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Trabajo Fin de Grado

Storywriting: a task-based proposal for cooperative writing in Primary Education

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ABSTRACT AND KEY WORDS

TFG Title (Spanish)	Escribimos cuentos: propuesta de escritura colaborativa mediante el enfoque por tareas para Educación Primaria
TFG Title	Storywriting: a task-based proposal for cooperative writing in Primary Education
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Abstract

The acquisition of effective writing strategies is essential for students of a foreign language. For students to become capable writers, the explicit teaching of writing appears to be indispensable. Therefore, this paper presents a collaborative storywriting task-based proposal for Primary Education, which focuses on the development of the necessary skills and strategies for effective writing.

Key words

Storywriting, Task-Based Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, effective writing, Primary School, writing strategies

1. INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

This paper is a collaborative storywriting proposal for Primary Education aimed at the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language, and focused on developing effective writing strategies.

Writing competence *per se* tends to be forgotten in most educational environments for what I have seen in the practicums so far. Even if there is a growing awareness about the importance for students to be able to communicate in a foreign language, thanks to the advent of the communicative approach, most of the times that communication is presumed to be oral. Little has been done so as to develop effective writing skills, taking them for granted. I believe it is equally important for our students to perform an effective written communication. It is true that effective writing involves a great amount of factors, but learning occurs to a great extent through writing in the same way as good writers write. On account of this fact, the present didactic proposal intends to bridge a gap, with a motivating proposal that hopefully will engage students in the storywriting process.

This paper has been organized into three main parts: theoretical framework, storywriting didactic proposal and conclusions. Firstly, the theoretical framework is a brief literature review on the topics concerned and also includes a general overview of the twentieth-century language teaching methodologies. Next, there is a more detailed explanation of the Communicative Language Teaching, approach that supports the Task-Based Learning methodology proposed here. After this, writing competence is examined and, more specifically, the three different approaches to writing and creative writing. Secondly, a thorough description of the collaborative storywriting didactic proposal is given. After the justification within the Aragonese Curriculum, the context assumed for this proposal is stated. The task framework is detailed in the next section, according to the structure (Willis, 1996) pre-task, task cycle, language focus and post-task. For each phase, different theoretical approaches as well as assessment tools are provided. Thirdly, the conclusions where the major findings and overall reflection on the process undergone throughout the whole task derived from the previous sections are put together. This part also incorporates areas for future in-depth study and for future professional improvement as a teacher. Eventually, the annexes include the different materials, such as the handouts and thinking charts, which would be used for the implementation of the task.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to develop this collaborative storywriting proposal, it is necessary to provide some theoretical framework concerning the four main issues that have been dealt with. Firstly, an overview regarding the most important second language teaching methods in the twentieth century can be found. Understanding the progression of such uneven methods is important for language teachers to picture the current course of events. Secondly, the main premises about the Communicative Language Teaching, approach upon which almost today's methodologies are grounded. Thirdly, information about the Task-Based Learning is given since it grants the perfect structure for this proposal. Fourthly, writing competence is studied, considering that it is the main skill involved in the proposal.

2.1. Twentieth-century language teaching trends

By the beginning of the twentieth century, language teaching developed substantially as applied linguists promoted principles and procedures for teaching methods and materials based on the standards and foundations of the linguistics and psychology of that time. Language teaching was then characterized by change and innovation and by the development of competing theories due to the increasing demand for speakers of second and foreign languages to respond to historical circumstances (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

From a historical perspective, considerable efforts were made to improve the effectiveness and quality of language teaching and learning resulting in controversial changes in teaching methods. Such great emergence of methods included the Grammar-Translation Method, with a structural approach whose main goal was to read foreign language literature. Its questioning led to an emphasis on the spoken language, the Direct Method, considered a "natural" method in which language could be learnt thanks to the target language input from a native speaker as a way of inducing language patterns. Critics argued that the Direct Method lacked methodological underpinning, drawback that prompted the birth of the Oral Approach and its later manifestation, Situational Language Teaching. While the Oral Approach focused on the selection and gradation of language structures and forms, the Situational Language Teaching presented the new contents contextualised, increasing meaningfulness. One of its most prevailing legacies is the PPP lesson format – Presentation-Practice-Production, still widely used today. Similarly, the Audiolingual Method stressed the mechanistic aspects of language teaching. Due to its strong behaviourist influence, language learning was seen as a process of habit formation in which pattern drills demanded accurate repetition and memorisation. However, this was precisely what created a crisis leading to its subsequent

decline in the 1960s (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The lack of a clear alternative, "led in the 1970s and 1980s to a period of adaptation, innovation, experimentation and some confusion" (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 73). Several alternative proposals appeared then, such as the Total Physical Response, the Silent Way and Suggestopedia. Additionally, outside the language teaching community, there were other proposals like Whole Language, Multiple Intelligences, Competency-Based Language Teaching and Cooperative Language Learning. However, the major paradigm shift came with the Communicative Language Teaching at the end of the 1970s, which was also the support of other current approaches or methods, including Content and Language Integrated Learning and Task-based Learning, to name just a few (Larsen-Freeman & Andersen, 2011).

2.2.   Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching arose as a result of two major changes in the 1970s. On the one hand, the scope of English language teaching worldwide changed dramatically due to the increasing demand of English proficiency that the contemporary society requested. Teaching policies, curriculum and approaches then were thought not to be providing a good response to such demand, however, becoming the subject of research for many years. On the other hand, the language teaching community evolved and reinvented itself thanks to the impact of the new ideas, trends and research (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).
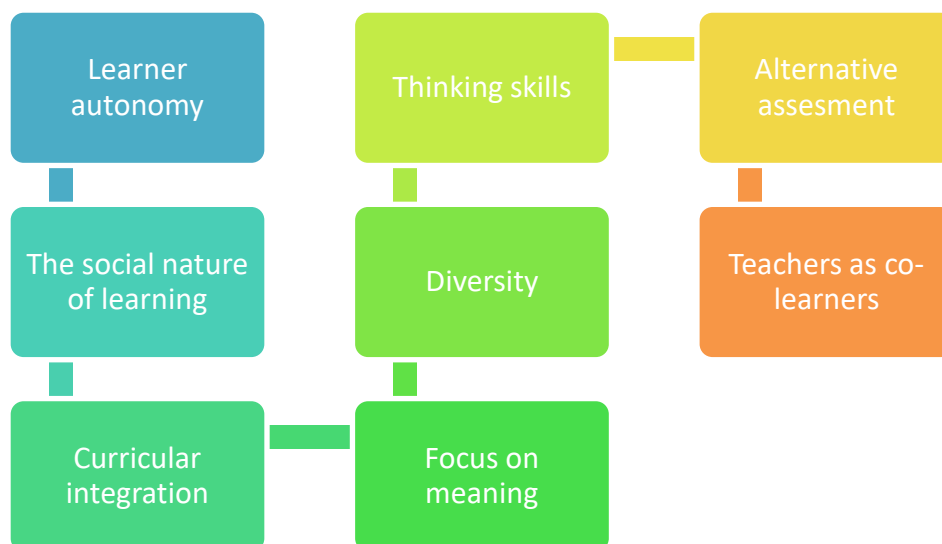
Communicative Language Teaching, also referred to as communicative approach, was therefore the result of the questioning of the assumptions and practices of the Situational Language Teaching and the Audiolingual Method. It is a more humanistic approach, with a functional theory of language in which language is seen as a means of communication. Thus, educators should "look closely at what is involved in communication. If teachers intend students to use the target language, then they must truly understand more than grammar rules and target language vocabulary" (Larsen-Freeman & Andersen, 2011, p. 128).

The Communicative Language Teaching aims are: "(a) to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication" (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 85). In that sense, "communicative competence" was a term coined by Hymes in 1972 to contrast Chomsky's linguistic theory, concerned with the tacit knowledge of language structure (Brumfit & Johnson, 1983). In short, it means that "being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence –knowing when and how to say what to whom" (Larsen-Freeman & Andersen,

2011, p. 115). Moreover, a couple of sociocultural streams converge in this social point of view of the communicative competence. For instance, Canale and Swain defined the four dimensions of "communicative competence" and another linguistic theory involved in Communicative Language Teaching was Halliday's functions of language since language is fundamentally a social activity. This theoretical base is ultimately translated into the following characteristics of the language learning process within the Communicative Language Teaching approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2014):

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.
5. Communicative competence entails knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions.

Hence, Communicative Language Teaching is essentially **learner-centered** and **experience-based**, paradigm shift that brought eight major changes in language teaching breaking with the procedures and techniques of most traditional approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2014):

Learner autonomy	Thinking skills	Alternative assesment
The social nature of learning	Diversity	Teachers as co-learners
Curricular integration	Focus on meaning	

In applying all those principles in the classroom, there is a need to use new materials and new classroom activities. As for the former, there is a wide range of materials that can be used as long as they enhance their communicative language use. Richards & Rodgers (2014) classify them into text-based materials (textbooks designed to support Communicative Language Teaching), task-based materials (communication activities including games, role plays, simulations, etc.), realia-based materials (authentic magazines, newspapers, advertisements, etc.) and technology-supported materials (they provide opportunities for accessing authentic language input as well as texts, images, audio and video allowing collaboration among learners).

As commented before, in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) it is believed that learners acquire a language through communicating in it and that communication, if meaningful, provides the learner with a better opportunity to learn. When designing and planning classroom activities, teachers should reflect on a series of **communicative principles** including, establishing real communication as the focus of language learning, completing tasks that involve negotiation of information and information-sharing, ensuring opportunities for learners to experiment and try, tolerating learner's error since they are seen as an indicator of language development, focusing on both accuracy and fluency, linking the different skills and letting students induce the grammar rules (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). These activity principles are summoned in the following diagram:

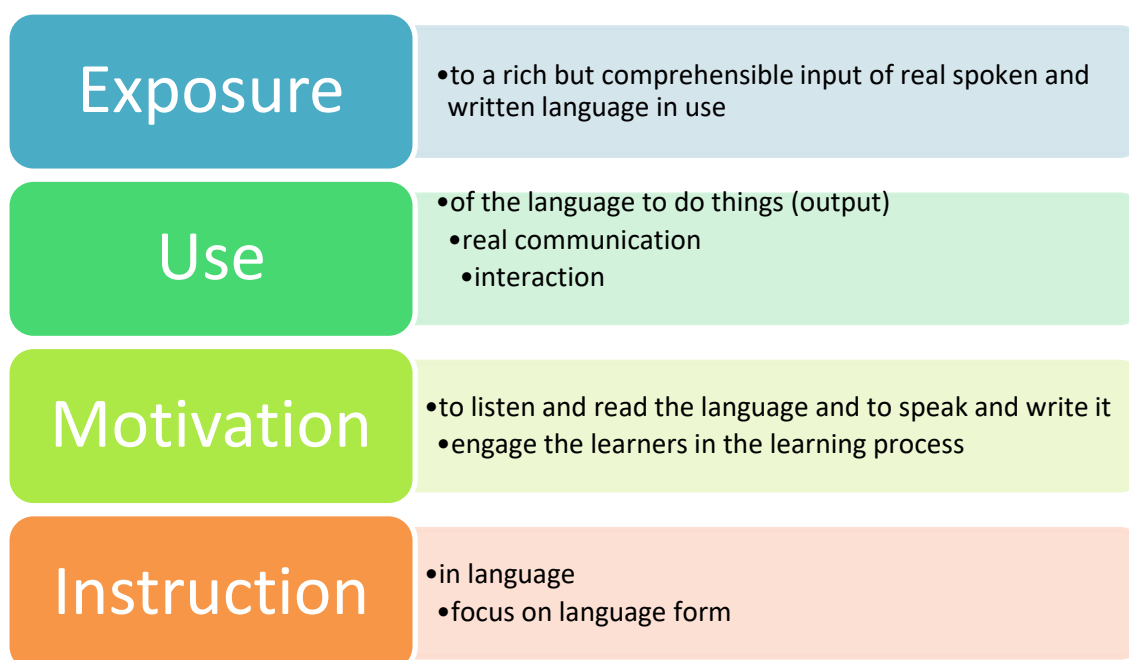Communication principle + Task principle + Meaningfulness principle = CLT
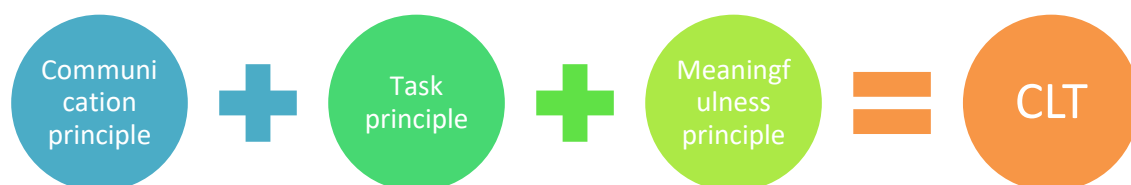
Finally, as Richards & Rodgers (2014) and Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2011) agree, recent approaches such as **Task-Based Learning** emphasize many of these processes and principles because they base the language teaching and learning around real-life functional tasks from which students have to communicate and use language for a real purpose.

