** ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Regarding this last question I have to say that, before having the results, I thought that just a few students would have some suggestions, but when I had the surveys and I checked this part, I was positively surprised to see that most of them had really good ideas that are showed in the appendix number 2.

Some of these suggestions have much to do, as I previously mentioned, with technologies. Many of them wrote that they would like to watch more films in English with English subtitles. This would help them to not only improve their listening comprehension, but also to know how words are spelled and therefore they will be able to increase their vocabulary and use it later in their pieces of writing. Related to this, they also consider that it would help to listen to English songs with the lyrics.

A suggestion from one of the students which I considered really interesting and which is also related to creative writing is that the student proposed to create a chapter of a book per week with the participation of all the students of a class. This idea could be easily developed and conducted by the teacher. There could also be a contest among the different groups of every course for them to be more interested in it.

Many of them insist on copying dictations made by the teacher. In my opinion, this activity is widely practiced during primary school, but when it comes to secondary school, this task is forgotten. They would also like to correct those dictations in their black boards or digital ones to learn from their mistakes and to give the chance to all the students to be aware of those mistakes.

Some of them also claim that they would like to interact with English or American students of their own age via e-mail. It would be useful for both Spanish and English-speaking student as Spanish students would write in English and they would be corrected by English natives and the other way round. This activity can seem pretty difficult to start but by contacting an English-speaking high school which is learning Spanish, this task could be really useful and interesting.

They also show a lot of interest for group activities. They would like to make some more often as they would be more involved with each other and it would be funnier and therefore more motivating for them.



## 5. CONCLUSION

As I have previously stated, writing is a very important feature when learning any foreign language, in this case English. It is not given the position it should have in high schools as well as speaking. It is much less practiced than grammar or even listening. It is essential in order to be able to have proper experiences with the language in the future, for example when applying for a job in an English-speaking country or for a scholarship. To have the correct skills when talking about writing is extremely necessary, as it would make that possibility easier and would open more doors for them in their future. And not only for that, it would also help to develop creative skills in the case of creative writing and to develop technological skills in the case of blogs. These two features, creativity and technology, are really important in the world we live nowadays so it is logic that teachers should start paying attention to both of them.

Before I started this project, I thought that the results of the surveys would be very different to the ones I obtained. My idea was that students would not be really interested in the participation on the questionnaire, but they gave me really good suggestions. What I realized, and it is sad, is that as students pass from course to course, the higher the course is, the less interest they show for these activities. As I could see in the graphics in the case of the ninth question and some other questions, the grades below five given as level of interest are more in number in 4º E.S.O. than in 1º E.S.O. I do not really understand what the reason could be why this phenomenon happens, but it is really disappointing that they are losing interest as such early ages. And what is more, I do not think that this problem is just happening referred to the English subject, but to all the rest subjects. I think this clearly reflects that some changes need to be made in the roots of the current education system.

These changes in English would start by asking students how they would like to learn English. This question is the one I planned referring to the little part that writing is inside the total of the English language. As I have mentioned previously, they would like to be more in touch with activities that require the use of new technologies (multimedia rooms with computers, digital boards, etc.) and they have really good ideas that need to be listened.

In my opinion, the two activities I propose in this project would cover those requests made by the students. On the one hand, they would be in touch with new technologies as for writing blogs one needs the Internet and computers. On the other hand, one of their most frequent suggestions was to divide group works, so this would be covered too with creative writing workshops, like creating a chapter of a book each week with the participation of all the students of the class. If they see their request and necessities covered they would feel more comfortable studying English and even more confident with the language as time passed. For the correct execution of these activities, teachers should be really involved with them and they should take it as a new opportunity to keep learning new and modern teaching methods that otherwise they would not try to learn.

To sum up, these activities are willing to satisfy the new necessities and requests of the students; and not only that, but also to favor their interests regarding English writing. It would also serve as new motivations and it will reinforce the relationship between teachers and students. Teaching should not only be carried out based on theory but on daily work, effort and cooperation among all the members that are part of the educative centre, in this way the quality of teaching would be improved.

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## APPENDIX 1

### ENCUESTA SOBRE LA EXPRESIÓN ESCRITA EN INGLÉS

Contesta a las preguntas sobre tu experiencia en la expresión escrita en inglés.

Sexo: H  M  Edad: Curso:

1. ¿Formas parte de un programa bilingüe?  Sí.  No.

