



POSTGRADUATE STUDIES - SECOND CYCLE

THESIS:

The Impact of Technology in Improving  
Students' Writing Skills

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## **ABSTRACT**

The use of technology has become inevitable. More and more, we are witnessing a shift in education. The times when technology was considered a “distraction” within the classroom, is now fading away. We come to live in a new reality, a far more technologically advanced reality, where technology is at disposal for anyone who is willing to make a change. All these changes cannot be done without having the proper training. Training will allow both students and professors to use technology for creation and enhancement. Using technology in education as a new medium, a far more advanced one is opening new opportunities every day. The comfort zone that technology can provide is crucial for the new generation of students and professors. By working in a relaxed, comforting environment, great things can be achieved. The students will have the freedom to learn as they please, and the professors will be there to aid them in any way they can. The results from conducting the online survey were positive, taken into consideration that the students cannot change their reality overnight. Changing the way they have been taught up until the moment of starting higher education is not going to be easy. It will take time, effort, and dedication in order to understand the full potential of technology and what it can offer regarding their education, thus making it more enjoyable and easier. To conclude, technology will always be around, whether we give the appreciation it deserves or not. We should all be grateful since without technology the world would be in trouble. Just because we are used to technology always being there, that does not mean that we should not try to use it for other purposes as well. In the end, we are all responsible for the choices we make, with or without technology.



## АПСТРАКТ

Употребата на технологијата стана неизбежна. Сè повеќе и повеќе, сме сведоци на промените во образованието. Времето кога технологијата се сметаше дека го “одвлекува вниманието” во училницата, сега исчезнува. Живееме во нова реалност, далеку технолошки понапредна реалност, каде технологијата е на располагање на секој што е подготвен да направи промена. Сите овие промени не можат да се направат без соодветна обука. Обуката ќе им овозможи на студентите и професорите да ја користат технологијата за создавање и унапредување. Користејќи ја технологијата во образованието како нов медиум, далеку понапреден, секој ден отвора нови можности. Зоната на удобност што може да ја обезбеди технологијата е клучна за новата генерација на студенти и професори. Работењето во релаксирана, удобна околина, може да постигне одлични работи. Студентите ќе имаат слобода да учат како што сакаат, а професорите ќе бидат таму за да им помогнат на било кој можен начин. Резултатите од спроведувањето на анкетата преку Интернет беа позитивни, имајќи во предвид дека студентите не можат да ја променат својата реалност преку ноќ. Промената на начинот на кој им било предавано до моментот на пред започнување на високото образование нема да биде лесно. Ќе биде потребно време, напор и посветеност со цел да се разбере целиот потенцијал на технологијата и што може да понуди во однос на нивното образование, со што ќе го направи да биде попријатно и полесно. Во заклучок, технологијата секогаш ќе биде тука, без разлика дали ќе и ја дадеме благодарност што ја заслужува или не. Сите ние треба да бидеме благодарни, бидејќи без технологијата светот ќе биде во неволја. Само затоа што сме навикнати технологијата секогаш да е присутна, тоа не значи дека не треба да се обидеме да ја користиме и за други цели. На крајот, сите ние сме одговорни за изборите што ги правиме, со или без технологијата.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The technological development has taken the world by a storm. Each and every day, we strive for progress and finding a new way to transfer the knowledge and make sure it becomes a habit. There is no special secret formula, just a lot of effort and practice because practice makes perfect. One of the hardest skills to master in any language is writing. Due to its extensive nature and complexity, most of the students give up after their first try, convincing themselves that it is not for them. Writing can be challenging and troublesome for some students, but it should never be the reason to give up completely. Therefore, the solution is adding a new medium. The students need a medium that they understand, something that they identify with, something used by their peers, and something that they use on a daily basis. This is where technology steps in. Technology creates an environment for improvement, expansion, and sharing. It has its own way of making people comfortable, giving them space where being judged is not a priority, and the freedom to express their opinions proves to be more than comforting. It is of crucial importance that we understand the needs of the students. We have to let go of the past and the way we have been taught because things have changed. We need to focus on the present and what is relevant to the lives of the students. That means keeping up with the latest technological improvements, showing the students that knowledge can be obtained in any way, preferably through a medium chosen by the learner. When it comes to learning, always choose to be the leader, never the follower, because in many cases what works for one student, might not work for another. Technology has the biggest database of information available with only one click away. Containing files of every format available for downloading, it gives the opportunity to choose how to obtain the information. When writing a paper, the students can search for examples, look at guidelines on the internet, read comments, search for tips on how to write the best paper they can, watch tutorials, read books about any topic, look at the format of the required paper, listen to audio books, or simply look for specific vocabulary with definitions. The possibilities are limitless. Although the research area of this topic is enormous, technology has become an inseparable part of the teaching process. The reality is that it is impossible to progress without technology. Sending emails, doing homework, writing essays, writing blogs, posting on social media, these are all, at first



sight, insignificant things that we do on a daily basis. Because we have all these commodities, we tend not to bother ourselves with why and how they work. Technology has a huge impact on writing if used properly. Everything we do is a way of learning. Sure, some people might disagree, but every new thing we learn or come in touch with, it is a new addition to our collection of knowledge. That is what makes this topic alluring, to find a new use to an already established use. The aim of this research is to show the impact of technology in improving students' writing skills. We will talk about the effects of technology on students' writing skills. We will explore this phenomenon from a different perspective, where usually there is a clash because of the generational gap. One of the crucial issues is to show that technology is a helping tool, a medium that should not be undermined just because no one said otherwise. It is a tool that requires a certain level of knowledge, from the teachers and students as well. There are still so many students that have issues with using programs like Microsoft Word, Excel, creating presentations in PowerPoint, and Prezi. The reason behind it is because no one taught them how to use them, or had no equipment to practice. Since they do not have the basic skills mastered, it is really hard for them to learn more advanced material. From this perspective, technology is presented as homework, one of the scariest words when it comes to students, of course with some other words along. Luckily, now we have tutorials that can educate the students from using a simple program to actually programming a game or creating a website. Another issue is to show that technology is not "a distraction", but a very effective learning medium meant to ease the lives of both, the teachers and the students. It all comes down to the point of view. This goes to all the people that say that they use the technology for work only, and not for things that are distracting, but still do them like, scrolling through social media, watching movies, listening to music, or watching videos on YouTube. Since these activities above are usually happening during their free time, they do not consider them as a distraction, because they choose to do them willingly, and are not forced by anything or anyone. Furthermore, we will look into some of the most popular exercises that the students choose to practice online, methods, and how they work when they are incorporated into a learning environment.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