2.3. Task-Based Learning

Within the communicative approach framework, the use of tasks which encourage a real purpose to communicate in the target language providing a context for language study is required. Task-based learning also departs from the traditional language teaching methodologies in the sense that interaction is seen as an opportunity to maximise the learning conditions (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Willis (1996) agrees that in order to learn a language efficiently and naturally, there are three **essential** conditions to fulfil (exposure, use and motivation) and also one additional condition that is **desirable** but not essential (instruction). These conditions are explained in the following diagram (Willis, 1996, p.11):

Exposure	•to a rich but comprehensible input of real spoken and written language in use
Use	•of the language to do things (output) •real communication •interaction
Motivation	•to listen and read the language and to speak and write it •engage the learners in the learning process
Instruction	•in language •focus on language form

Task-based learning would definitely meet all these previous conditions because the same author defines tasks as "activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" (Willis, 1996, p. 23). In addition to this, she explains that, given the fact that tasks are 'goal-oriented', "the emphasis is on understanding and conveying meanings in order to complete the tasks successfully. While learners are doing tasks, they are using language in a meaningful way" (Willis, 1996, p. 24). Finally, language is considered a tool but not an end in itself because the emphasis, as stated before, is on meaning and communication. Learners, therefore, should be willing to explore language on their own regardless of the errors they might commit. As long as students are

communicating and conveying meaning, errors are regarded in a positive way as a normal part of the learning process:

> Learners need to feel free to experiment with language on their own, and to take risks. Fluency in communication is what counts. In later stages of the task framework accuracy does matter, but it is not so important at the task stage (Willis, 1996, p. 24).

Another important feature of task-based learning is that it has the capacity of **integrating all four skills** (listening, speaking, writing and reading). While many learning methodologies and lessons are aimed at improving one skill, task-based learning fosters a combination of the four skills in order to achieve the task goal. As she acknowledges, "the task objectives ensure there is always a purpose for any reading and note-taking, just as there is always an audience for the speaking and writing. Carrying out a task demands meaningful interaction of some kind" (Willis, 1996, p. 26). Willis (1996) sets out six main types of tasks:

Listing

Ordering and sorting

Comparing

Problem solving
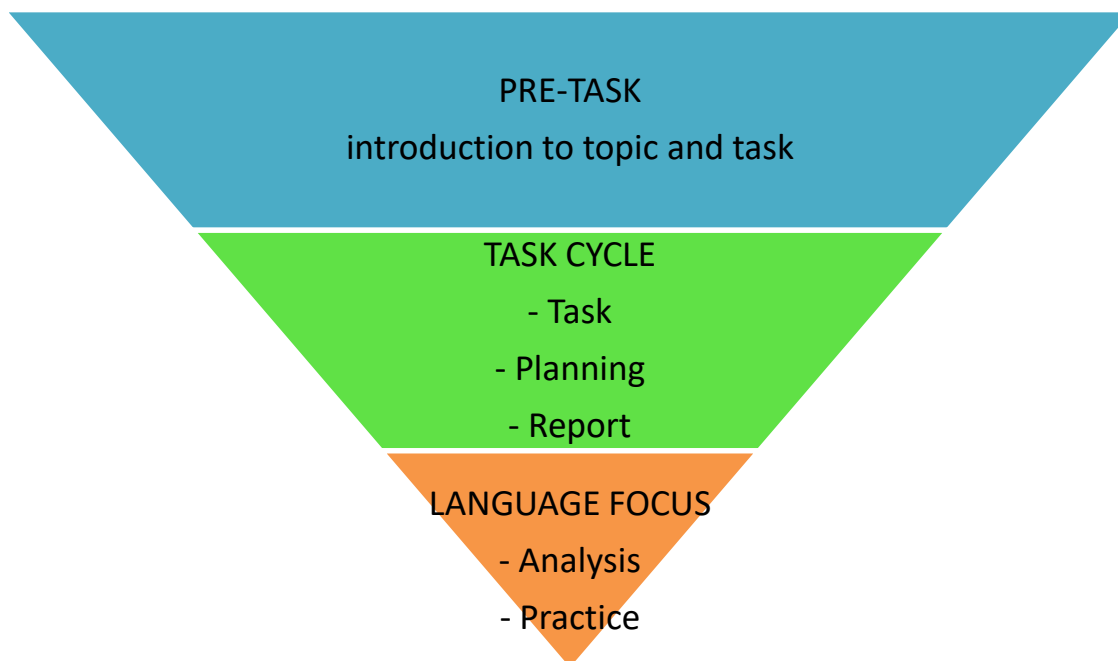
Sharing personal experiences
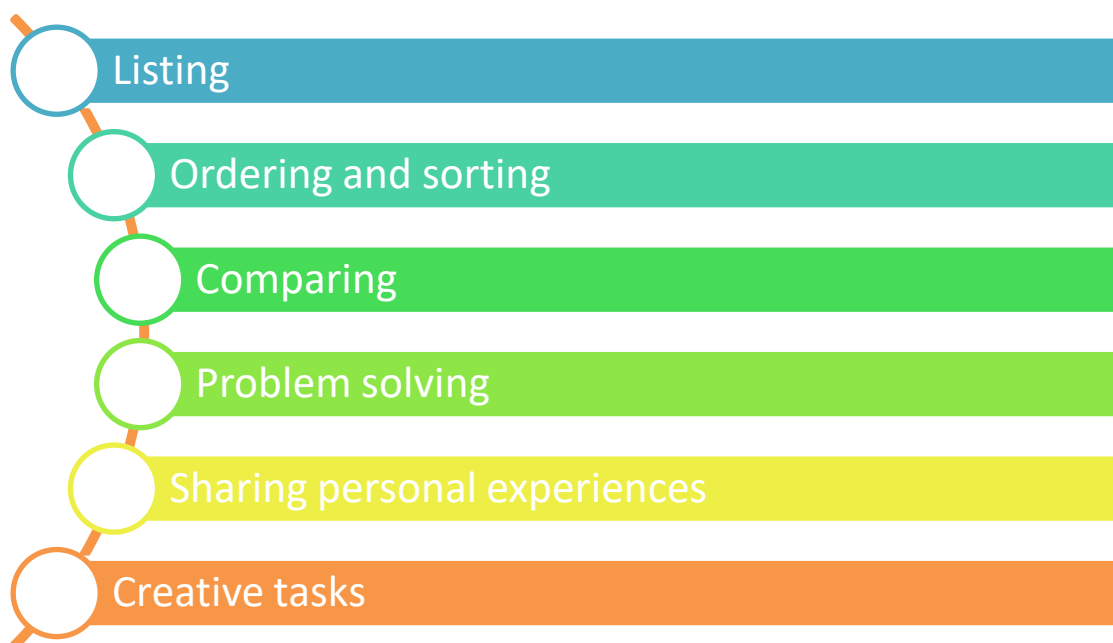
Creative tasks

My didactic storywriting proposal belongs to the last category and it could be considered as a **complex task** since it can incorporate the other ones.

Willis (1996) establishes that the outcome in creative tasks can be appreciated by a wider audience and, given their complexity, they have more stages than the usual tasks. She also confirms that creative tasks are often referred to as "projects".

Regarding the procedures of the task framework, it is important to know the phases and how they link together. As Willis (1996, p. 40) states, "task-based learning is not just about getting learners to do one task and then another task and then another". The task components,

on the contrary, "provide a naturally flowing sequence, each one preparing the ground for the next" (Willis, 1996, p. 41). In other words, they are a continuum of tasks that lead to the achievement of the goal.

The components of the task-based framework are summarised in the following diagram (Willis, 1996):

PRE-TASK
introduction to topic and task

TASK CYCLE
- Task
- Planning
- Report

LANGUAGE FOCUS
- Analysis
- Practice

Willis (1996) defines the **pre-task** phase as an introduction to the topic and identification of the topic language that students will be using along the task.

The **task cycle** consists of three steps: students do the task, then they plan how to explain their partners their findings and results (report). This phase allows students to use the language they already know and improve it later in the language focus phase. This task framework meets the three essential conditions for language learning (exposure, use and motivation) previously described (Willis, 1996).

The **language focus** phase draws students' attention to language form, which includes the fourth desirable condition for learning: explicit study of language form.

These outlines are flexible and could be focused predominantly on the use of spoken or written language. My didactic proposal focuses precisely on the latter.

2.4.   Writing competence

The teaching of writing in a foreign language has been traditionally subordinated to the learning of the other three skills and characterized by the uncontextualized production of sentences as a way of reinforcing grammatical structures. Broadly speaking, little or no effort has been devoted to the teaching of writing itself, its strategies and tactics. As Harmer (2013, p. 360) points out, "of all the skills, writing is the one that teachers and learners seem most reluctant to focus on because it requires them to make special efforts. As a result, it sometimes tends to be neglected". Whatever the reasons, fortunately, this trend seems to be changing and the writing pedagogy is opening up its way in the English as a Foreign Language classrooms.

Since its appearance, the communicative approach tends to focus more on *oral communication* rather than *written communication*, taking it for granted. This implies a misconception, meaning that if a learner masters to speak well, the ability to write appropriately and effectively will follow naturally. Douglas Brown (2001, p. 335) rightly says that "written products are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills, skills that not every speaker develops naturally".

Experts such as Tribble (1996), White & Arndt (1991) and Hedge (1988) agree that writers have to face a series of problems no matter their language proficiency. "Writing is far from being a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols: it is a thinking process in its own right. It demands conscious intellectual effort" (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 3).

All things considered, in order to be an "effective writing teacher" (Douglas Brown, 2001, p. 341) guidelines on microskills for writing, principles for designing writing techniques, writing approaches and, specifically, creative writing are to be examined.

Douglas Brown (2001) enumerates the microskills needed for writing production. Among many others, he includes certain microskills related to the characteristics of the written text (accomplish the communicative functions, acceptable grammatical systems and word order patterns, conventions of written discourse, literal and implied meanings…). Each one, without exception, is a valuable microskill to acquire to become a good writer. Nevertheless, I believe his last microskill is the most thought-provoking considering this storywriting proposal is aimed at Primary School students:

> Develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing the audience's interpretation, using prewriting devices, writing with fluency in the first drafts, using

paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing (Douglas Brown, 2001, p. 343).

These so-called writing strategies are what would contribute to students' growth as effective writers. Thus, developing these **writing strategies** is certainly one of the key elements of this storywriting proposal. Students will apply them at all instances: the audience will be determined in the planning phase; pre-writing and drafting are the core of the storywriting cycle through a process approach; and peer feedback is used so as to improve, revise and edit the story drafts.

Equally important, Douglas Brown (2001, p. 346) concreted a series of principles for designing writing techniques based on the above writing microskills:

1. •Incorporate practices of "good " writers
2. •Balance process and product
3. •Account for cultural/literary backgrounds
4. •Connect reading and writing
5. •Provide as much authentic writing as possible
6. •Frame your techniques in terms of prewriting, drafting and revising stages
7. •Strive to offer techniques that are as interactive as possible
8. •Sensitively apply methods of responding to and correcting your students' writing
9. •Clearly instruct students on the rhetorical, formal conventions of writing

The development of writing strategies coupled with the principles for designing writing techniques laid the groundwork for this storywriting proposal. In order for students to effectively write their stories using prewriting, drafting and revising stages collaboratively (interaction is guaranteed), they will first of all analyse two renowned storybooks (literary background and connection between reading and writing) to inductively obtain the insights of the storywriting conventions. Those stories will be published eventually, ensuring authenticity. More information about the balance between product and process is provided below.

