

**Meaningful learning experiences in the development of paragraph writing.
Experiencias de aprendizaje significativas en el desarrollo de la escritura de párrafos.**

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of meaningful learning experiences on the development of English paragraph writing skills among fifth-year students at the Angel Polibio Chaves Millennium Educational Unit in San Miguel de Bolívar. The research aimed to identify the main challenges students face when writing paragraphs in English and to evaluate how pedagogical strategies based on meaningful learning could enhance their writing abilities. A quasi-experimental design was applied, involving an experimental group exposed to innovative learning experiences and a control group receiving traditional instruction. Pre-tests and post-tests, modeled after the Cambridge English: A2 Flyers exam, assessed students' writing proficiency before and after the intervention. Results showed that before the intervention, students struggled with coherence, cohesion, grammar, vocabulary, and argument development. Following participation in meaningful learning activities, students demonstrated significant improvements in paragraph structure, organization, fluency, and lexical variety. Statistical analysis confirmed that these differences were significant, validating the effectiveness of the intervention. Additionally, students reported increased motivation, confidence, and engagement in writing tasks, highlighting the benefits of connecting learning to everyday experiences and fostering collaboration. The study emphasizes the importance of meaningful, student-centered approaches in English as a Foreign Language instruction. By addressing linguistic and conceptual challenges, educators can improve students' writing proficiency while promoting critical thinking, creativity, and active participation. The findings provide practical guidance for teachers seeking to develop competent, motivated, and confident writers in primary EFL classrooms.

Keywords: meaningful learning, paragraph writing, English as a foreign language, primary education, student engagement.

Resumen

Este estudio examinó el impacto de las experiencias de aprendizaje significativo en el desarrollo de habilidades para redactar párrafos en inglés entre estudiantes de quinto año de la Unidad Educativa del Milenio Angel Polibio Chaves en San Miguel de Bolívar. La investigación tuvo como objetivo identificar los principales desafíos que enfrentan los estudiantes al escribir párrafos en inglés y evaluar cómo las estrategias pedagógicas basadas en el aprendizaje significativo pueden mejorar sus habilidades de escritura. Se aplicó un diseño cuasi-experimental, con un grupo experimental expuesto a experiencias de aprendizaje innovadoras y un grupo de control que recibió instrucción tradicional. Se realizaron pruebas previas y posteriores, basadas en el examen Cambridge English: A2 Flyers, para evaluar la competencia en escritura antes y después de la intervención. Los resultados mostraron que, antes de la intervención, los estudiantes presentaban dificultades en coherencia, cohesión, gramática, vocabulario y desarrollo de argumentos. Tras participar en actividades de aprendizaje significativo, los estudiantes demostraron mejoras significativas en la estructura y organización de los párrafos, fluidez y diversidad léxica. El análisis estadístico confirmó que estas diferencias eran significativas, validando la efectividad de la intervención. Además, los estudiantes reportaron un aumento en la motivación, confianza y participación en las tareas de escritura, resaltando la importancia de vincular el aprendizaje con experiencias cotidianas y fomentar la colaboración. El estudio subraya la relevancia de enfoques pedagógicos centrados en el estudiante para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, ofreciendo orientación práctica para desarrollar escritores competentes, motivados y seguros en aulas de educación primaria.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje significativo, redacción de párrafos, inglés como lengua extranjera, educación primaria, participación estudiantil.

Introduction

In the context of a globalized world, English has become the most relevant international language in scientific, academic, technological, administrative, and cultural domains (Paudel, 2021). Its mastery has turned into an essential requirement for accessing educational and professional opportunities in both local and international contexts, reinforcing its role as a vital tool for communication in increasingly interconnected societies (Alemayehu, 2024). In this regard, English learning goes beyond grammatical knowledge and requires the balanced development of the four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, writing represents one of the most complex competences, since it not only demands formal knowledge of linguistic structures but also the ability to organize ideas coherently, supported by prior experiences of reading, observation, and meaningful learning that begin in early childhood.

Nevertheless, at the Basic General Education level, persistent difficulties are evident regarding the production of written texts in English. In institutions such as the Ángel Polibio Chaves Millennium Educational Unit, located in San Miguel de Bolívar, it has been observed that fifth-year students present deficiencies in reading comprehension, both in their mother tongue and in English. This limitation directly affects their ability to construct coherent and well-structured paragraphs, which restricts not only their academic progress but also, their future integration into more demanding educational contexts, where English writing skills are increasingly valued. The prevalence of traditional methodologies focused on rote grammar learning has limited opportunities for students to engage in meaningful learning experiences that allow them to internalize the language as a real and creative communicative tool.