After reading and carefully breaking down various articles and books about technology and writing, many of them contained a strong relationship and proof that technology is one of the most used methods that have a positive impact on improving students' writing skills. Numerous sources focused on how technology helped the students become better at writing by using a vast collection of online materials. Multiple books and researches had a strong opinion that the students should be more confident and start believing in their own writing. Additionally, it showed that students can publish their writings online and get feedback from anyone who reads their writings. They can start running their own blog and attract different kinds of readers. In practice, people tend to leave two types of feedback; the constructive one, and the less constructive one. This is where students need to be very careful in choosing whose feedback they are going to trust and try to fix their writing based on it. This is a rather delicate topic that should not be overlooked. There are some readers that are harsh, but very honest about the piece of writing they read. They are just frustrated in the sense of how the writer made such mistakes that are very elementary and easily noted by the average reader. There is one catch here, not everyone has the same norm when it comes to describing the average reader. Some readers are not bugged by, what others might get ticked off. In this category, we might include things like the unappealing alignment of the text, bad organization, the bad background of the blog, the bad color of the font, formatting in general. These are some things that tick readers off. It is not expected to bug everyone, but there are people that do not enjoy reading stories or any text that is not accordingly formatted. Not all mistakes the students make are language-based things like bad grammar, colloquialisms, slang, abbreviations, there is also the case of the formatting, the overall look of the piece of writing as mentioned above. Not everyone seems to pay attention to every aspect of a piece of writing when they first come in touch with. Some readers want to immerse in the writing, soak the atmosphere of the text, and the message of the author. They like to have their own insight first before they judge it. The problem is that if something is not appealing enough to look at, it will probably not be given a chance. It would function much better if the writing is judged for its logical flow of ideas and grammar first, then for its format. The reason behind this is very simple. The formatting of a



piece of writing is easier to be corrected, compared to fixing the text. Every piece of writing can be fixed, with a few tweaks, but if the text itself is not solid, there is not much to do about it, since the writer needs to sit down, look at the text, brainstorm again, and then come up with a way to fix it, and implement the feedback that was given to them. This is not impossible, but in order to produce a good piece of writing, it has to go through many filters, before clamming that it is done and it cannot be perfected. On the other hand, we have the less constructive feedback. This is probably the worst thing that can happen to anyone that is interested in writing. There are many people that dwell on the mistakes that they made in their own lives, but they cannot do anything about it. What they do is spread toxic throughout society. Imagine having a young, promising person interested in writing. What would happen if that same person is influenced by someone as toxic as a bitter person? The answer is very sad but painfully real. That person will stop writing. Those bitter people suck out the joy of other people. It is how they survive. These people have a special energy, a way to make others think the same way they do. It is manipulation at its finest. Let's say a piece of writing is bad in their eyes. They will praise it, spread the word, and then enjoy the fruits of their hard labor. The person who wrote that piece of writing will be so proud and forget the very essence of why they started to write. When things go in over their heads, they lose every sense of reality, starting to live in an imaginary world. After some time, that once proud person will receive the hardest reality check. From the clouds to the ground, to the underground. The actual problem is that they do not give any kind of constructive feedback. It is always things like, you are bad at writing, you are trying too hard, and you are not as innovative as you think you are, and so on. It is even worse if they like a piece of writing. That piece of writing will get an unbelievable amount of hate from one single person only, and we all know how people are when they find out that someone is having a harder time than they are. They are like sharks once they smell blood, unstoppable until there is nothing left. They come, spread their negativity, and they enjoy as others struggle and doubt everything they have ever done in their lives. What happens next is that negativity will penetrate their skin so deep it will poison their soul, and make them lose any sense of self. In order to be a decent person in their eyes, they will try to do anything to please them. By this point, there is no return. They will be long gone before even realizing



that they lost many chances focusing on pleasing one bitter person on the internet they probably do not know, or will ever meet, to failing the most important person in the world, themselves. The worst part is that they will never ever please that bitter person. They will always ask for more, nothing will satisfy their thirst for destruction. They will never be good enough, no matter what. What happens from here is even sadder. They already transformed and turned in the same bitter, toxic person that ruined their life. From here on, they will join the toxic society and poison, everyone they can, infecting them with their negativity, just because it was done to them. Do others deserve that? No, no one does. Will that make up for the fact that someone destroyed their life? No, no it will not. They will just continue the trend because misery loves company. Instead of breaking the cycle, they just continue to feed this corruption. The logical question will be; why would I have to deal with it? Why cannot someone else do it? The real answer might be shocking, but these toxic people do not have a filter. They come, activate the poison, and run. After some time they come back to check how many are infected. The best way to deal with people like these is to cut any contact with them. As the old saying goes, "Out of sight out of mind". Everyone seems to forget one simple, yet an incredibly hard thing to do, avoid them. As it was stated before, not all feedback should be accepted and praised, especially if it comes from toxic people. Some people might ask, how do I know who is trying to help me and who is not? Well, that question is easy. Their professors would be the best choice because after all the professors want their students to be successful, and sometimes the students do not understand what the professors are doing, but they are not working against their students. They are trying to point out the good things, and the things that need fixing. It is a very difficult situation to be in, but it is better for the student to be aware of their mistakes, rather than learning it the wrong way and try to change from there. That never ever works. Another feedback that they should listen to is that little voice inside them. If the inside voice is happy, then they should not worry, because they wrote the best text they could. With time and experience, they will learn who is there to help them and who is telling them lies that the world is pink and only pink. Here are a couple of words of wisdom shared between professors. This scenario happens to everyone that ever wrote something. It is one of the many fazes that everyone goes through with writing. The important thing is, to be honest about the