2.4.1. Approaches to writing

As far as the teaching of writing is concerned, there are many views of going through it. Tribble (1996) identifies three principle ways of approaching a writing task:

Focus on form

Focus on the writer

Focus on the reader
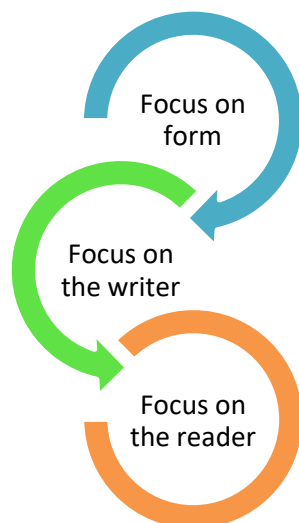
The first, **focus on form**, is a traditional text-based approach in which students have to imitate or adapt a model of writing given in the textbook trying to achieve correctness. It has also been called *product approach*. Differently, the second approach, **focus on the writer**, sees the writer as an independent producer of texts. In such a context, the emphasis lays on the writing skills and its process, which is a cycle of writing activities following what writers actually do while writing, stressing creativity and unpredictability. This approach is often called *process approach*. The third approach, **focus on the reader**, considers writing as a social activity in which, for the sake of communication, writers construct their text in such way that the reader recognizes it within that discourse community. Such approach entails writing using the conventions of that genre so that the reader recognizes it, for instance, an advertisement, a poem or a formal letter when we see them (Tribble, 1996). That is why Harmer (2013) calls it *genre approach* to writing.

Historically, teachers, when planning a writing activity, feel as if they had to choose which approach to adopt, underlying a certain dichotomy between *product* and *process* as contraries that one excludes the other. It is true, however, that we advocate a certain approach depending on our didactic objectives. For example, when the time is limited and we want our students to write something quickly as part of another activity a process approach would not be appropriate. Be that as it may, Douglas Brown (2001, p. 337) argues that "the current emphasis on process writing must of course be seen in the perspective of a balance between process and product".

The proposal I bring in this essay is a longer piece of writing (short story) and, since the final version of the stories will be published in an online platform (StoryJumper), the end product is something we have to bear in mind all the time. In these sorts of writings "the writing process is at least as important as the product" (Harmer, 2013, p. 365) because we are more likely to have a good product if we have followed a good process. Yet we cannot write a short story without meeting the conventions and design features of the narrative genre. Therefore, whatever the choice, we might be preventing our students from some of the benefits of the other approaches. In fact, there are some worries of using an exclusive writing approach in proposals like this:

> Firstly, if students only see one model within a genre, we are in danger of encouraging them to be slavish imitators of someone else's writing style, rather than creative language users in their own right. Secondly, by focusing on the *product*, they may lose sight of the processes that are necessary for effective writing (Harmer, 2013, p. 366).

What I propose is to join the three approaches since a well-planned and balanced task framework makes them perfectly compatible. The analysis of the **genre**, short stories, will help students tease out the three essential features of this kind of writing (Harmer, 2013): context, audience and examples. This analysis will be carried out in the pre-task[1] phase in form of a mind map and thinking charts. Harmer (2013, p. 365) concludes that once students have done this, "they are in a position to create their own writing within a genre". Then, the next step will be the task cycle[2] phase in which students will focus on the writing **process**, the necessary steps that any piece of writing goes through. Students will perform the various stages of drafting, writing, redrafting, reviewing, rewriting, editing, etc. As Douglas Brown (2001, p. 336) declares, "the process approach is an attempt to take advantage of the nature of the written code [...] to give students a chance to think as they write. Another way of putting that is writing is indeed a *thinking process*". And Clark (2012a) claims that students should be taught how to think since "thinking leads to learning". Finally, the writing as a **product** approach will make students not lose sight of the importance of a good final product because "process is not the end; it is the means to the end" (Douglas Brown, 2001, p. 337). This step pays special attention to language form in the language focus[3] phase. In addition to all this, I designed a fourth stage on my own, a post-task[4] phase in which students will edit their stories to be published online and retell them to the youngest students in their school.

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[1] See section 4.2.1. Pre-task
[2] See section 4.2.2. Task cycle
[3] See section 4.2.3. Language focus
[4] See section 4.2.4. Post-task

It is also noticeable that in this didactic proposal the part that carries more weight is the second one, the task cycle, and it has been planned as a **process approach**. The reasons to support such choice would rely on the writer-oriented and nurture-nature of the approach. The process-focused approach enables writers to be the only responsible for their outcome, directing attention to *how* writers write through the acquisition of the appropriate writing skills to try to arrive at their best version possible, being creative and unpredictable. Due to this, we encounter a challenging and intricate task:

> Writing is a form of problem-solving which involves such processes as generating ideas, discovering a 'voice' with which to write, planning, goal-setting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written as well as what has been written, and searching for language with which to express exact meanings (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 3).

This process, according to the above researchers, is not lineal. Writing is, therefore, a complex and dynamic recursive process looping backwards and forwards, shifting from one activity to the other, some even overlapping, as the following figure shows:
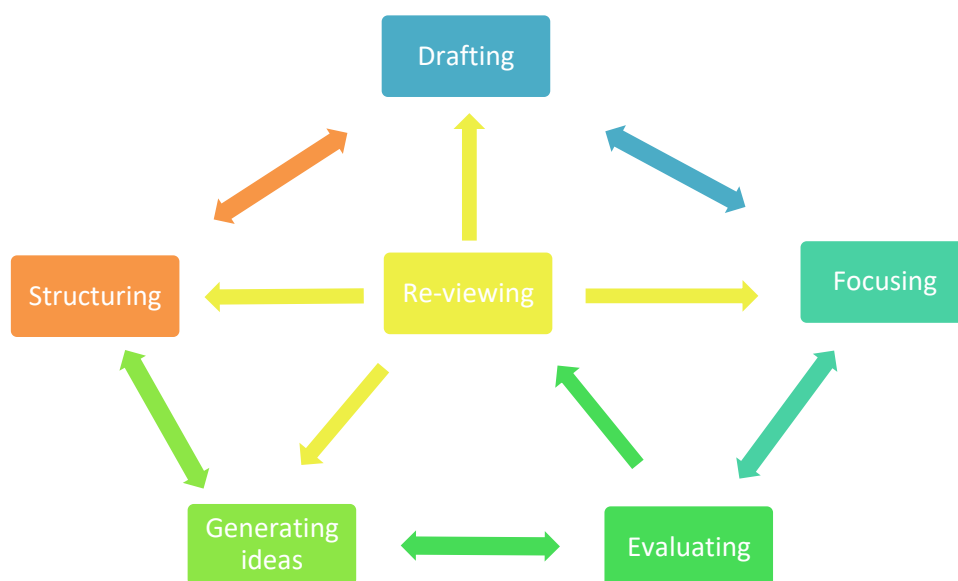

Figure 1: A model of writing (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 20)

The key point in this figure is the notion of re-viewing (also re-vising or re-writing). Instead of being an error-checking activity concerning only the teacher at the end of the process, it is now seen as an essential role to play by the writer at the end of every stage.

2.4.2. Creative writing

Brewster & Ellis (2002) divide the kinds of writing activities students tend to do into two categories: **learning to write** (where students focus on 'surface' form features including handwriting, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and grammar) and **writing to learn** (where students focus on meaning in more demanding activities like freer or creative writing). Both kinds of writing also **differ in the demands and skills involved**. The same two authors (Brewster & Ellis, 2002, p. 117) say that "the first is connected with *choosing the right language* while the second is concerned with *thinking* and *having ideas*, such as remembering, choosing, selecting, ordering, prioritizing and interpreting visual clues using a picture or graphic organizer". In the same way, the **language required** depends on the category as well: *learning to write* pays attention to word or sentence level only whereas *writing to learn* is much more challenging and ambitious, it includes "choosing the right vocabulary, grammar, sentence patterns, spelling and layout, having ideas and joining them, thinking of writing as communication and focusing on the message and the reader" (Brewster & Ellis, 2002, p. 118).

As would be expected, storywriting would be an example of a writing to learn activity because of its high cognitive demands and its focus on meaning. Similarly, in 3.3., we have seen that Willis (1996) says that **creative tasks** are also called **complex tasks** because they include a series of simpler tasks.

"Creative writing is a 'journey of self-discovery, and self-discovery promotes effective learning'" (Gaffield-Vile 1998:31) as quoted in Harmer (2013, p. 366). When students are engaged in creative tasks, they are more inclined to strive than for routine assignments (Harmer, 2013). However, the same author admits that "there is always a danger that students may find writing imaginatively difficult" Harmer (2013, p. 367). 'Having nothing to say' might demotivate and discourage students resulting in a sense of frustration and failure towards writing. Instead, teachers should "provide students with motivating, straightforward (short) tasks to persuade them that writing is not only possible but can also be great fun" Harmer (2013, p. 367).

Relevance and benefits of stories for Primary School children have been widely argued:

> Stories are particularly important in the lives of our children: stories help children to understand their world and to share it with others. Children's hunger for stories is constant. Every time they enter your classroom they enter with a need for stories (Wright, 1995, p. 3).

With this creative writing proposal based on stories, students will go one step further: they will be able to write their own stories and share them with others.

3. DIDACTIC PROPOSAL: STORYWRITING

3.1. Aragonese Curriculum

The hereby didactic proposal will be applied in a primary school in Aragón dealing with students of 6th year of Primary Education. The most relevant laws concerning the **Aragonese curriculum legislation** are the Order 16th June 2014, by which the curriculum for the Primary Education is approved and its application in schools of the Autonomous Community of Aragón is applied; the Order 21st December 2015, by which the evaluation in Primary Education is regulated in the schools of the Autonomous Community of Aragón; and the Order ECD/850/2016, of 29th July, which modifies the Order 16th June 2014 and approves the Primary Education curriculum.

This didactic proposal has the objective of developing efficient writing strategies through a collaborative storywriting task. Both writing short stories and developing appropriate writing strategies appear in the Aragonese Curriculum for the English as a Foreign Language subject in the following way. Block 4 is entirely devoted to writing and its content table[5] shows that writing strategies including planning, drafting and redrafting and reviewing are completely justified within the contents of the Aragonese curriculum. As seen before, all these strategies lead us to what various researchers in the field (Hedge, 1988; White & Arndt, 1991; and Tribble, 1996; among many others) call **process writing**. As far as writing short stories is concerned, the main **communicative functions** described in the content table are description and past narration, cornerstones of all stories. Speaking of **syntactic-discursive functions**, key idea-connections such as time sequencing, concession, contrast, purpose, and so on are covered. These functions are what articulate a logic and well-structured text. Finally, the general **lexis** of almost every topic child-related (animals, family, free time, environment, new technologies, daily routines…) is also encompassed in the program. Spelling and other writing conventions, basic in an appropriate and effective writing process, are also included.

In the curriculum, the relationship between criteria, standards and key competences can also be found[6]. Those criteria and standards will be taken into account in order to design the assessing tools in 3.4.

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[5] See Annex 1 – Curriculum contents
[6] See Annex 2 – Relationship between criteria, standards and key competences

3.2. Context

The present storywriting proposal is aimed at 11-12 year-old Primary School Students and could be implemented in any group within a Foreign Language class, being easily adapted if considered. As seen in 3.1., it includes the criteria and general orientations for the subject of English in **6th year of Primary Education** following the Aragonese Curriculum.

Taking as a reference the information appearing at the back of most of the English language course books for 6th grade, the students' CEFR level of English would be roughly **A2**.

Each Foreign Language class is expected to last one hour and for 6th grade of Primary School Education, the Aragonese curriculum establishes a total amount of three hours per week. Considering that the whole didactic proposal takes **13 sessions**, the task will cover approximately a month of class. It could be implemented at any course stage.