2. ¿Cuántos años llevas estudiando inglés?

De 1 a 5 años  De 5 a 10 años  Más de 10 años

3. ¿Consideras que la expresión escrita en inglés es importante?

Sí, me puede ayudar en mi desarrollo en el futuro (e-mails formales para pedir trabajo en el extranjero, becas, etc.) y también a nivel personal (comunicarme con amigos en el extranjero, compras por Internet, etc.).

Sí, pero creo que la pronunciación y la expresión oral son más importantes.

No.

4. ¿Cuánta importancia le darías a la expresión escrita en inglés para el desarrollo del idioma? (0=ninguna importancia; 10=mucha importancia) (Rodea el número)

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

5. ¿Crees que los ejercicios de expresión escrita en inglés que se hacen en clase son suficientes?

Sí, son suficientes.

Sí, pero no son efectivos.

No, no son suficientes.

6. ¿Te gusta escribir en castellano en tu tiempo libre?

Sí.

No, pero me gustaría si tuviera más tiempo.

No.

7. ¿Escribes en Inglés en tu tiempo libre?

- Sí, creo que me ayuda a mejorar mi nivel de inglés.
- No, pero me gustaría si tuviera más tiempo.
- No, creo que no tengo el nivel suficiente para hacerlo.
- No, no me interesa.

8. ¿Te gustaría que se hicieran otras actividades para mejorar la escritura en inglés, como blogs o talleres de escritura creativa?

- Sí.
- No.

9. ¿Cuál de las siguientes te gustaría realizar y en qué medida? (Rodea el número)

ACTIVIDAD	INTERÉS DEL 0 AL 10 (0=nada; 10=mucho)										
Escribir un blog	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Taller de escritura creativa	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

## APPENDIX 2

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Analizando canciones o viendo más películas en ~~es~~ inglés en clase.

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Viendo películas en inglés con subtítulos en inglés además de la pronunciación se practica la escritura.

Con juegos de vocabulario y con redacciones y yo creo que con 1 redacción ~~en~~ cada semana o cada dos semanas se aprende bastante.

Y hacer trabajos ~~creativos~~ creativos (biografías, de investigación, etc).

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Tal vez se podría motivar a la gente a mejorar su habilidades de escritura en ~~es~~ inglés con actividades más ajenas y cercanas a sus gustos. Por ejemplo: escuchar canciones en inglés que gusten a los estudiantes e intentar interpretar la letra. O escribir historias o anécdotas con una finalidad creativa, no teórica.

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Ver películas con subtítulos en inglés, transmitida en inglés (ledo en inglés)  
También escuchar canciones o música que a ti te guste en inglés.

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Me parece bien la idea de escribir un blog.  
Hablar mediante correos electrónicos con un nativo sería una buena idea.

Escribirse cartas con gente de otros lugares, enviando una en inglés y otra en español para saber lo que ponemos.  
Escribir blogs, artículos periodísticos y ver películas con subtítulos. ~~Escribir~~

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Escribiendo e-mails a los otros compañeros de clase (en inglés).  
Haciendo un blog donde publicar, en inglés, lo que has hecho el fin de semana, o comentar sobre una película que has visto.

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Escribiendo e-mails a chicos de nuestra edad que sean de algún país anglosajón, y así poder aprender.

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Si. Ya que tenemos en algunas clases, podríamos hacer juegos para mejorar nuestro inglés. También podríamos hablar con niños de nuestra edad de Inglaterra o Estados Unidos.



10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Podríamos realizar actividades didácticas escribiendo, como escribirnos cartas entre alumnos

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Yo creo que hacer talleres de escritura creativa nos ayudaría a mejorar el inglés.

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Yo creo que escribiendo un blog donde participásemos todos, o comunicándonos con chicos de Estados Unidos o de el Reino Unido mediante e-mails

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Por ejemplo, podríamos hacer un libro, inventar una historia y hacer un capítulo cada semana.

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Creo que sería bueno hacer historias en clase para mejorar la escritura y no cometer tantas faltas de ortografía.

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Escribir cuentos en inglés

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Haciendo Dictados,

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Mi idea sería hacer una actividad en la que escribiéramos un libro en inglés.

10. ¿Tienes alguna idea o sugerencia sobre cómo se podría mejorar la habilidad de la escritura en inglés?

Hacer actividades en grupo, aparte de aprender también nos divertimos y nos gusta más que hacerlo en individual.