Within this framework, the present study is justified for its dual contribution. On a theoretical level, it enriches the field of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching by

grounding itself in the principles of meaningful learning (Song et al., 2023). This perspective emphasizes the construction of knowledge from learners' prior experiences and background, integrating them with new content in authentic contexts. It surpasses a mechanistic view of language, framing writing as a process of meaning-making in which learners develop not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication skills. On a practical level, this study seeks to enhance students' writing abilities in English, which will positively influence their academic performance while broadening their personal and professional opportunities. The impact is multidimensional: students benefit by improving their communicative competence, teachers gain innovative pedagogical strategies for writing instruction, and the institution strengthens its educational quality through the adoption of active learning methodologies.

Various studies have explored meaningful learning and the development of reading and writing skills in English, particularly focusing on paragraph writing and written production among primary and secondary school students.

Vargas (2024) highlighted the importance of providing meaningful learning experiences to improve paragraph-writing skills by fostering community, feedback, technology integration, and a focus on the writing process. Similarly, Abdi et al. (2024) emphasized that collaborative group work enhances understanding and retention of writing concepts. Xiao y Cui (2025) demonstrated that integrating scientific practices into writing instruction promotes meaningful learning, while García et al. (2024) showed that multimedia resources stimulate creativity and improve paragraph-writing skills. Likewise, Yamin (2019) found that students face challenges in formulating topic sentences, supporting ideas, and maintaining coherence, which directly affects the quality of their written work.

Flórez (2024) examined the impact of project-based learning, revealing significant improvements in motivation, self-efficacy, and collaborative skills. Similarly, Noreña, (2019) reported that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used among English language students, followed by social and compensation strategies, suggesting the need for personalized teaching approaches. In Ecuador, Lynch (2024) evaluated the use of digital strategies via WhatsApp to strengthen English writing, resulting in higher motivation and improved learning outcomes. Medina (2024) proposed a methodological strategy based on interviews, classroom observations, and student surveys, highlighting the importance of adapting teaching methods to students' needs.

Barrios y Ruiz (2025) concluded that technology and digital platforms play a key role in transforming English teaching, promoting the development of language and communication skills. Similarly, Cartuche et al. (2024) combined short stories and digital tools to enhance reading, writing, and values education, while López (2024) demonstrated that Open Educational Resources (OERs), such as Duolingo and English for Kids, improved vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and writing skills.

Sanchez (2025) implemented a Virtual Learning Object through Canva, resulting in greater student engagement and improved writing performance. Likewise, Ruiz-Loor y Intriago-Romero (2022) applied the LID el Araguato platform, achieving significant advances in reading and writing. In response to learning challenges during the pandemic, Morán-Vera et al. (2025) used an educational blog, which effectively supported writing and listening skills.

Several studies have explored active and innovative teaching methodologies:

- Mendoza (2024) applied Content-Based Instruction (CBI) to connect writing with real-life issues, fostering situated writing.
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- Garcia y Santisteban (2023) validated the Write & Improve platform, showing an 89% improvement in written production.
- Carrasco (2024) confirmed the effectiveness of the “Let’s Write” workshop for advanced English writing skills.
- Syafi’I (2020) integrated Google Classroom and Writing English, enhancing vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure.
- Zumba et al. (2024) demonstrated that gamification combined with ICT tools significantly improved student motivation and writing competence.
- Torres-Torres (2024) used Genially and Google Drive, achieving notable improvements in writing and oral communication skills.
- Palma (2023) incorporated local legends as a didactic strategy to promote contextualized reading comprehension and writing.
- Subirats-Blanco y Conde del Rio (2024) showed that augmented reality enhances the English learning experience, improving vocabulary acquisition and writing skills.

Overall, the reviewed studies highlight that innovative teaching strategies, digital platforms, open educational resources, and active learning methodologies significantly contribute to strengthening English reading and writing skills. The integration of technology, personalized instruction, and collaborative learning emerges as a crucial factor for fostering motivation, autonomy, and academic performance.