Cooperative learning is seen as an essential component of the classroom daily life, designed for students to achieve a common goal maximising their own and each other's' learning (Putnam, 1993). The whole didactic proposal has been planned according to the enormous benefits obtained from **collaborative writing**:
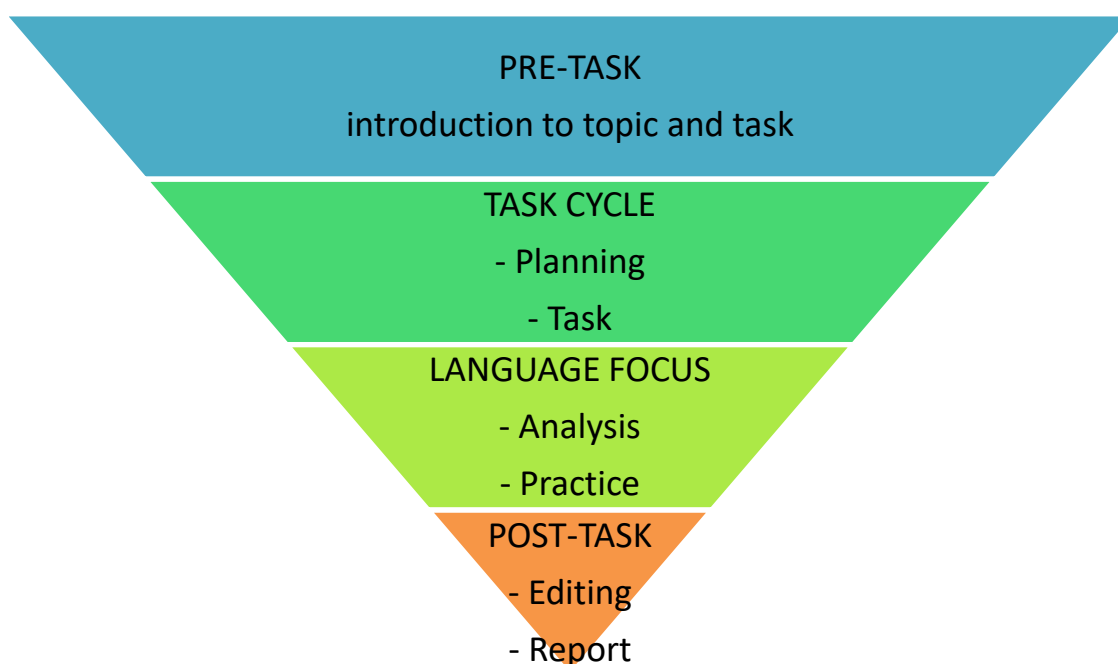
> Writing in groups, whether as part of a long process or as part of a shorter sequence, can be greatly motivating for students, including as it does not only writing, but also research, discussion, peer evaluation and group pride in a group accomplishment (Harmer, 2013, p. 367).

Seating arrangements are expected to be made resulting in **four base teams** of about five students. Pujolàs (2004) defines base teams as heterogeneous, permanent and stable groups whose composition should be maintained during the entire educational cycle. Therefore, the four base teams stablished at the beginning will remain without any variation.

Laptops, tablets or computers will be required for this didactic proposal on the grounds that they allow writing, re-writing and modifying the text as many times as necessary facilitating and accelerating the process. Indirectly, students will be developing what Harmer (2013) calls '**digital literacy**', vitally important in today's society. Yet screens are not absolutely essential since this whole process could be undertaken with pen and paper (more time would be needed, of course). The fact that the fundamental act of writing being done digitally does not necessarily mean that students are not going to use traditional handwriting. As a matter of fact, all the preparatory materials will be handed in in paper. The teacher will have the last word on what support to use on the basis of the school facilities.

3.3. Task framework

The main objective is that, at the end of this task, students will be able to use the writing strategies to become capable, efficient writers. The way to do it is through writing a short story collaboratively. This objective has shaped the task framework since this didactic proposal, as commented in 2.3, follows the task framework developed in Willis (1996) consisting of pre-task, task cycle and language focus. However, taking into account such procedure, I came up with my own task framework to adapt it to my concrete learning objective.

PRE-TASK
introduction to topic and task

TASK CYCLE
- Planning
- Task

LANGUAGE FOCUS
- Analysis
- Practice

POST-TASK
- Editing
- Report

Contrary to common belief, children in this context are capable of achieving meaningful composition, even if their language level is quite low, depending on the way the language task is structured and the nature of support they receive from the teacher (Reilly & Reilly, 2005, p.7).

As Reilly & Reilly point out, the task structure is essential to the success of the task. With Willis' (1996) diagram in mind, there has been a significant change in the **task cycle**. Instead of consisting of *task*, *planning* and *report* (Willis 1996), I decided that it would be better for students if, before the actual task (storywriting), I helped them **plan** their stories with a couple of activities given the considerable difficulty of the task. The **report** (retelling) was then postponed until the post-task phase because, provided that the stories are expected to be published online, **language focus** is required prior to it. Consequently, **online editing** grants that the students' final product is a real storybook.

Taking into account all the previous theoretical assumptions covered before regarding **communicative approach**, **task-based learning** and **writing** (especially, the strategies for writing, the principles for designing writing techniques and the writing approaches), the outline of this task-based storywriting proposal is the following:

	ACTIVITY		NUMBER OF SESSIONS
PRE-TASK	Story mind mapping		2
	Story analysis		
TASK CYCLE	**Planning** our story	Using given sets of questions	1
		Storyboard	1
	Task: storywriting	Fastwriting	1
		Character building	1
		Beginning	1
		Middle	1
		Ending	1
		Content check	1
LANGUAGE FOCUS	**Analysis**	Assessing the draft	1
	Practice	Re-viewing and re-writing	1
POST-TASK	Online editing		1
	Report: story retelling		1

Needless to say that, in all cases, the timings given are approximate and the outline can be adapted in many ways to suit learners in different circumstances. Writing is a process that needs time. Thus, timetable constraints are not advisable and flexibility and adaptability should drive the process (White & Arndt, 1991).

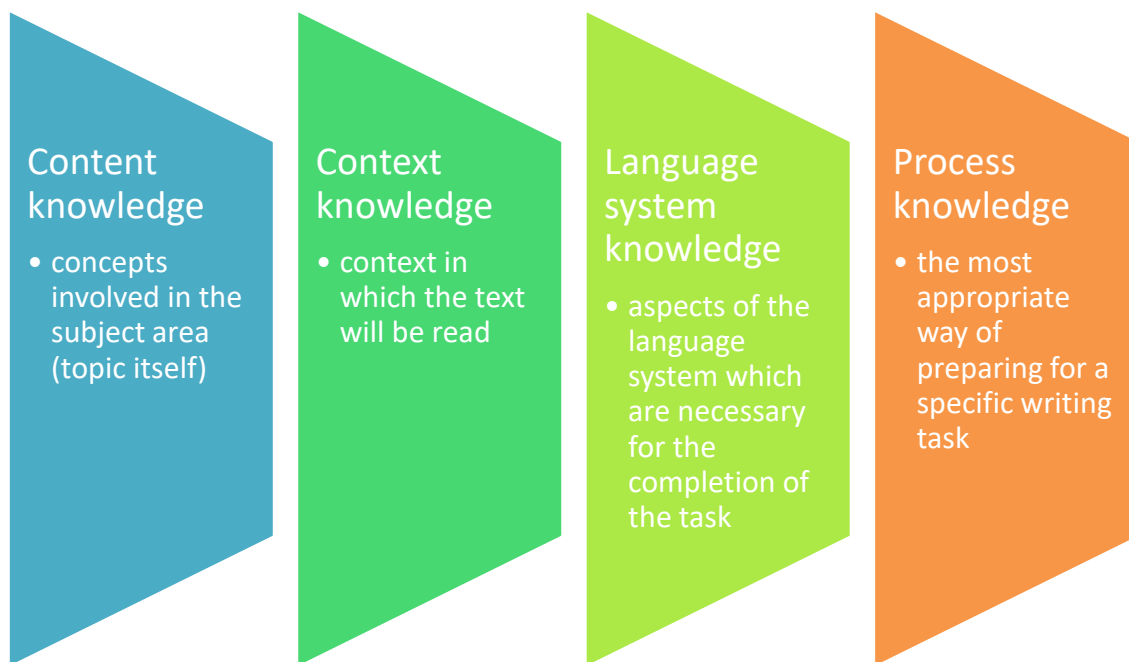Further information will be provided in subsequent sections.

3.3.1. Pre-task

As tedious as it might seem, the pre-task process lays the foundation of all the subsequent stages. The main objective of this phase is to **introduce the topic and the task itself** (Willis, 1996).

Children have been dealing with stories maybe even before they learned how to read. They are used to reading them both at home and at school. Therefore, it would be wise to assume that they have a great deal of knowledge about such topic. Their prior-knowledge would be the start point of what is to come. Thus, on the one hand, the **two activities** designed in this pre-task phase are aimed at taking advantage of what they already know about stories (structure, types, characters, and so on) to engage and motivate students, and on the other hand, to increase understanding of deeper features of stories to prepare them for the later parts. The following theoretical premises were taken as a framework to design the two pre-task activities:

As Hedge (1988) points out, it is important to understand two aspects of our writing before starting to write. The first has to do with the *function* (purpose) of the writing. Students will have a sense of what a story looks like. It is highly likely that they are familiar with some terms such as plot, character, action, setting and structure. The specific characteristics of the narrative genre in which stories are framed will undoubtedly predetermine their texts. The second one is related to the *audience*, "who we are writing for" (Hedge, 1988, p.22). In that sense, as she argues, it is important to demonstrate students that the teacher is not the final audience. Their story has the possibility of being published online, hence their tasks turn out to be meaningful, authentic and especially communicative. They are going to convey ideas, feelings and information to children worldwide, which should trigger a sense of responsibility and self-commitment to the task. However, in order for this communication to be successful, they should apply what White & Arndt (1991) call "laws of communication". Thus, for the message to be understood, certain unspoken rules need to be applied: writers have to give the exact amount of information necessary, neither more nor less, also use clear, unambiguous language and use an adequate structure according to the type of text.

In addition to Hedge's contributions above, Tribble (1996) illustrates the range of background knowledge needed before undertaking a writing task:

Content knowledge	Context knowledge	Language system knowledge	Process knowledge
• concepts involved in the subject area (topic itself)	• context in which the text will be read	• aspects of the language system which are necessary for the completion of the task	• the most appropriate way of preparing for a specific writing task

As commented before, all these theoretical premises have been summoned in two pre-task activities.

From the countless ideas drawn in the *Generating ideas* section in White & Arndt (1991), I decided to use the warming-up brainstorming by students strategy because of its effectiveness and contribution to cooperative learning. In my opinion, one of the best ways to carry out this activity is with a **mind map**. Mind mapping, according to Hedge (1988), is a well-known technique for organizing note-taking, jotting down ideas and making associations in a spontaneous practice.

Such discussion would be helpful to learners in many ways, mainly because learners can begin to pinpoint the final objective of our task, their strengths and weaknesses on the topic and also demonstrates the benefits of sharing ideas with other students.

The mind map is entitled "What do we know about stories?"[7] and its branches cover issues including definition, characteristics, types, format, authors, audience, purpose and storywriting process. At the end of this activity, students will be able to recognize the main characteristics of stories and also to debate about what makes a good story by providing some examples from their own personal experience. It is also useful to test and identify their opinions and beliefs about stories.

Following this activity, a more specific **story analysis** which includes data collection is required in order to make them aware of the insights of storywriting. Students will analyse the

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[7] See Annex 3 – Mind map

most remarkable defining features regarding written stories, which are characters and structure (beginning, middle and ending) through a couple of chosen stories they already know.

The sample stories are *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson and *The Tunnel* by Anthony Browne, both best-sellers in children literature, which is why I assume students might be reasonably familiar with them. It goes without saying that other suggestions and recommendations from students would be welcome. However, I have chosen these two stories because they are paradigmatic as far as characters and structure are concerned. *The Gruffalo* is an excellent example of both characters and place description. The combination of cheerful rhymes and its intuitive illustration makes it easy to follow despite the difficulty of the adjectives. *The Tunnel* contributes to make children aware of the changes of place and time throughout the beginning, middle and ending. Should students not know the stories, we will watch and listen to the audio books online ([The Gruffalo](#) and [The Tunnel](#) both have audiobooks available on YouTube) and the paperback books will be available in class as a reference.

The idea is to carry out an analysis through story books using Lane Clark's *thinking charts*. Lane Clark is a Canadian expert in pedagogy and a Secondary and Primary School teacher. Her worldwide notoriety lies on the fact that she has depicted an innovative, engaging and crosscurricular approach of teaching founded on the importance of teaching thinking skills. As she says in one of her conferences (Clark, 2012a), students should be taught how to think since "thinking leads to learning". In fact, Clark (2012b) goes beyond that and she adds that thinking and learning are nothing but joint enterprises that go hand in hand. For the teaching to be successful, she continues, teachers should empower students to be self-directed, autonomous learners. Yet, she admits, students are not the only ones struggling while the thinking process takes place, teachers should take an inner observation of their teaching practice to ensure depth and breadth indicators of thinking (Clark, 2013).