objectives set with the piece of writing. The chances are that at the beginning all writing will seem like the best thing in the world, but after some years and experience, when they stumble upon their first pieces of writing or decide they want to have a little bit of taste of the old days, they will probably laugh and think, wow. The idea seems a little too real, but do not worry, we all had those kinds of moments. What's more, that is how we grow and change. Sometimes we learn from our own mistakes, sometimes we learn from others. The contradiction of life is that even if we know that something is wrong and it will probably leave its mark, we still need to feel on our own skin to be sure. Why? No one really has that answer. It is all part of the vast unexplored territory that is human nature. One sensitive matter that all articles discussed is that the students do not get the right motivation and freedom of imagination. This is a crucial part of creating a good piece of writing. The one thing that makes any piece of writing worth reading, is the personality put into it. From here on, we can all agree that imagination and motivation might be if not are one of the most important things any quality piece of writing should contain. To be able to tell a story through the eyes of a person that is free to imagine and have a strong motivation is very rewarding. Students do not use this method. They think that they will be judged for their opinions, beliefs, or style of writing. Some students write in a way that is very intriguing, causing their readers to really put some effort into understanding what they are trying to say. Other students write in a way that through their perspective, innocent things stop being innocent after the reader gets that insight. There are students, who write using a lot of descriptive adjectives, and their writing seems more like poetry, but if that style is used correctly, beautiful writing can be produced. Lastly, there are the students that no matter what will keep on producing generic writing. They will not be judged for their writings, but one professor cannot repair the damage that has been done to the students for a long time. Even when the motivation or freedom of expression was given, they did not use it, they kept writing in the same generic way, thinking that it was some kind of a trick. They lack creativity which leads to creating problems and concerns that are not even real. They copy from established writers, thinking that if the writer is famous, their writing must be good. They are afraid to try and be original, which in most cases turns out to be ridiculous because pretending to be someone else and then be angry when people judge them for it is not fun. The proper



term for impersonating someone else is a copycat. That is a bad type of publicity. People in our society have an aversion toward writing in general. They think it is not important, it is just another chore, and it is not like they are going to ever write something in their lives again. They fail to understand that writing presents a vent for many students. As Purcell, Buchanan, and Friedrich stated, "Ultimately, most of these teachers see their students expressing themselves in text (and other formats) more so than was the case when they themselves were in middle and high school" (p. 18). Writing is a way of self-expression. Some students are not very talkative but are incredibly gifted when it comes to writing. It is their way of comfortable communication. They want to stay under the radar, just because of their introvert personality. They are usually not very active during the classes, but they enjoy writing. Since that is the way of how they adapted to function, they feel right at home when they need to write something. They have the necessary freedom and they produce one of the best pieces of writing within the class. There are also students who are very active during the classes, but also enjoy writing. It all comes down to the personality of the students. If they decided that writing is good for them and enjoyable, they will do it no matter what, just they will be very careful with whom they share their opinions. Through writing, the soul of the writer is revealed. Their dreams, struggles, opinions, beliefs, backgrounds, interests, and so much more. The reader connects with a particular piece of writing if the writer writes about something that is of high value for the reader. Let's say the reader is a fan of science fiction. If they read writings connected with science fiction, their attention will be immediately captured and they will stay until the end, trying to see how the things they love are perceived by others. We are all the same, but different. This means that the reader should never assume or judge writings based on the opinions of others. What is bad for one person might be the best thing for another. There are many people that support this trend, and that is why we have books that are not of a high quality being famous and bestsellers instead of the books that they should be. It sounds a little negative, but these books that do become famous overnight are usually cheap thrills. People read them because they are trendy. They will not like the book, but still read it just because in their circle of friends and family, that book is beloved by everyone, and they do not want to feel left out. After two months, a new trend will become popular and everyone will forget about the



last book and focus on the new one. Honestly speaking, if a book leaves a good impression on someone, will they forget it, or just choose not to speak about it since people are very opinioned towards things that they do not enjoy. There is a fine line between wanting to belong somewhere and inner peace. One is more rewarding than the other; the choice is entirely up to them. The recent research in this field shows that technology goes beyond our wildest imagination. It is so extensive that every day we find out new things that were already invented recently or years ago. Finding a new use to an already established use is next to impossible, but finding new use in a different surrounding to where it was created is difficult but manageable.

## **2.1 Using technology to change the current state of mind**

Firstly, we will start with some examples as to how with the help of technology, we can change the minds of the students and show them that writing is not boring or despised, as they believe. Furthermore, we will talk about one seemingly insignificant issue, and that is the destructive pattern of generic writing. Lastly, we will talk about keeping an open mind and accepting that any medium can invoke strong feelings of motivation and inspiration, it does not have to be words only. As Otte and Mlynarczyk (2010) explained, “The need to jettison unwanted baggage is at least as striking as the acknowledged need for new approaches” (p.47). People, in general, tend to show favoritism to the things that were in their lives for the longest period of time. This is their comfort zone, the zone where everything is how they want it to be because they have constructed it that way. The problem surfaces when they need to change the things within their comfort zone. This takes time, effort, and a huge will since it is a big change. The thing is that when we mention the word change, people perceive it as bad. Well, it is somewhere in the middle, a change might be good or bad, depends on which side the person stands. Instead, I would recommend that we use words like option or addition since those words are closer to the whole process of change. People need to understand that implementing changes does not change the thing from its very core, it simply adds a new dimension to it, and this goes to all the people that claim that we are not as technologically advanced as other countries. My question is as follows, how is that going to happen when they do not accept the things that are normal in the countries that they compare us with?