The general objective of this research is to analyze the impact of meaningful learning experiences on the development of paragraph writing in English among fifth-year students at the Ángel Polibio Chaves Millennium Educational Unit during the 2022–2023 academic year. Specifically, the study aims to: (a) establish theoretical foundations

linking meaningful learning with paragraph writing in English as a foreign language, (b) identify the main difficulties students face in the writing process, and (c) design and promote pedagogical strategies based on students' daily experiences to foster the production of coherent and meaningful paragraphs. Ultimately, the study seeks to demonstrate that English instruction can transcend traditional grammar-centered approaches, becoming a dynamic process that promotes motivation, autonomy, and holistic development. In this way, it prepares learners to face the communicative challenges of a globalized society.

Materials and methods

This study was designed under a quasi-experimental research approach, aimed at examining the influence of meaningful learning experiences on the development of English paragraph writing among fifth-year students of the Ángel Polibio Chaves Millennium Educational Unit, located in San Miguel de Bolívar, Ecuador. The selection of a quasi-experimental design responded to the need to analyze causal relationships in an authentic educational environment, where random assignment of participants was not feasible. According to Benmarkhnia y Fuller (2020) quasi-experimental approaches are particularly useful in educational contexts because they provide valid insights into the effects of interventions while preserving the natural structure of classrooms. In this sense, the present research allows the comparison between an experimental group, exposed to innovative strategies based on meaningful learning, and a control group, which continued working with traditional instructional methods.

The study was carried out in the urban facilities of the Ángel Polibio Chaves Millennium Educational Unit, a public institution that provides access to diverse student populations. A total of 74 fifth-year students formed the research population, divided equally between two groups: 37 students in class A who constituted the experimental

group, and 37 students in class B who formed the control group. This division enabled a balanced analysis and reliable comparison of results, minimizing external bias.

To support the intervention and data collection, the study relied on various material and human resources. Physical resources included notebooks, pencils, and textbooks, while technological resources such as computers, projectors, and printers were employed to facilitate instructional activities and assessments. Human resources were essential: students participated actively in the intervention, teachers collaborated in classroom management and instruction, and the research team, including investigators and tutor guides, ensured the proper application of instruments and monitoring of results.

The instruments used were pre-tests and post-tests adapted from the Cambridge English: Young Learners Flyers examination. These tools were chosen for their reliability in measuring young learners' language development and writing performance. The pre-test was administered to both groups prior to the intervention to establish a baseline of students' paragraph writing abilities. Following the instructional period, the post-test was applied to both groups to evaluate the progress achieved. The tests assessed grammar usage, sentence structure, coherence, vocabulary application, and the ability to produce short but meaningful paragraphs.

The hypotheses guiding this study were as follows: the null hypothesis (H0) proposed that the correct development of written paragraphs does not contribute to the acquisition of meaningful learning in fifth-year students. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (H1) established that the correct development of written paragraphs significantly contributes to meaningful learning acquisition in the same population. Testing these hypotheses provided a clear framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention.

The methodological process was structured in three stages. In the diagnostic stage, the pre-test identified students' initial weaknesses in paragraph writing, particularly in grammar, coherence, and vocabulary use. The second stage consisted of the intervention, during which the experimental group engaged in carefully designed meaningful learning activities, while the control group continued with conventional grammar-based lessons. Finally, the evaluation stage involved administering the post-test and analyzing the results to determine differences in performance between groups.

Data collection was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Quantitatively, the results of pre- and post-tests provided measurable indicators of progress in paragraph writing. Qualitatively, observations of classroom participation and motivation during the intervention enriched the interpretation of results. This mixed perspective ensured that the study did not merely capture numerical differences but also contextualized them in terms of student engagement and attitudes toward English learning.

Expected results of the study include significant improvements in the experimental group's writing performance, reflected in more coherent, structured, and grammatically accurate paragraphs compared to the control group. It is also anticipated that the intervention will foster greater student motivation and willingness to engage with English writing tasks, thereby improving not only their linguistic proficiency but also their attitudes toward language learning. These outcomes are projected to provide valuable pedagogical insights, demonstrating the relevance of meaningful learning experiences as an innovative strategy for enhancing writing instruction in EFL contexts. Moreover, the findings aim to offer practical implications for teachers and institutions, supporting the development of teaching practices that align with the communicative needs of students in today's globalized world.

Analysis of Results

The present study was conducted to determine the impact of meaningful learning experiences on the writing of English paragraphs among fifth-year students at the Millennium Educational Unit “Ángel Polibio Chaves.” The results obtained are presented below, organized according to the objectives of the research and the instruments applied, highlighting the differences observed between the initial assessment (pre-test) and the final assessment (post-test).