Among her various repertoires of tools granted in her webpage, her *thinking charts* suit perfectly the task undertaken in this didactic proposal for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are strategically addressed to guide learners in the processing, investigation and sequencing of new information. Secondly, they elicit different types of thinking as well as emotional involvement together with feedback. Finally, her *thinking charts* have an easy layout which ensures understanding, connections and reflection.

Lane Clark's *thinking charts* are an organising tool made up of a schema in which the identifying elements are placed to the left and the divisions and subdivisions to the right. Students are supposed to complete the chart reflecting on a great variety of issues, including

cause-effect relations, descriptions, results, reasons, etc. The more subdivisions contained, the more depth and breadth of focus of the chart. The complexity of the frames should match the cognitive capacity of the learners, though. Depending on their language proficiency, students will complete the chart with just words, phrases, short sentences or more complex ones.

Her *thinking charts* have been an inspiration helping me design my own materials for this concrete task. I designed four different thinking charts[8] regarding storywriting: character building, beginning, middle and ending (that is the reason why in 3.2. organising the students in four base teams was recommended).

Building a strong character is essential since they drive the whole story. In the **character building** thinking chart, aspects such as the type of character (animal, child, adult or superhero) and their role (hero, villain…) as well as their appearance an personality traits were taken into consideration. Since students are going to write a short story, no more than three characters are required although they could add more if necessary.

Using Brown & Hood (1989) naming, the typical narrative story structure consists of *orientation* or introduction, *complication* or middle part and *resolution* or conclusion. Once students have identified the purpose of the story, target audience, title, narrator and settings (time, place and atmosphere), they will realize that the **beginning** of the story prepares the reader for an action which triggers a problem, which naturally gets more and more complicated until the big event in the **middle** part arrives. Eventually, that problem finds resolution with a (happy?) **ending**.

The four groups of students (characters, beginning, middle and ending) will have to reflect on those aspects. Having completed the thinking charts, all the base teams and the teacher will embark in a discussion in which each one will take turns to explain their findings to the others. Wright (1997) reckons that this reflection should be accompanied with action instead of just a mere theoretical analysis. That is why, by means of this sort of analysis, students will have set the sufficient scaffolding for the construction of the structure of their stories. What is more, those thinking charts will be subsequently reused in later sessions and they will know exactly what they are expected to produce.

The thinking charts will be given to students in A3 format so that it is easier for them to note down and complete, and also will be displayed on the walls of the class as posters for future reference.

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[8] See Annex 4 – Thinking charts (analysis)

3.3.2. Task-cycle

Planning our story

In this phase, **collaborative writing** will be at the heart of the task. Students will be working in the same base teams as in the previous phase, as Pujolàs (2004) recommends. It also has the objective of developing the writing microskills (Douglas Brown, 2001) described in 3.4.1. It must be remembered that, although the four base teams are going throughout the same storywriting process, each group will adopt their own particular approach to process writing depending on their particular difficulties, needs and demands.

Having stablished the basic elements involved in a story (characters, beginning, middle and ending) and their components, the first step to write our own one is to **generate ideas and organise them**. To that effect, a series of questions will be used as prompts to stimulate thinking. This is a guiding procedure which appears in White & Arndt (1991).

In such fruitful technique, each base team of students is given **a set of questions** covering a large range of functions in a story. From the general plot to some important details, students are asked to answer ten essential questions that all writers should ask themselves[9]. The questions have the objective of prompting and triggering students' first ideas around their story.

The next activity is what the same two authors (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 34) call "making structured notes". In this procedure, students use a **storyboard**[10] template to supply information above each heading. In this case, the headings are related to the structure of the narrative genre (beginning, middle ending) and its action details of their story. The objective is to shape that raw material from their previous activity (isolated general ideas) into the first sketch of their future story by starting to make a coherent connexion between those ideas. The objective, therefore, is that they separate, classify and order those isolated ideas from the previous set of questions, into a coherent narrative thread. While doing this storyboard activity, students can also be encouraged to think about the illustrations that might go with each part of their story.

Now that students have generated and organised their ideas, it is time to start actually writing.

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[9] See Annex 5 – Given set of questions
[10] See Annex 6 – Storyboard

Task: storywriting

Despite moving on, students might feel the necessity of going back to the generating ideas part. It is important to make them realise that it would be a natural and understandable step since writing, as commented before, is a recursive cyclical process.

In White & Arndt (1991), an activity called **fastwriting**[11] is described at this stage. This activity is designed to help students move from pre-writing (generating ideas) to actually writing. It is aimed at getting students into subject and it focuses on producing a whole stretch of text, putting language aside. Of course, being concerned about spelling, punctuation or grammar is important in writing, but it sometimes can inhibit the free flow of their ideas. Bearing in mind the ideas drawn in the *planning our story* activities phase (given set of questions and storyboard), students should compose the first draft of their story putting those ideas (content) before language. Whether it means using their L1 at some points or even leaving blank spaces, students should go on with the draft. They will be allowed to use a dictionary afterwards. Under these conditions, students' first draft will be obtained.

Using Hedge's words, "the drafting process focuses primarily on *what* the writer wants to say, while redrafting progressively focuses on *how* to say it most effectively" (Hedge, 1988, p.23). She suggests that good writers first concentrate on content (the plot of the story in this case) and leave other details, such as language, until later. Despite all this, writers might interrupt their writing in order to read over, revise, eliminate or bring new ideas.

At this phase, and fundamental to the process approach of writing used in this storywriting proposal, concepts of "revising", "redrafting" and "rewriting" play a crucial role. As suggested in previous sections, those actions might overlap with writing itself. To help students complete their stories, add missing information and incorporate it, the thinking charts used before will now be reused. However, the thinking charts we are going to use at this stage have a slight difference from the ones used in the pre-task phase. They contain an "evaluation" grid including items such as strengths, weaknesses and ideas. These **thinking charts with Evaluation**[12] comprise a high component of peer evaluation getting others involved in the writing process, as Douglas Brown (2001) strategies for writing suggested. He claimed that students become better writers as well as better readers because not only do they give feedback to their partners but also they get feedback from them. Furthermore, Harmer (2013, p. 367) adds that "reviewing and evaluation are greatly enhanced by having more than one person working on a text".

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[11] See Annex 7 – Fastwriting
[12] See Annex 8 – Thinking charts with Evaluation

Each base team of students is given the first thinking chart (character building). When students have completed it with the information of their story, they exchange it with the group on their right, whose task is to read that part of text to provide some feedback by completing the evaluation columns (strengths, weakness and ideas). The feedback and suggestions will be undoubtedly offered in a constructive way to make the text clearer and more convincing. Students should then use the feedback given by their classmates to reconsider and rewrite their original draft.

It is true that giving feedback might be difficult for students principally if it is their first time. So, the teacher can be a feedback provider at any stage. If that was the case, "teachers should respond positively and encouragingly, especially to the content of what the students have written" (Harmer, 2013, p. 369). Additionally, according to White & Arndt (1991), the writing process approach is set out in a number of assumptions regarding the teacher-student relationship. More specifically, the teacher-student relationship becomes complementary with a certain degree of self-disclosure. To put it another way, on the one hand, the teacher should respond, as a reader, to what students have written. On the other hand, students provide with feelings, experiences, ideas, etc. that are to be shared with the reader. The teacher's role is not merely to judge grammar, neither should students treat their piece of writing as a bare display of their language proficiency.

Likewise, the same procedure is repeated with the other three thinking charts with Evaluation (beginning, middle and ending). As they are writing, they might make corrections, additions, scratch out previous ideas now seen as irrelevant or unnecessary. This is a natural part of the recursive writing as a process approach. At the end, the result will yield the second draft of their story.

As shown above, the emphasis of this writing as a process lies on the fundamental aspects of the content of the writing as well as the skills necessary to do it efficiently. Up to this stage, students will have worked **separately** on the four main features of a narrative text: characters, beginning, middle and ending. Therefore, it is by all means imperative to check the overall coherence of the writing and the **natural and fluent integration of those parts**. This stage will be done with a content peer assessment checklist and the outcome will be the third draft.

It is widely accepted that the assessing part is only to be done by the teacher. As White & Arndt (1991) claim, however, it is important to cultivate a sense of responsibility, self-criticism and self-awareness in our students:
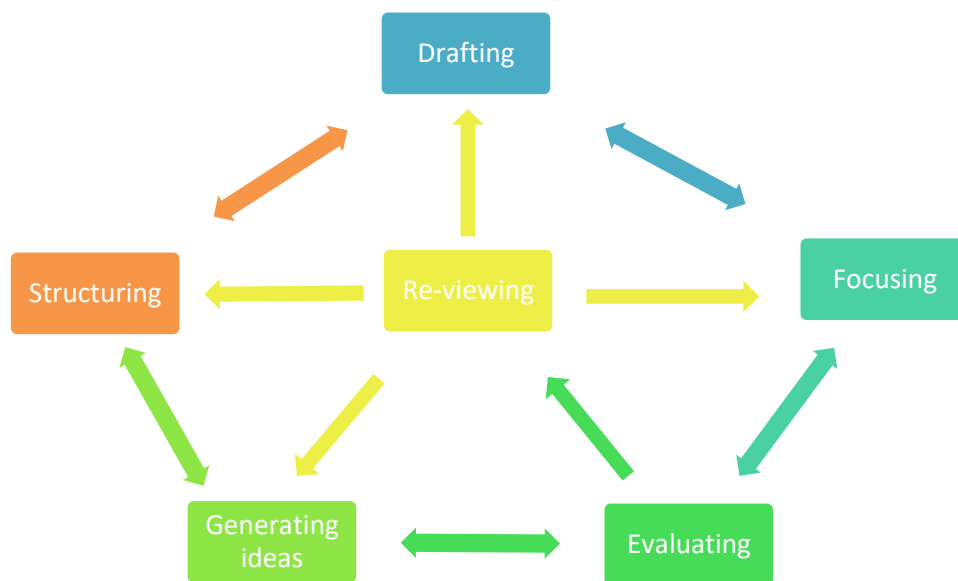
Students are often under the impression that 'checking one's work' is the equivalent of looking for mistakes –mistakes of spelling, punctuation, grammatical structure, word order and so on. Whilst it is, of course, important (eventually) to see that the text is as error-free as possible, a more fundamental concern which ought to have priority at the drafting stage is the underlying coherence of the writing (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 117).

White & Arndt (1991) are convinced that for students to become gradually capable of self-assessment, they should first evaluate other's writing. That is why I designed a checklist which includes the aspects mentioned above (content and coherence checking as well as peer-assessment). The following **content** peer-assessment checklist has been adapted from *Process Writing* by White & Arndt, 1991, p. 123. The checklist combines storywriting conventions, clarity of purpose and ideas, the logical sequencing of those ideas and the relevance and amount of information given in each part. The procedure will be the same as in the previous stages: students will exchange their short stories with the group on their right, whose task is to read the whole text to provide some valuable feedback by completing the checklist:

		😄	😐	😢	Comments
Form	1. Have the writers followed the expected conventions of this type of writing?				
Purpose and ideas	2. Is the purpose of the story clear?				
	3. Are the main ideas clear?				
Structure of text	4. Do relations between ideas need to be made clearer?				
	5. Do ideas need to be resequenced?				
	6. Is the story segmented into suitable paragraphs?				
	7. Is the beginning of the story suitable?				
Response as reader	8. Is the middle of the story suitable?				
	9. Is the ending of the story suitable?				
	10. Any points unnecessary? Which?				
	11. Any points need to be clarified? Which?				
	12. Any points need to be expanded? Which?				

The aim of this assessment is to check for overall content (meaning, ideas coherence and purpose). The questions foster judging the text as a reader. At the end, students will obtain their third draft.

Another key point is realizing that, from the model of process writing proposed in the Figure 1 by White & Arndt (1991, p. 20), **each group will follow their particular process approach to writing**:

```
                        ┌──────────┐
                        │ Drafting │
                        └──────────┘

┌─────────────┐       ┌────────────┐       ┌──────────┐
│ Structuring │ ◄──── │ Re-viewing │ ────► │ Focusing │
└─────────────┘       └────────────┘       └──────────┘

      ┌────────────┐              ┌────────────┐
      │ Generating │ ◄──────────► │ Evaluating │
      │   ideas    │              └────────────┘
      └────────────┘
```

Far from being a standard model, the teacher will have to realize that not all groups will have the same necessities nor will face the same difficulties, so each group will implicitly use their own model in consonance with their needs as they work on their drafts.