These issues might seem unimportant, but professors cannot teach students about writing until they make sure that the students have the proper foundation and change their opinions and beliefs about writing because if they think that writing has no value, they will not even try to write.

## **2.2 Using technology to provide new ways of improving students' writing skills**

Students need challenges. They like to be involved in the teaching process, to create and be innovative. When given the opportunity where their voices will be heard, they will try their best to leave the best impression they can. By capturing their attention, giving them something to identify with that has a huge impact and meaning in their lives, we give the students the opportunity to strive to be the best. If they feel like what they are doing has a purpose, they will not need any more motivation than the thought of becoming the best version of themselves. One of the greatest challenges is teaching the students not to despise writing, and change the stereotypes that writing is boring. This is the case with most of the students. During elementary and high school, the students are taught to fear writing, especially when they receive their graded essays and they see the red pen corrections all over their essay. This causes them to feel bad because red is the international color of saying "you did not do well" but they also do not get any feedback on what they have done wrong. It is usually some vague feedback that no one knows what is it about, even the ones that wrote it cannot be sure what they meant after a couple of days, once they forget about the essay. Day by day, students start to despise writing, and that trend continues until they reach higher education. Instead of working on more advanced writing techniques, they will be stuck with the basics. It is hard to progress without having the basics. So when they start their higher education, they realize that they have made a horrible mistake by continuing the trend that others have started. Following because it felt like the right thing to do, they change their habits. They try to learn as much as possible and they get better at writing, because of the professors who give them constructive feedback like what to correct, what to leave the same, what to eliminate, and what to add. As Palfrey and Gasser (2009) claim, "We find ourselves in a period of transition" (p.253). Now, the transition is a very good word. It showed that in order to implement one thing into an existing one, we need to be



patient and considerate as to why would anyone rush to enter the unknown territory and get lost inside? But, this territory is not unknown. The reality is that the older generation of students and professors are already accustomed to the traditional way of learning and teaching. This territory is unfamiliar to them, and change takes a lot more time and effort. This is no excuse to avoid technology in teaching, because both the professors and the students will have an easier and more enjoyable time, knowing that everything is a click away. There is no need to go and look for specific books in the public domain. Just go online, type the name of the book, and read it. Besides, all books in the public domain are free to read, so it is like going to the library but from the comfort of their own homes. By mixing writing and technology, we can change the circumstances and make writing even more appealing to the students. Here is one example that students find useful. The student's task is to write a movie review. Simple enough. The professor gives the students a guideline and examples of how the movie review should look like. Then, the professor and the students go through some dos and don'ts about writing a movie review and answer any questions the students might have. The next task is choosing the movie. We have to keep in mind that the students will probably not agree with each other, but here are some tips. Never chose horror, drama, or romance. Those are genres that are both loved and hated. Including comedy, documentaries, or science fiction can have similar consequences. When it comes to tastes in movies, students are very defensive, so the one thing the professor can do is propose the movie to be trending and let the students take a vote, giving them the room to place their own suggestions and then take a vote. Of course, the options must be appropriate to watch within a classroom environment. Another good solution would be to watch a movie based on something that is in the curriculum. Next, before starting the movie, we make sure that there are subtitles but only in English, so the students can see how the words are spelled. Besides spelling, they will be able to listen to the actors speaking and the right pronunciation of the words. They will get a chance to learn real English, which is a bit different from actually teaching a class because we cannot simulate every situation they might find themselves in. After watching the movie, we will have a discussion where the students will share their first impressions, which parts they liked, which parts they hated. Next, we will scroll through social media like Twitter and Instagram and read some comments about



the movie, and what the starting actors say about it. The students will have 10 minutes to go through social media and find an appropriate comment that they agree with and share with the class. After the class is over, their assignment is to write a movie review about the movie they watched in class, based on the guidelines, tips, and examples that they worked on. Since they have the structure of the movie review, the guidelines, they watched the movie, read comments from the social media, and had an in-class discussion; they can completely devote their attention to their opinion only. Overall, the students will have a lot of fun, learning about writing through a method that is innovative and creative. So, the next time the students need to write a movie review they will be able to do it perfectly, after a little bit of recall. This method will stay in their working memory longer because it is associated with a positive feeling, and they realize that writing is flexible. It all comes down to how the professor presents writing to the students. By connecting writing with technology, the students see a whole new opportunity that they did not notice it before. This opens a brand new horizon of opportunities and possibilities that will enhance their writing skills and broaden their opinions, showing them that the world is not pink, black, or white. It will show them that every color is present, one in a bigger percentage, another in smaller. We can be sure that next time, a student is asked to write a movie review, they will be happy to, because it is connected to something that now matters to them, and they will spread this kind of energy to whoever asks them about their experience with writing. The impact the professors have on their students can be immense, depending on the subject and its further usefulness in education. One simple tip to keep in mind the next time when a professor teaches and the student is attending their classes. A change cannot be achieved if one side is opposing.