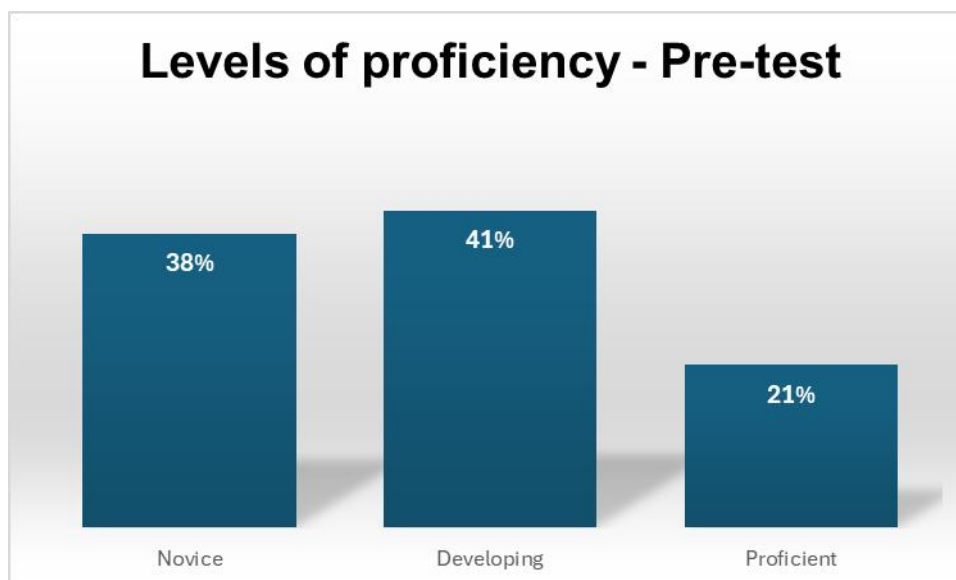
Pre-test Results

The pre-test was administered to establish a baseline regarding the students' writing skills in English. The results revealed an overall low performance:

- 38% of the students scored 5, which represents the minimum achievement level and was characterized by disorganized written productions with frequent grammatical errors.
 - 41% achieved a score of 6, reflecting a slightly higher level, although still insufficient to ensure coherent and cohesive paragraph writing.
 - 21% obtained a score of 7, which indicated an intermediate level but still with persistent difficulties in grammar, spelling, and the appropriate use of connectors.
 - In terms of proficiency levels:
 - 38% of students were categorized as Novice,
 - 41% as Developing,
 - and only 21% as Proficient.
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Figure 1.

Levels of proficiency - Pre-test.



These initial results revealed that most students faced significant challenges in paragraph writing. The main deficiencies observed were:

- Problems with coherence and cohesion: paragraphs lacked a clear and logical structure, making it difficult to follow the students' ideas.
- Limited use of connectors: sentences were presented in isolation without linking devices to articulate the discourse.
- Restricted vocabulary: students frequently repeated basic words, which impoverished the lexical richness of their texts.
- Frequent grammatical and spelling errors: these hindered the clarity and accuracy of the written productions.

The pre-test thus demonstrated that the sample group was at an initial stage, characterized by the aforementioned deficiencies. These findings confirmed the necessity of implementing innovative teaching strategies to improve the teaching-learning process of English writing skills.

Post-test Results

After the implementation of the methodological proposal based on meaningful learning experiences, a post-test was administered to assess the impact of the intervention. The results revealed substantial improvements in students' performance compared to the initial diagnosis:

- 50% of students obtained a score of 8,
- 44% achieved 9,
- and 6% reached the maximum score of 10.