3.3.3. Language focus

Once we have put content right, there is a shift of perspective to language and form. In this phase, Willis (1996) presents two main procedures regarding language: **analysis** (assessing the draft) and **practice** (re-viewing and re-writing). At the end of the process, students will accomplish their final product. The third draft obtained in the previous phase will be eventually **analysed** as far as language is concerned and will require **practice** immediately to re-write some of the parts of the text. At the end, students will have accomplished the final version of their stories.

In order to analyse language, Hedge (1988) says that it is meaningful to show a positive approach, with comments if possible. In other words, if students receive a positive feedback, they will feel that they are improving in their writing skills. Whereas if they are only provided negative feedback they will feel discouraged and turn back to simple writing. That is why she claims that raising students' linguistic awareness of a good writing is also important in their development of writing skills.

The following linguistic peer-assessment checklist has been adapted from *Writing* by Tricia Hedge, 1988, p. 148:

Criteria	Possible marks	Marks awarded	Comments
Organisation of ideas and content (good organisation, clarity, keeping to the title…)	10		
Grammatical skills (verb tenses, agreement, complex structures…)	15		
Use of vocabulary (richness, variety…)	15		
Sentence structure (length, word order, well-structured sentences…)	15		
Spelling (capital letters, misspelled words…)	15		
Punctuation	15		

(commas, question marks or exclamation points, semicolons, colons, slashes, hyphens…)	
Fluency (naturality…)	15

The two previous tools have been designed as the last steps in the process of completing the third draft that will now become the final product, the stories. In both cases, although the checklist have been designed as way of increasing students' self-sufficiency, it would be also advisable that the teacher give them feedback at any point necessary, especially when it comes to language.

Another possibility could be that teacher and students design together the assessing tools, stablishing their own criteria and descriptors on the basis of their assumptions of how a good piece of writing should look like.

Along the whole task cycle, the students' stories have been reviewed, revised, redrafted, reconsidered, rethought, reread, many times. At this point, however, we have to admit that "there is a sense in which a writing task never ends; instead, we simply have to decide that we have reached the point where we must abandon our text to its fate" (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 136).

3.3.4. Post-task

The post-task phase is not strictly necessary within the whole task framework (Willis, 1996). Despite this, **two extension activities** are proposed to conclude the task in a satisfactory and rewarding way for students: online editing and retelling their stories to the youngest learners in the school.

3.3.4.1.   *Online editing*

Harmer (2013, p. 366) mentions that "in order to bolster the 'product pride' that students may feel when they have written creatively, they need an audience for what they write". As a matter of fact, quoted in Harmer (2013, p. 366), there is some wealth of research conducted by experts including Kayaoglu (2009) and Vicky Saumell (2013) that yielded excellent and notorious results regarding students' motivation and enthusiasm for writing when they posted their digital stories on a website.

Certainly, the outcome is that each base team of students will write a short story using the online resource StoryJumper. It is a free online editor which allows composing and illustrating stories specially addressed to children, schools and learning environments. The platform is flexible and user-friendly. It has various tools for story creation (voice, sounds, templates, photos, backgrounds, drawing scanning, among many others) and the completed stories can be also shared online.

This publication indeed increases relevancy and motivation in students, creating a sense of writing with a real purpose for a real audience at the other side of the screen. Students should edit their stories to turn them into a product worthy of admiration and publication.
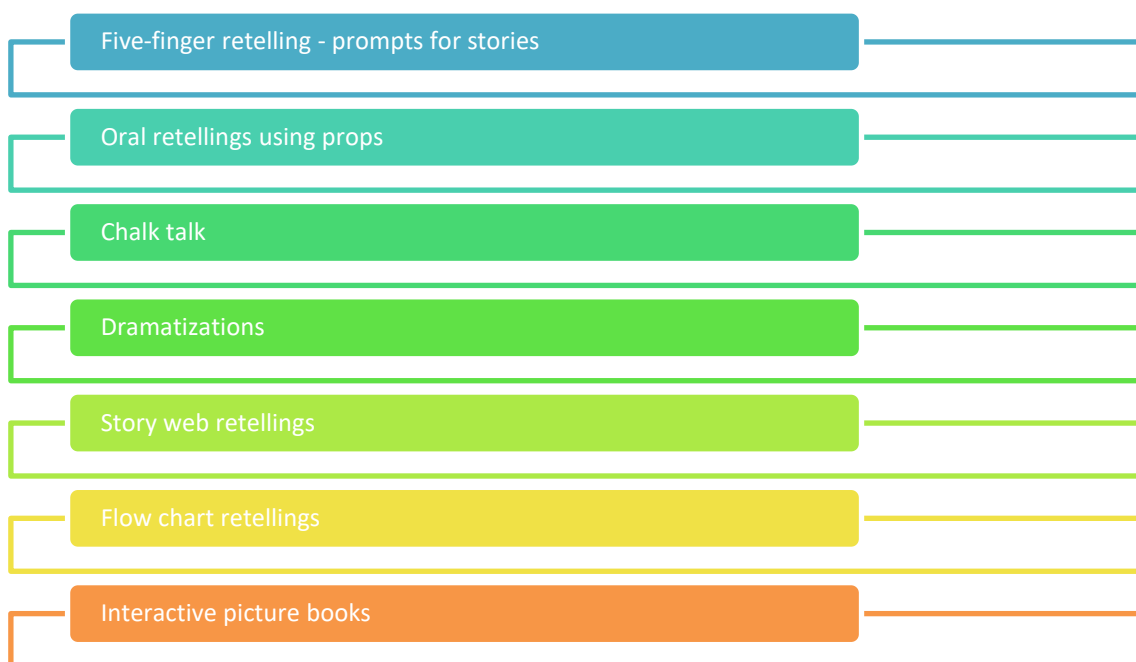
Moreover, the same platform gives the opportunity of printing students' storybooks in various ways (hardcover book and paperback book) and also ebook and audio book formats are offered. Although printing requires payment, it would be a form of taking part in the school library.

3.3.4.2.   *Retelling*

Apart from being online published, the fact that students retell their stories to the youngest learners in their school is much more than making their texts public. Retelling proves to actively **contribute to literacy development**, especially in oral skills, story comprehension and understanding of story structure (Gibson, Gold & Sgouros, 2003).

It is true that students will retell the same stories they have written themselves, however, it is not easy since **retelling goes beyond recalling** the events of their stories. "Story retellings require the reader or listener to integrate and reconstruct the parts of a story. They reveal not only what readers or listeners remember, but also what they understand. Retellings build story comprehension" (Gibson, Gold & Sgouros, 2003, p. 1). The same authors explain that retellings focus on a "deeper comprehension of the text" (Gibson, Gold & Sgouros, 2003, p. 2).

Gibson, Gold & Sgouros (2003) propose a range of retelling activities:

- Five-finger retelling - prompts for stories
- Oral retellings using props
- Chalk talk
- Dramatizations
- Story web retellings
- Flow chart retellings
- Interactive picture books

From the above list, using **interactive picture books** would be suitable for this didactic proposal because students could use their own digital stories in StoryJumper. Moreover, it will foster younger students' curiosity for reading and for the storywriting task undertaken by the students of 6th year. In the long run, this didactic proposal set out within a task-based framework could smoothly evolve into a **project** involving the whole school and its educational community or even a project among the schools in the same city or town. In short, the difference between *task* and *project* relies on the fact that projects focus on real life problems or concerns that need to be solved (Solomon, 2003).

In addition to all these tasks, those students' stories would be the start point to a series of follow-up activities, for example, domino stories, pass the story (both oral and written), guess the mime story, crazy start and crazy finish, just to mention some of the ideas that Wright (1997) suggests.

3.4. Task assessment

Three different assessment tools have been designed to fulfil all the requirements of such complex writing process. The **peer and self-evaluation grids** are intended to evaluate both the group and individual work along the whole task. The **final rubric** is the instrument that the teacher will use to mark each story considering the above. As could not be otherwise, the **teaching performance** will also be subject of evaluation to improve our teaching practice as well as the task, should it be implemented in the future.

Peer-assessment and self-assessment are at the heart of the assessing process, as Douglas Brown's writing microskills suggested (2001). The whole task has been conceived as a collaborative storywriting process, that is why both peer and self-assessment are taken into consideration as a way of developing students' reflection of their whole work. The following self-assessment grid makes students reflect on their own role within the group work:

	Always	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
I try to provide useful ideas				
I do my best while working				
I use time well to ensure things get done on time				
I look for and suggest solutions to the problems				
I have a positive attitude about the task				
I stay focused on the task				
I bring materials and am ready to work				
I listen to others, share my opinions and respect my partners				
I can accept and use my partners' feedback to improve				

All the base teams have followed the same process, the results surely diverge though. That is the richness of this kind of didactic proposals. Beyond the linguistic proficiency of the members of the group, their prior writing skills, what makes this task truly successful is the commitment and engagement of the members of the group. This is a way of rewarding it:

My partner…	Student #1:	Student #2:	Student #3:	Student #4:
tries to provide useful ideas	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
does his/her best while working	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
uses time well to ensure things get done on time	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
looks for and suggests solutions to the problems	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
has a positive attitude about the task	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
stays focused on the task	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
brings materials and is ready to work	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
listens to others, share my opinions and respect my partners	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
provides constructive feedback				

Lastly, the **final rubric** embraces all the previous assumptions about individual and group work, content and language adequacy and appropriateness as well as conventions regarding storywriting. Also, the standards in the Aragonese Curriculum for written production covered in 3.1. have been implicitly considered.

The main point of responding to writing, according to Brewster & Ellis (2002, p. 128) is "to develop a sense of what each child is capable of". Whether the focus is on *surface features* (spelling, for instance) or *language forms* (such as new vocabulary or sentence patterns), teachers target accuracy but we should "recognize both accuracy and effort" (Brewster & Ellis, 2002, p. 128):

> Where pupils are struggling to incorporate their own words or meanings into sentences or texts which are not so tightly controlled, the teacher may be more inclined to comment on the content and the child's willingness to 'have a go' at writing. In this case you might want to write short comments such as *Very interesting/exciting/funny. I enjoyed your story*; *I liked your ending…* (Brewster & Ellis, 2002, p. 128).

Therefore, the following rubric attempts to acknowledge such progress in students' writing. Giving a numerical score has been avoided so that students can focus on those aspects of writing to which they should pay more attention:

	Criteria	Excellent ♥♥♥♥♥	Good ♥♥♥♥	Adequate ♥♥♥	Inadequate ♥♥	Weak ♥
Group	Meaning and purpose					
	Linguistic, stylistic and formal features					
	Digital editing					
Individual	Peer assessment					
	Self assessment					

Finally, we cannot forget about **evaluation of the teaching practice**. As Clark (2013) points out, teachers should also reflect on the main aspects of their work. The Council of Europe in the EPOSTL document (2007) also encouraged teacher self-reflection of their specific skills and abilities to think about their own progress and development as a teacher.

All these aspects are presented in the form of questions divided into four parts that I consider important for our self-reflection as teachers: learning objectives, learning method, learning environment and assessment.

The final purpose of this self-evaluation is having evidence of the potential errors or issues that arise during the implementation of the present storywriting proposal, in order to get ideas and improve for future planning in next tasks.

SKILLS	SCORE (1-5)	COMMENTS
LEARNING OBJECTIVES		
1- Were the objectives appropriated for students' age?		
2- Were objectives and aims covered?		
3- Was the task motivating for students?		
LEARNING METHOD		
1- How did the task develop the students' use of language?		
2- Did the methodology promote communication amongst students?		
3- Were the resources used useful enough for students?		
4- Was the methodology useful to encourage their own findings?		
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT		
1- Was the learning environment provided friendly?		
2- Could something else be done to create a proper learning environment?		
3- Were the students involved in the task thanks to a suitable environment?		
ASSESSMENT		
1- Did the students receive enough feedback?		
2- Was the feedback useful for students?		

4. CONCLUSIONS

This collaborative storywriting task-based proposal has the objective of developing effective writing skills in our students. Therefore, the whole proposal has been planned and designed so that students progressively acquire the strategies needed to become effective and capable writers.

The history of language teaching has come a long way. In the last couple of decades, the Communicative Language Teaching has emerged as a referent in foreign language teaching. Many authors and researchers agree on the numerous benefits that such approach brings to our students. Communication is what drives the teaching principles and techniques, and writing is indeed a way of communication with its own features and particularities. Thus, explicit writing teaching is required. Among its various applications in the teaching practice, the Task-Based Learning seemed to me perfectly consistent with the main principles of the communicative approach: learner-centered and experience-based. Students learn to write by writing with the help of the tasks, which serve as a scaffolding to gradually build up their writing skills. This didactic proposal encompasses the advantages that the Communicative Language Teaching together with the Task-Based Learning offer to students, including the social perspective of construction of knowledge and the integration of all four skills.