### **2.3 Using technology to promote critical thinking, originality, and imagination in writing**

Critical thinking, originality, and imagination are some of the most important aspects when it comes to creating a good piece of writing. No one wants to read the generic writing on the generic topic. For a long time, especially through elementary and high school, students are taught to write generic, or not write at all. Remember that one topic, how I spent my summer/winter vacation? There are only so many things the students can write on that



overused, generic topic. It is to my pleasure to announce that when enrolling at a university, this topic will not be mentioned ever again. There, professors have so many better and more interesting topics. One of the biggest issues that the students have is that they as Mullin (1998) stated, "lacked the ability to observe detail" (p.57). Writing needs details. Details are the little things that separate the good writers from the bad. First of all, it is highly annoying to read a story starting every line with - he said, she said, or have a repetitive pattern of sentences, all lifeless and colorless. That is boring, generic writing that is usually graded as excellent. Sadly, it is because they are not very open-minded to new possibilities, due to the fact that they have been introduced to one pattern that is acceptable and they stay stuck in that rut forever. They have been taught from an early age that different is wrong. It feels like someone is telling the students what to think, so any possibility of critical thinking is cut short, like having a different view of the world will not help them write better papers. They are advised not to experiment and stick to what has already been proven as correct. They simply fulfill the requirements for belonging in the pattern of a well behaved, knowledgeable student. This is a very wrong thing to do. Of course, every type of writing has its own pattern, those are the rules. The pattern is there to show to the students how the paper should look like in terms of formatting and overall appearance, what are some expressions that are always put within the type of writing, used font, how many paragraphs, logical cohesion and so on. The guidelines do not tell the students what to include or exclude in their writing idea wise. Guidelines do not limit the possibility of the student to write from a different perspective or use examples that no one used before. The guidelines do not prohibit the flow of ideas, the imagination of the writers. The guidelines are assisting the student in producing the best paper they can, appearance and content-wise. The guidelines are not the enemy, but the common misconceptions are. One size does not fit all. Why people cannot implement this in writing as well? This self-destructive patterned writing brings only chaos. The worst part is that with enough bad influence, the writes can adopt and when the professor tells them to look at one thing and write as many details as possible describing the object, the students will notice the same details. It is both sad and disturbing. People do not have hive minds; information is not shared between everyone, at least not it that way. This is the price to pay for belonging to a pattern. Is it worth it? No, not by a long shot.



From here there is one crucial reasoning that Mullin (1998) points out, “why do students increasingly seem to write less interesting, in-depth papers?” (p.57). Because of the already established pattern. Since they have a positive experience with generic writing, they continue the trend. Students are not encouraged enough to write creatively, independently, and innovative. They think that if they are given the opportunity to alter reality, having complete freedom of expression, then something must be wrong. Professors give the students a writing task because they want to see whether they will be creative and stand behind their opinions, or go with the classic generic writing which will sound cliché and boring. When students write generic papers, they usually fall into categories, as Mullin (1998) claims, “the sort that tell us what students think we want; the ones that leave out as much of their personal views as possible; the kind that skim the surface” (p.60). Professors deal with this kind of students on a daily basis. That is why the professors are trying to show to the students, make them realize that critical thinking is a necessary skill that they have to use all the time. Yes, some students might have similar opinions, similar interests, but the chances that there will be two identical students are next to impossible. Students think that they should please the professors by telling them what they want to hear. The truth is the professors want to hear something new, innovative, and personal. They do not want to hear the same old story all the time. This is why they are trying to find new solutions to the same everlasting problem. Students leave out their personal opinions because they were taught that expressing their own minds can be rather dangerous, as to the fact that some students get the nickname of a know-it-all. It is funny to see now from this perspective that there is no balance, it is either good or bad, no silver lining. As for the students that skim the surface, now they do not even bother at all. All of the above behavior is caused by the fear of making a mistake because mistakes are punishable. Everyone makes mistakes; that is how we learn. If everyone succeeds on their first try, they will not try to work as hard as they have. No one is all-knowing. That is the beauty of writing. Just when you think that you have mastered a topic, new information appears. We never stop learning because there is always room for acquiring new skills. When this repetitive pattern is broken, the students will realize that they have been wrong about many things. They will begin to understand that their originality and opinions are the things that make them different from the



rest of the class because they come from within. Yes, there are people who have similar ideas, points of view, or dreams, but the reason is that they share an interest in the same things, which to happen in a learning environment is a rare case. Not everyone has the same opinions or experiences as they do. By interacting with students that are different from them, they grow, learn, and gain a new perspective and how they perceive the world, because beneath the surface they are all different, whether they choose to show it or not. They realize that there is a way out of the as Palfrey and Gasser (2008) stated, “copy-and-paste culture” (p.245). That means that everyone is responsible for their results. One great exercise that can help break the pattern of generic writing is free writing. The teacher gives the students a starting topic to write continuously for 15 minutes, not worrying about grammar, spelling, or vocabulary. The goal of this exercise is to relax the mind and include as many details as possible, focusing on just developing the story and the flow of ideas. If the students run out of ideas on the given topic, they can continue with another idea that they have. They can imagine as if they are reliving the situation, or completely shut out everything around them and get in their own zone. While writing on the given topic, some students have different feelings than others. Some might have a bad day, some normal, others great. That will reflect on their writing. Their feelings will bubble to the surface when they are given the space and time to express them without being judged. This way they understand that generic writing makes them average, and no one wants to be average. Next time when the students need to write an essay, they will use this technique quite a lot. They will be able to sort out the most important ideas and after that, they will just polish the paper. Writing is not about using fancy words that do not connect with the writer and the reader, it is about staying true to themselves and being original, we have enough copycats already. Just let them wander to the possibility that they are responsible for what they produce, and let them think about how they want to be remembered, as leaders or followers. One of these two is immediately forgotten, but no hints. This is something the students must figure out for themselves.