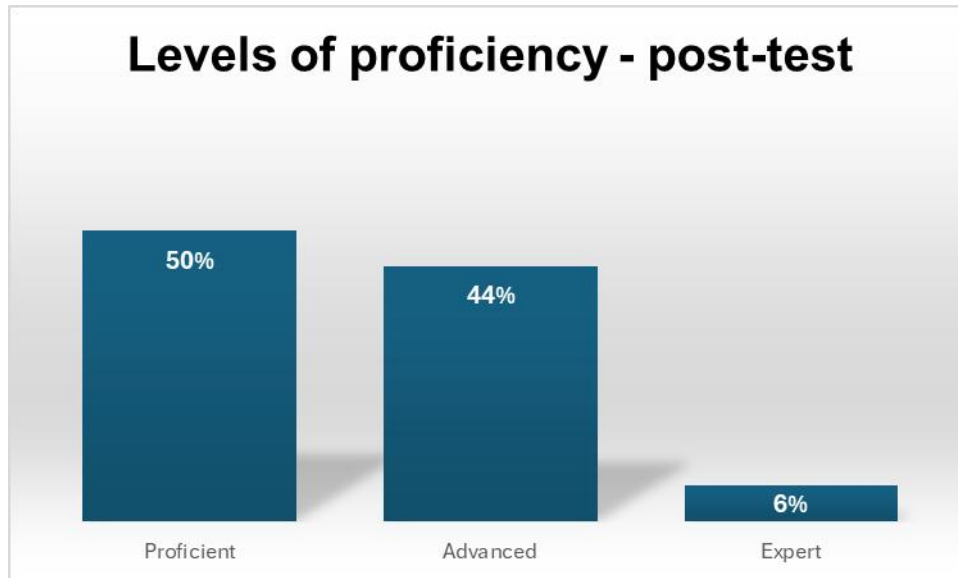
The analysis by proficiency levels showed a significant shift:

- 50% of students were classified as Proficient,
- 44% as Advanced,
- and 6% as Expert.

It is important to note that no student remained in the lower levels (Novice or Developing), which represents a considerable advancement compared to the pre-test results.

Figure 2.

Levels of proficiency - Pre-test



Progress was evident in several areas:

- Clearer structure: paragraphs now contain a well-defined introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - Improved cohesion: students used connectors effectively to relate their ideas.
 - Better grammar and spelling: the frequency of errors decreased considerably, enhancing the clarity of the texts.
 - Expanded vocabulary: new words and expressions were incorporated, enriching the students' writing.
 - More complex development of ideas: paragraphs demonstrated greater depth and logical organization.
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The post-test results not only confirmed improvement in the scores but also reflected qualitative advances in the ability of students to express their ideas with accuracy, coherence, and precision.

Comparison Between Pre-test and Post-test

After comparing the pre-test and post-test results, it became evident that the methodological intervention based on meaningful learning experiences had a substantial impact on the students' development in English paragraph writing. Initially, the pre-test revealed that most students concentrated in lower proficiency levels, with scores ranging from five to seven. In contrast, the post-test demonstrated a significant shift toward higher levels, with scores predominantly between eight and ten. The proportion of students capable of producing coherent, organized, and grammatically accurate paragraphs increased remarkably, demonstrating the effectiveness of meaningful learning experiences in promoting the practical application of English writing skills beyond rote grammar exercises. This comparison clearly shows that the intervention facilitated measurable improvements in the quality of students' written productions and allowed them to achieve a higher level of linguistic proficiency.

Overcoming Initial Difficulties

The intervention also addressed and overcame the initial difficulties observed in the pre-test. Prior to the study, students displayed frequent errors in coherence and cohesion, limited vocabulary, and a high incidence of grammatical mistakes. Through deliberate and guided practice, students were able to develop structured paragraphs that communicated their ideas more clearly. The continuous formative feedback provided by teachers enabled students to identify mistakes and make corrections in real time, reinforcing learning. Contextualized writing activities connected to students' daily experiences increased engagement and motivation, while collaborative tasks encouraged peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing. As a result, students

developed a stronger understanding of textual organization, logical progression of ideas, and proper use of grammatical structures, which collectively contributed to the improvement in their writing skills.

Student Perceptions

An important outcome of the study was the change in students' attitudes toward English writing activities. After participating in meaningful learning experiences, students reported greater interest, motivation, and self-confidence in their ability to write in English. They expressed satisfaction with a variety of activities, including both creative exercises, such as story writing and expressive tasks, and structured activities, like summaries and thematic paragraphs. Working collaboratively allowed students to exchange ideas and develop their writing skills collectively, which further reinforced engagement and facilitated learning. The positive shift in students' perceptions indicates that meaningful learning experiences not only enhanced writing skills but also fostered a more enthusiastic and participatory attitude toward language learning.

Statistical Validation

To statistically validate the results, a student's t-test was conducted, comparing the pre-test and post-test scores. The analysis confirmed that there were significant differences in performance before and after the intervention, providing strong evidence that meaningful learning experiences contributed to the improvement of paragraph writing skills among fifth-year students. The statistical results supported the research hypothesis that the correct development of written paragraphs promotes meaningful learning acquisition, while the null hypothesis, which suggested no impact of the intervention, was rejected. This confirms that the observed improvements were not due to chance but were a direct result of the pedagogical strategies implemented.