Much has already been said regarding the writing approaches. However, what I propose here is a balanced combination of the three approaches since, in order to have a good product within a certain text genre, a good writing process is required. I see them from an inclusive perspective because all of them contribute to enrich and improve the quality of the students' final productions.

I would like to highlight some interesting aspects of this collaborative storywriting proposal: the necessity of developing writing strategies and the crucial role of feedback. On the one hand, developing effective writing strategies implies, altogether, that students will be able to apply them not only in this proposal but later on throughout their academic or personal life, every time they have to face a written task of any kind. Developing effective writing strategies means that they will be able to identify their audience, use pre-writing and drafting, solicit peer or teacher feedback and use it to revise and edit their piece of writing. If they have developed such effective writing strategies, I am confident students will communicate effectively. On the other hand, both giving and receiving feedback is a way of demanding higher-order thinking skills which lead students to raise self-awareness towards their own written productions. As some authors have pointed out, peer feedback is the first

step of that awareness-raising process, which helps students become critic, selfdemanding and responsible.

I am quite conscious of the fact that the task in which students embark here is not an easy one. Writing a short story which is going to be published can overwhelm students unless it is very well-planned and structured. Otherwise, students will either panic or write down the first thing that comes to their mind. Consequently, the task framework sets up the foundation of the whole proposal.

In the pre-task phase, students will learn how to identify, label, list and classify their ideas in a mind map about stories, showing at the same time their prior knowledge on the topic. Next, the thinking charts will play a crucial role by helping students infer, examine and analyse the insights of stories (characters, beginning, middle and ending), base on which their stories will be written. The thinking charts will support and guide students in such genre analysis. The task cycle phase is the most important part of the task, using a process approach to emphasise the writing strategies. Students will go from generating ideas (questions and storyboard) to drafting (fastwriting). The thinking charts are the core of the writing part since they invite students revise, rewrite, discuss and elaborate the content of their productions. Giving constructive feedback is equally important here, students need to argue, assess, criticise, defend or disprove their partners' texts, which demand high-cognitive skills. In the language focus phase, students will pay attention mainly to formal aspects, assessing its appropriateness. In the post-task phase, students will develop their digital competence when editing their stories in the online platform to finish their product in the best possible way and the retelling will make them assimilate their story.

This proposal is characterised by its versatility and flexibility, which enables different adaptations to suit students' needs (time, facilities, resources, etc.). Another major advantage of this proposal is its exploitable didactic potential. Far from ending with the publication of the short stories, such outcomes provide the perfect excuse for countless didactic approximations.

Nevertheless, developing effective writing strategies is a vast issue and this proposal has only attempted to provide a hands-on overview on the subject. There are many other areas for future in-depth study related to collaborative writing and its efficacy as far as language acquisition is concerned, for instance. Regrettably, the collaborative storywriting task-based proposal in this paper has not been put into practice with a real classroom yet, but I do believe, in the light of what has been previously explained, detailed and commented, that it would positively contribute to students' growth as effective writers.

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6. ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Curriculum contents

Block 4 – Writing – Aragonese Curriculum

INGLÉS	Curso: 6º
BLOQUE 4: Producción de Textos Escritos: Expresión e Interacción.	

Contenidos:

Estrategias de producción:

Planificación

Movilizar y coordinar las propias competencias generales y comunicativas con el fin de realizar eficazmente la tarea (repasar qué se sabe sobre el tema, qué se puede o se quiere decir, etc.).

Localizar y usar adecuadamente recursos lingüísticos o temáticos (uso de un diccionario o gramática, obtención de ayuda, etc.).

Ejecución

Expresar el mensaje con claridad ajustándose a los modelos y fórmulas de cada tipo de texto.

Reajustar la tarea (emprender una versión más modesta de la tarea) o el mensaje (hacer concesiones en lo que realmente le gustaría expresar), tras valorar las dificultades y los recursos disponibles.

Apoyarse en y sacar el máximo partido de los conocimientos previos (utilizar lenguaje

'prefabricado', etc.).

Aspectos socioculturales y sociolingüísticos: convenciones sociales, normas de cortesía y registros; costumbres, valores, creencias y actitudes; lenguaje no verbal.

Funciones comunicativas:

Saludos y presentaciones, disculpas, agradecimientos, invitaciones.

Expresión de la capacidad, el gusto, la preferencia, la opinión, el acuerdo o desacuerdo, el sentimiento, la intención.

Descripción de personas, actividades, lugares, objetos, hábitos, planes.

Narración de hechos pasados remotos y recientes.

Petición y ofrecimiento de ayuda, información, instrucciones, objetos, opinión, permiso.

Establecimiento y mantenimiento de la comunicación.

Estructuras sintáctico-discursivas. Expresión de relaciones lógicas. Relaciones temporales. Afirmación. Exclamación. Negación. Interrogación. Expresión del tiempo. Expresión del aspecto. Expresión de la modalidad. Expresión de la existencia. Expresión de la cantidad. Expresión del espacio. Expresión del tiempo. Expresión del modo.

Léxico escrito de alta frecuencia (producción) relativo a identificación personal; vivienda, hogar y entorno; actividades de la vida diaria; familia y amigos; trabajo y ocupaciones; tiempo libre, ocio y deporte; viajes y vacaciones; salud y cuidados físicos; educación y estudio; compras y actividades comerciales; alimentación y restauración; transporte; lengua y comunicación; medio ambiente, clima y entorno natural; y tecnologías de la información y la comunicación.

Patrones gráficos y convenciones ortográficas.

Annex 2 – Relationship between criteria, standards and key competences

CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN	COMPETENCIAS CLAVE	ESTÁNDARES DE APRENDIZAJE EVALUABLES	RELACIÓN DE CC CON ESTÁNDARES
Crit.IN.4.1. Construir, en papel o en soporte electrónico, textos muy cortos y sencillos, compuestos de frases simples aisladas, en un registro neutro o informal, utilizando con razonable corrección las convenciones ortográficas básicas y los principales signos de puntuación, para hablar de sí mismo, de su entorno más inmediato y de aspectos de su vida cotidiana, en situaciones familiares y predecibles.	CCL CSC CAA	Est. ING. 4.1.2. Escribe correspondencia personal breve y simple (mensajes, notas, postales, correos, chats o SMS), en la que da las gracias, felicita a alguien, hace una invitación, da instrucciones, o habla de sí mismo y de su entorno inmediato (familia, amigos, aficiones, actividades cotidianas, objetos, lugares), hace y contesta preguntas relativas a estos temas, haciendo uso de estrategias de producción y de una ortografía adecuada, aplicando las normas de cortesía básicas y utilizando las estructuras sintácticas y el léxico adecuado, aunque sea necesario el uso de elementos paratextuales.	CD CSC CAA
Crit.ING.4.2. Conocer y aplicar las estrategias básicas para producir textos escritos muy breves y sencillos, p. ej.: copiando palabras y frases muy usuales para realizar las funciones comunicativas que se persiguen.	CAA CCL	Est. ING. 4.2.2. Escribe correspondencia personal breve y simple (mensajes, notas, postales, correos, chats o SMS), en la que da las gracias, felicita a alguien, hace una invitación, da instrucciones, o habla de sí mismo y de su entorno inmediato (familia, amigos, aficiones, actividades cotidianas, objetos, lugares), hace y contesta preguntas relativas a estos temas, haciendo uso de alguna estrategia básica de producción de textos (planificación y ejecución).	CAA CCL
Crit.ING.4.3. Conocer aspectos socioculturales y sociolingüísticos básicos, concretos y significativos (p. ej.: las convenciones sobre el inicio y cierre de una carta a personas conocidas) y aplicar los conocimientos adquiridos sobre los mismos a una producción escrita adecuada al contexto, en relación con temáticas propias de estos aspectos, respetando las normas de cortesía básicas.	CSC CCL	Est. ING. 4.3.2. Escribe correspondencia personal breve y simple (mensajes, notas, postales, correos, chats o SMS), en la que da las gracias, felicita a alguien, hace una invitación, da instrucciones, da su opinión o habla de sí mismo y de su entorno inmediato (familia, amigos, aficiones, actividades cotidianas, objetos, lugares), hace y contesta preguntas relativas a estos temas; y aplica las convenciones y normas de cortesía básicas adecuadas.	CSC CCL

Crit.ING.4.4. Cumplir la función comunicativa principal del texto escrito (p. e. una felicitación, un intercambio de información, o un ofrecimiento), utilizando un repertorio limitado de sus exponentes más frecuentes y de patrones discursivos básicos (p. ej.: saludos para inicio y despedida para cierre de una carta, o una narración esquemática desarrollada en puntos).	CCL CD CSC	Est. ING. 4.4.2. Escribe correspondencia personal breve y simple (mensajes, notas, postales, correos, chats seguros o SMS), en la que da las gracias, felicita a alguien, hace una invitación, da instrucciones, da su opinión o habla de sí mismo y de su entorno inmediato (familia, amigos, aficiones, actividades cotidianas, objetos, lugares), hace y contesta preguntas relativas a estos temas ajustándose a la función comunicativa del texto.	CCL CSC
Crit.ING.4.5. Manejar estructuras sintácticas básicas (p. e. enlazar palabras o grupos de palabras con conectores básicos como "and", "or", "but", "because", relaciones temporalescomo "when", "before", "after" o el uso de comparativos y superlativos), aunque se sigan cometiendo errores básicos de manera sistemática en, p. ej.:., tiempos verbales o en la concordancia.	CCL	Est. ING. 4.5.2. Escribe correspondencia personal breve y simple (mensajes, notas, postales, correos, chats o SMS), en la que da las gracias, felicita a alguien, hace una invitación, da instrucciones, da su opinión, o habla de sí mismo y de su entorno inmediato (familia, amigos, aficiones, actividades cotidianas, objetos, lugares), hace y contesta preguntas relativas a estos temas y demuestra que maneja estructuras sintácticas básicas.	CCL
Crit.ING.4.6. Conocer y utilizar un repertorio de léxico escrito de alta frecuencia relativo a situaciones cotidianas y temas habituales y concretos relacionados con los propios intereses, experiencias y necesidades.	CCL	Est. ING. 4.6.2. Escribe correspondencia personal breve y simple (mensajes, notas, postales, correos, chats o SMS), en la que da las gracias, felicita a alguien, hace una invitación, da instrucciones, da su opinión o habla de sí mismo y de su entorno inmediato (familia, amigos, aficiones, actividades cotidianas, objetos, lugares), hace y contesta preguntas relativas a estos temas usando un vocabulario sencillo dentro de unos campos léxicos definidos por los contenidos.	CCL
Crit.ING.4.7. Aplicar patrones gráficos y convenciones ortográficas básicas para escribir con razonable corrección palabras o frases cortas que se utilizan normalmente al hablar, pero no necesariamente con una ortografía totalmente normalizada.	CCL	Est. ING. 4.7.2. Escribe correspondencia personal breve y simple (mensajes, notas, postales, correos, chats o SMS), en la que da las gracias, felicita a alguien, hace una invitación, da instrucciones, da su opinión o habla de sí mismo y de su entorno inmediato (familia, amigos, aficiones, actividades cotidianas, objetos, lugares), hace y contesta preguntas relativas a estos temas, utilizando patrones gráficos y ortográficos básicos para escribir con una razonable corrección.	CCL CD

Definition

Audience

Characteristics

Purpose

What do we know about STORIES?