## **2.4 Evoking inspiration with the help of technology**

Students need a little push, that leap of faith that everyone is afraid to make. They need a stimulus to invoke their feelings and inspiration even if it is achieved through using a different medium. Sometimes it might be a song, a picture, a memory, or a postcard in this case. Making a little change can go a long way as Trimmer (1998) stated, "Instead of taking my writing students to the art museum, I brought the "gift shop" to them" (p.23). By introducing a new way to look at writing, showing that any medium can be used as a stimulus for writing, amazing results can be achieved. The students will learn something new, keep an open mind, and develop a higher level of critical thinking because they will have to do something that they already know in an environment that is not quite familiar to them. As Hobson (1998) puts it, "Visual artists write; verbal artists draw" (p.140). This way, the students learn to get out of their comfort zone and go the extra mile, because the results will be enough of a reward itself. When students are faced with something that they have never done before, they tend to panic a lot. Since it is not registered within their memory, they do not know how to behave and come to the point when they let their imagination run wild. Coming up with all kinds of conspiracy theories as to why this is happening and how it is going to affect them, they miss out on all the fun and knowledge, and keep stressing about things that are not real. It is an initial reaction, to fear the unknown. Then there is one question left to ask - How are they going to learn new things if they never come in touch with them? Hiding behind the line of their comfort zone will not get them anywhere. In life, there will be many cases where they will be forced to do something that is not allowed within their comfort zone, but knowing that if they expand their comfort zone they will only benefit from it, would they do it? My guess is yes. Everybody changes, that is how we progress forward. Whether is a new material, a new way of instruction, or a new way to look at the world, we realize that those things will only benefit us in the long run. There is nothing wrong with a little competition and raising the bar a little higher. One thing that seems to be generational is the influence of popular students in their classrooms. We have all been through this, so the next words will be no surprise to anyone. Basically, in order to become popular and hang with the in-crowd, the in-crowd has some demands asked from all existing and new members. Respect what has been decided as a decision. Sometimes through



the influence of one student, the others might get better as well, but this is not the case every time. Most of the time, the popular student is the one that decides what the others should do, say, or behave. Now, this is the breaking point of every student going from high school to university. To find their own path. There are students who are so used to the fact that someone is always there, showing them the way, leading them through thick and thin, helplessly following them, no matter where that might take them. Others get fed up by having to listen to another student that for whatever reasons everyone bows down to. There is one, and probably the hardest solution to this problem, just stop. They should take a look around and see who is fighting with them in their corner. When they realize the sad, but harsh truth, they will change and realize that everyone is the master of their own universe. High school is rough; they just need to know what is worth fighting for and what is not. Being falsely adored, or have self-respect. A great price to pay, for an even greater choice. Once the students know what they really want, they can focus on making those things happen. A great exercise that helps the students understand the importance of inspiration is giving them complete freedom. Every student can choose their own motivation no matter the medium. This happened to almost everyone when they were a student. The professor tells the students that they need to write an essay about a topic that they think is important, and then confusion collides. The students are so confused and overwhelmed at the same time. They try to think of the perfect topic to represent themselves and are so happy that they get to choose the topic and write about something that matters to them. The problem is that they are lost. They raise their heads up and see that everyone is chatting among themselves trying to figure out the perfect topic. They start going online and researching funny videos, inspirational quotes, inspiring pictures, favorite songs, or some students concentrate and zone out, it all comes down to what kind of feeling they are going with, what gets them excited. What is interesting is that every student has their own way of getting the motivation they need. The first time the students complete this exercise, it will feel different, but then they will return to this exercise because it will show them that the same results can be achieved even when taking a different route. Before anything changes in the lives of the students, there must be a change from within. Without having a little change in the mindset of the students, all efforts will be in vain.



## **2.5 Technology requires a certain level of knowledge before it can be used properly**

Secondly, we will talk about one thing that almost everyone forgets, and that is that technology requires a certain level of knowledge before being able to properly use all of its options. Implementing technology in teaching is becoming a powerful force that needs to be recognized. No one seems to appreciate the things we have before we lose them. That will never happen with technology. It will always be there, no matter what. It is so vast, that even spending a lifetime will not be enough to uncover its secrets. No one is all-knowing. We just need to find the balance between not getting lost in the sea of information and what actually matters. As long as we use technology for the things that are beneficial to us and we can transfer them to other people and help them become better people, we are fulfilling the real purpose of life. There is a limit to what the human body can withstand. The crucial thing with technology is to know how it works, and how to use it. It does not mean knowing everything about technology, only enough to cover the activities done on a daily basis. For professors, it is imperative to know how to use the programs they need like Microsoft Word, or PowerPoint, which are mostly used by students and professors. This does not mean that the learning should stop here, these are only the basics. They need to know how to open PDF files, JPG files, MP4 files, MP3 files and so much more. This is only the tip of the iceberg. As De Voss, Aadahl, and Hicks (2010) pointed out, "For computers to be richly connected to curriculum, a great deal of time and training must be allocated to their integration" (p.33). By setting priorities, great results can be achieved. It takes a lot of dedication, work, and enhancement to be able to be a proficient user of technology, especially when it comes to writing. There is a variety of things to know before using technology for writing like the things stated before. We must never forget that technology is used for one aspect only. It is in every aspect of our lives. Today without technology it is almost impossible to exist and survive. Everything that is work or school-related is saved on the personal computer. All contacts are saved on our smartphones. We simply cannot live without it. We have become dependent on it. No internet equals no news, no progress; it is like we are back in the Stone Age. It is a constant struggle to keep up with the technology. All those applications that come out every day. It is a very dedicated life to one purpose, and that is to be the best people we can be. One important aspect when it comes to