In conclusion, the findings of this research indicate that meaningful learning experiences positively and significantly influenced the writing abilities of fifth-year students. The intervention led to improvements in the coherence, cohesion, structure, and grammatical accuracy of students' paragraphs, as well as expansion in vocabulary and enhanced ability to develop arguments logically. Additionally, the study promoted greater motivation, engagement, and confidence among students, which are essential for sustained learning. Overall, the results demonstrate that the strategic use of meaningful learning experiences can effectively enhance both the technical and expressive aspects of English paragraph writing, providing a strong foundation for continued language development and academic success.

Discussion

The present study aimed to determine the impact of meaningful learning experiences on the development of English paragraph writing skills among fifth-grade students. The analysis of pre-test and post-test results revealed notable variability in students' initial performance, with most students scoring between five and six, indicating limited proficiency in paragraph writing and difficulties in coherence, cohesion, and vocabulary use. These findings are consistent with prior studies that emphasize the challenges faced by elementary students in producing structured and coherent written texts in a foreign language (Smith et al., 2019).

Following the intervention, significant improvements were observed in students' paragraph writing abilities, both in terms of grammatical accuracy and the organization of ideas. The deliberate practice incorporated into the meaningful learning experiences, alongside formative feedback and exposure to various writing styles, proved crucial in enhancing students' writing competence. These results align with Johnson (2020), who highlights that structured and reflective writing exercises, coupled with continuous feedback, contribute substantially to the development of writing proficiency in young

learners. Moreover, the intervention addressed common errors, including fragmented sentences, limited vocabulary, and weak argument development, enabling students to internalize and apply writing conventions more effectively, as noted by Jones (2018).

The findings also underscore the importance of motivation and collaboration in the learning process. By engaging in meaningful learning activities connected to their daily experiences, students demonstrated increased interest, active participation, and greater confidence in their ability to write in English. Collaborative tasks fostered peer interaction and idea-sharing, enhancing both cognitive and social dimensions of learning. This supports the theoretical framework of constructivist learning, which posits that students acquire knowledge more effectively when they are actively involved in meaningful and contextually relevant activities.

Overall, this study confirms the efficacy of meaningful learning experiences in improving English paragraph writing skills among fifth-grade students. It demonstrates that targeted pedagogical strategies, which combine structured practice, feedback, contextual relevance, and collaborative engagement, not only enhance technical writing skills but also promote motivation, critical thinking, and self-confidence. The results contribute to the broader discourse on language education by reinforcing the value of experiential and student-centered approaches, offering practical insights for educators seeking to foster more effective and engaging English writing instruction.

Conclusions

A strong theoretical framework was established to promote meaningful learning and paragraph development in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for primary school students. By exploring relevant educational theories and previous research, the study provided educators with valuable insights into effective teaching methods, highlighting strategies that can enhance both the quality and coherence of student writing. The research also successfully identified the specific challenges that students encounter

when writing paragraphs in English. Recognizing common obstacles, such as difficulties with grammatical structures, lack of coherence, and limited vocabulary, allowed the design of targeted pedagogical interventions. This proactive approach not only improved students' writing skills but also fostered confidence and autonomy, enabling them to express themselves more competently through written discourse.

Moreover, the development of paragraph writing in English was facilitated through pedagogical strategies that drew on students' everyday experiences, creating meaningful learning encounters. By incorporating familiar themes from their daily lives, including routines, hobbies, significant events, preferences, local customs, and other notable occasions, the study established a learning environment that encouraged active participation and personal engagement. This approach enriched students' linguistic proficiency while simultaneously supporting their cognitive and emotional growth. As a result, students were able to produce more coherent, cohesive, and expressive written paragraphs, demonstrating not only improved technical skills but also greater motivation and confidence in using English.

In summary, the findings of this research highlight the effectiveness of meaningful learning experiences in enhancing paragraph writing skills among fifth-year students. The integration of theoretical foundations, targeted strategies, and real-life contextualization provided a holistic framework for language learning that fosters both academic development and lifelong engagement with English. By addressing linguistic challenges, promoting active participation, and connecting learning to students' daily lives, this study offers practical and valuable guidance for educators seeking to cultivate proficient, motivated, and confident writers in primary EFL classrooms.

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