Types

Storywriting process

Format

Authors
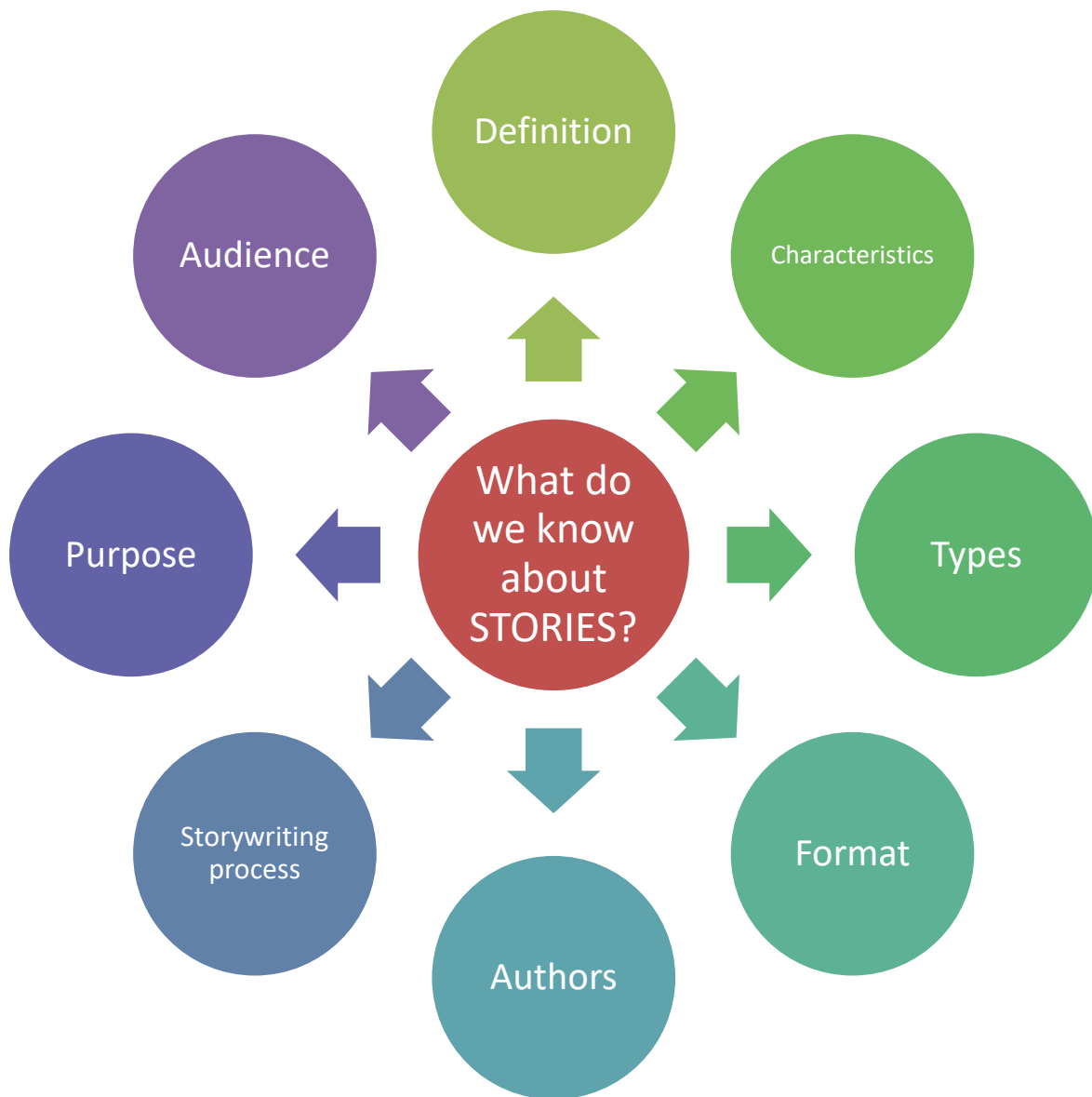
Think about your **favourite** story.

🤔

What makes it so special?

Annex 4 – Thinking chart (analysis)

THINKING CHART – CHARACTER BUILDING

CHARACTER #1	Name	
Type	☐ Child ☐ Animal. Which one? _____ ☐ Adult ☐ Superhero ☐ Other: _____	Role ☐ Hero ☐ Villain ☐ Mentor ☐ Ally ☐ Other: _____
Appearance		
Personality traits		
Actions	☐ Problem	☐ Goal

CHARACTER #2	Name	

	Type	Role
Type	☐ Child ☐ Animal. Which one? _____ ☐ Adult ☐ Superhero ☐ Other: _____	**Role** ☐ Hero ☐ Villain ☐ Mentor ☐ Ally ☐ Other: _____
Appearance		
Personality traits		
Actions	☐ Problem	☐ Goal

CHARACTER #3	Name	

	Type	☐ Child ☐ Animal. Which one? _____ ☐ Adult ☐ Superhero ☐ Other: _____	Role	☐ Hero ☐ Villain ☐ Mentor ☐ Ally ☐ Other: _____

Appearance	

Personality traits	

Actions	☐ Problem	☐ Goal

THINKING CHART – BEGINNING

BEGINNING			
Purpose	☐ Entertain ☐ Inform ☐ Educate ☐ Persuade ☐ Other: _____	Audience	☐ Younger learners ☐ Primary school readers ☐ Other: _____
Title			

Narrator	☐ Omniscient
	☐ Main character
	    Who? _____
	☐ Witness
	     Who? _____
		Action	

Setting	Time		
	Place		
	Atmosphere		

MIDDLE				
Problem		Character feeling		
		Character thinking		
Complication				
The big event	Time			
	Place			
	Atmosphere			
	Character feeling			
	Character thinking			

THINKING CHART – ENDING

	ENDING		
Type	☐ Explicit ☐ Unresolved ☐ Twist ☐ Cliff hanger		☐ Moral
Resolution			
	Time		
	Place		
	Atmosphere		
	Character feeling		
	Character thinking		

Let's think!

|	
1. What is your story about?	2. Who is your main character? Why should we be interested in him/her?
3. What does he/she want or need? Why?	4. Are there any other characters? What is the relationship between them?
5. What are they doing? Where are they going?	6. What happens? What are the causes of the problem? And its consequences?
7. What do they do next?	8. How can the problem be solved? Is there any alternative?
9. How does the story end?	10. Do we learn something from the story?

Storyboard

BEGINNING		DETAILS:
		DETAILS:

MIDDLE		DETAILS:
		DETAILS:

ENDING		DETAILS:
		DETAILS:
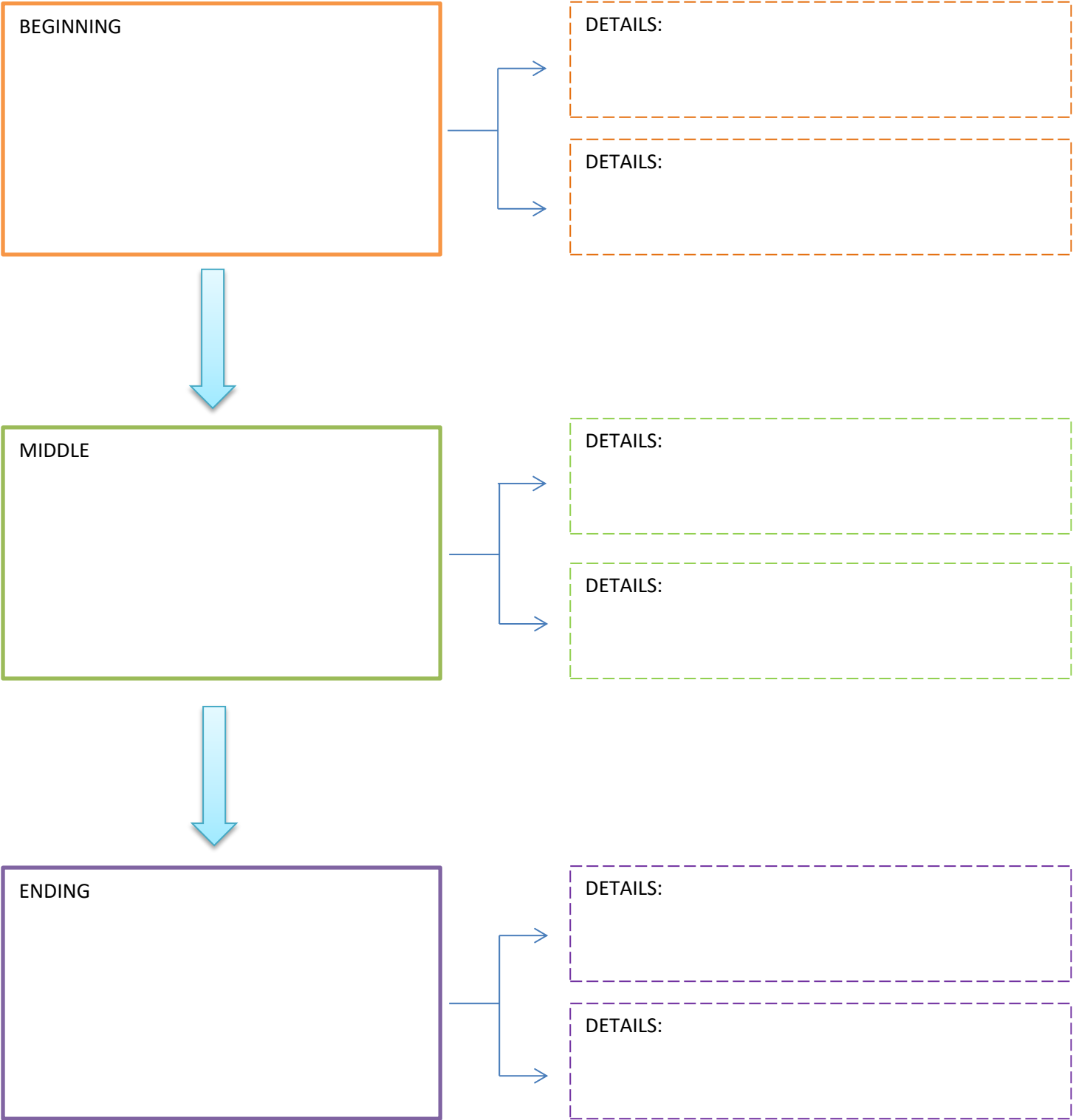
Fastwriting instruction sheet

(adapted from *Process Writing* by White & Arndt*)*

1. Concentrate on ideas, not on language, grammar or punctuation.

2. Write as quickly as you can and *don't stop writing*.

3. Don't stop to cross out or correct mistakes.

4. If you can't think of a word or phrase, either write in Spanish, or leave a blank or write 'something'.

5. Return to the blank spaces or words in your native language when you have finished writing, and then, using a dictionary, add or translate the words or phrases concerned.

Annex 8 – Thinking charts with Evaluation

THINKING CHART – CHARACTER BUILDING

CHARACTER #1	Name			EVALUATION		
				S Strengths	W Weaknesses	I Ideas
Type	☐ Child ☐ Animal. Which one? _____ ☐ Adult ☐ Superhero ☐ Other: _____	Role	☐ Hero ☐ Villain ☐ Mentor ☐ Ally ☐ Other: _____			
Appearance						
Personality traits						
Actions	☐ Problem		☐ Goal			

CHARACTER #2	Name		EVALUATION		
			S Strengths	W Weaknesses	I Ideas
Type	☐ Child ☐ Animal. Which one? _____ ☐ Adult ☐ Superhero ☐ Other: _____	Role	☐ Hero ☐ Villain ☐ Mentor ☐ Ally ☐ Other: _____		
Appearance					
Personality traits					
Actions	☐ Problem	☐ Goal			

CHARACTER #3	Name		EVALUATION		
			S Strengths	W Weaknesses	I Ideas
Type	☐ Child ☐ Animal. Which one? _____ ☐ Adult ☐ Superhero ☐ Other: _____	Role	☐ Hero ☐ Villain ☐ Mentor ☐ Ally ☐ Other: _____		
Appearance					
Personality traits					
Actions	☐ Problem	☐ Goal			

THINKING CHART – BEGINNING

	BEGINNING			EVALUATION		
				S Strengths	W Weaknesses	I Ideas
Purpose	☐ Entertain ☐ Inform ☐ Educate ☐ Persuade ☐ Other: _____	Audience	☐ Younger learners ☐ Primary school readers ☐ Other: _____			
Title						

Narrator	☐ Omniscient
	☐ Main character
	     Who? _____
	☐ Witness
	     Who? _____
		Action				

Setting	Time					
	Place					
	Atmosphere					

THINKING CHART – MIDDLE

MIDDLE			EVALUATION		
			S Strengths	W Weaknesses	I Ideas
Problem		Character feeling			
		Character thinking			
Complication					
The big event	Time				
	Place				
	Atmosphere				
	Character feeling				
	Character thinking				

THINKING CHART – ENDING

ENDING			EVALUATION		
			S Strengths	W Weaknesses	I Ideas
Type	☐ Explicit ☐ Unresolved ☐ Twist ☐ Cliff hanger	☐ Moral			
Resolution					
	Time				
	Place				
	Atmosphere				
	Character feeling				
	Character thinking				