technology and knowledge is the generational gap. The truth is that our parents lived in a very different reality than us and frankly the next generations of students yet to come, will be repeating the same cycle, living differently from our generation. Luckily, they will never experience the pain of surfing the Net, and their mother telling them to get off the internet, so she can use the phone. It might seem funny to the people who were not growing up with these struggles, but it is a part of who we are. Things like this defined my generation. Change is good; it means that things are looking up. We were a transitive generation. We caught the glimpse of all stages of childhood. From going outside and playing with our friends, then being amazed by the power of playing consoles, then the power of the internet and personal computers, followed by the frenzy of MSN, MySpace, Skype, until cell phones were becoming popular, then touch technology and so on. It seems quite funny now thinking about it, but going through all these little insignificant changes made a huge impact on my generation. It is a vicious cycle. Every trend being replaced by a new and more sophisticated one. Then followed the biggest change in our education, implementing computers in our high school classrooms. That was so short-lived; it was like it was not even implemented at all. Our professors could not find a way to get used to the fact that technology was there to make their job easier and make learning more enjoyable. The biggest problem was that as Palfrey and Gasser (2008) explained, "But very few schools of any sort take the simple first step of giving teachers adequate training, or any training at all, to help them teach using technologies in a way that supports their specific pedagogical mode" (p.250). This is a huge issue. The logical rule is that technology cannot be implemented as something new without making sure that adequate training was provided before. Without adequate training, technology became a problem, an obstacle and it was completely removed from the classrooms. This is not the case with higher education. Our professors taught us that technology is very beneficial, and it really was. All those projects and presentations that we made helped us to understand the importance of technology. That in order to be successful, everyone needed to keep up with the trends. By having the training they need, they will not feel pressure and work with technology will be like a walk in the park. They will be able to focus on teaching and preparing the students for the future, as Palfrey and Gasser stated, "The school of the future will put students in digitally supported environments



where they can work, and learn, in teams” (p.248). This is essential for the healthy development of the students’ working habits. This is and will be their life, it is all about technology. Who knows what the future holds?

## **2.6 Technology provides the perfect environment for writing**

Thirdly, technology creates an optimal environment for students to work on improving their writing skills, using their most preferable method. This kind of freedom is essential when it comes to students and improving their writing skills. As Poole, McIlvain, and Evans stated, “Teachers everywhere have a golden opportunity today to improve the educational experience for their students by creating an environment in which children can take advantage of computer-based technologies to extend their ability to think and learn” (p.307). One way to improve their writing skills is to blog about Literature. The professor will open a blog and invite all students to join. Students can have online discussions, comment on other students’ answers, post materials, share with the group, and interact. Besides having an opportunity to speak their minds, because there are students who are better at explaining when writing rather than talking, they are within their comfort zone knowing that everyone in that group understands the things that they are talking about. They will feel like they belong to yet another group that has similar interests to theirs. As Pytash, Ferdig and Rasinski stated, “that videogames can be harnessed to interest students in learning as well as in developing an awareness of their learning” (p.83). This encourages students not to be afraid to pursue their passions. Some students are not satisfied with the level of writing skills they have, therefore they do not want to write. Maybe their writing skills were not so sharp during elementary or high school, but there is one thing they can do, and that was improving their writing skills. The truth is that writing takes time, practice, passion, and the most important aspect is constant enrichment. By constant enrichment, it is understood reading a lot of books, learning new words for a more colorful vocabulary, learning and trying new things and so on. It is a work in progress that requires dedication and an unbelievably vast imagination, keeping an open mind, and staying motivated. Writing is a type of soul food, something that fulfills people from within. But there is only one catch. They have to be open to new things and willing to accept that there are people



that are already well versed in writing and be willing to learn from them. One way to sharpen their writing skills is as Palfrey and Gasser (2008) claimed, “creative use of gaming in the classroom” (p.248). By playing games, they will develop a different view when writing. This is important because there are different types of writing and students cannot use the same strategy for all writing. The most important thing when dealing with any kind of problem is not to get stuck in the wormhole of the problem. That way, they will get one or two solutions to their problem, which in most cases is never enough. When they try to solve the problem from another perspective, they will see that they have double the solutions in comparison to when they concentrated on solving the problem and did not consider anything else. This is helpful because they will put themselves in the shoes of another character which is not their normal perspective. They will get to think like a detective that is trying to solve a mystery. They will gain a new perspective on critical thinking. They will be better at noticing details. Imagine how much benefit they will have if they play detective games while taking a course in Detective Stories. They will have the specific vocabulary, have the mindset of the investigator, or the perpetrator, it all depends on the games that they are playing. Each student has their own way of learning. According to the Education Degree website, there are 7 different types of learning styles, “Visual; Aural; Verbal; Physical; Logical; Social; Solitary” which shows that there is more than meets the eye. It is never just one style solely; it is a combination of at least two different styles. According to Palfrey and Gasser (2008), “As students research, write, and create collaboratively through online environments, they will be learning skills that will serve them well over time, even as digital economies evolve” (p.248). Another great way to improve their writing skills is to take online courses, watch tutorials, and do exercises, everything that their heart desires. It all comes down to the students and what is their preferred method of learning. Technology has created the opportunity for all this to happen. It gives the opportunity to break the predetermined patterns of thinking and the reasoning of things. It gives a chance to be innovative and original without being judged. The students can check words for spelling; they can have help from the internet, can look at examples, and so on. It all comes down to making a statement, because living without technology will cut them out of society, and they will not be



able to do anything. No one reads letters anymore, just emails. Overall, this is how the current research has helped me with my own research, providing the evidence that I require.

### **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

My theory is that the impact of technology in improving students' writing skills is crucial and taken for granted. The use of technology has become inevitable. More and more, we are witnessing a shift in education. The times when using technology in the classroom was considered a "distraction", now it seems to be providing and creating a supportive environment that is optimal for learning. From the four skills, writing is the most challenging skill to master. Containing components like - grammar, ideas, spelling, punctuation, organization, the point of view, word choice, creativity, imagination, just to name a few. Technology presents one of the mediums that help the students with resolving any challenging matters. Starting from doing a research which, according to Palfrey and Gasser (2008), "is more likely to mean a Google search than a trip to the library" (p.239), up to applying for a job, technology is helping the students to learn, grow, and keep up with everything that is happening around them. Technology should not be looked at from one side solely. It is so complex, that many pieces of research done in this field have an estimation of its boundaries and its benefits. There are many other things that can be done on the internet besides scrolling through social media. Another interesting fact about technology is that it is the ultimate way of keeping up with what is going on in the world. No matter what we are looking for, the internet is the greatest database that contains the past, the present, and possibly the future. Think about publishing. The internet and technological advancement made the process of publishing much easier. Since everyone keeps the books in their computes or tablets, their lives are so much easier and organized. As Thompson (2012) put it, "books are now readily available online to anyone anywhere in the world" (p.18). Technology is great at keeping us up with the trends, but not too much that it would be weird. Technology is probably the best tool for learning, a companion that contains all of the answers we might require, thus making everything so much easier for us. Let us not forget that there are blogs, writing and publishing stories, reading books, watching movies, listening to music, which presents just a few ways to improve the students' writing skills through the use of technology.



Many people are skeptical towards this approach, but this is education, the reward goes to the ones that go the extra mile.

### **3.1 Basic understanding of technology is a must**

To begin with, one crucial fact that everyone seems to ignore is that to be able to use the technology properly, both the professors and the students have to have a basic understanding of the technology they use. Whether it is Microsoft Office Word or Microsoft Office PowerPoint, the important thing is that they know the full potential of the medium they are using. As Selfe (1999) stated, "Technological literacy - meaning computer skills and the ability to use computers and other technology to improve learning, productivity, and performance - has become as fundamental to a person's ability to navigate through society as traditional skills like reading, writing, and arithmetic..."(p.3). This has been and it still is an issue in education. There are still debates and people with divided opinions on the actual impact of technology in improving students' writing skills. But not everything is as grim as they present it. Many of the ones that believed that technology has no place in education have jumped ships. Before the trend of technology was introduced as a new and exciting medium in teaching, the professors and the students were limited as to what they could do. Limited in the sense of how the accessibility of information worked. The times were so much more different and putting the effort of acquiring that same information in comparison to now, it was really different. Imagine having to go through dozens of books, page by page, searching for the required information. The reality was quite different then. As Tapscott (2009) stated, "The old system is what I call one-size-fits-all, one-way broadcast learning" (p.130). It was not necessarily negative; it was just how the methods worked then. Nowadays, it is impossible to use the method of one-size-fits-all, since no two people are the same. Therefore, they have come to the conclusion that not all new things are bad, and that progress is being made with the current mediums at their disposal. One of the main reasons this presents an issue is the lack of training and acceptance on behalf of both sides. Teachers are put to teach in an environment that is familiar to them, but the medium is not very popular, and the students do not feel comfortable using technology in this particular way, to help them with their education. Of course, this is not a matter that will



go overnight, but with enough training and understanding, both sides will come to the conclusion that technology is there to make things easier for them, not more difficult. There are many ways to adapt to technology like watching tutorials, attending courses, attending workshops. All it takes is a little effort and patience since technology in education is perceived as either right or wrong.

### **3.2 Technology provides the opportunity for enhancing the students' writing skills**

Secondly, technology allows professors to get creative and present more than one way to enhance students' writing skills. This is one of the best methods lately. It allows the professors to get creative with the material and exercises. As the British Council stated, "Times have changed, teachers have evolved, and we now have a new breed of learning technologists" (p.2). Sometimes the results might be surprising but in a good way, as to everyone is the same, but different. If the balanced connection is established the proper way, the results will be overwhelming, giving the students that little push they need in order to reach their full potential. The most important thing is that we change their mindset. As Fyfe (2014) stated, "Enhancing the student experience is clearly a key strategic driver for all universities, sharpened by ever increasing global competition for well-qualified students" (p.2). As can be noticed from previous experiences it is very hard to change someone's reality to something new. It just defines their whole meaning of existence as unimportant. It is a little bit harsh to look at it like that, but unfortunately, people get very aggressive when someone else is trying to change the old ways that are not doing them anything good, it is like they are allergic to it. Even though we are trying to teach some people that what they know is wrong, that whoever told them the information did not transfer it right to them, we get only hatred for it. On the other hand, if we do not help them and tell them that what they know is wrong and it will make them sound inappropriate, we still get only hatred for not telling them. Well, how are we supposed to talk when the other person will not even try to hear us out, it is not like we can force them to do something that they do not want, right? We are all humans, and if we cannot use communication to reach an agreement, then I do not know what else we would use. How are we supposed to implement new ideas and techniques if the people across us are not even



concerned about it, or willing to give it a chance in the least? There are many students that despise writing because, for one reason only, and the reason is that no one told them to think otherwise. They have an opinion that writing is boring and it is only done by people who have to do it. From this point, generic writing is the only kind of writing they know. They seem to follow one universal guideline and we all know that it is possibly the worst choice to make in education, not to mention life itself. Fit in the crowd, standing out is not rewarding enough. The reason behind this opinion on writing goes way back, even before they were born, and society does not help either. By wanting to belong in a social group, there are certain requirements, rules you must follow and have specific opinions on many isolated topics. One and the most common way of bonding in a social group is hatred. There are many people that stick together because they feel hatred towards a particular thing. I am not a judge to tell the students what is right or wrong, no one has that kind of power. I am just trying to show them that there is another way if they decide to keep an open mind to other suggestions and to stop the trend of generic writing because it is hurting their progress. Most of the students are petrified when they are asked to be creative and innovative. The only one thought going through their mind is, 'what am I going to do now'? This is a very serious problem because they are taught that creativity equals punishment. That is the price that has to be paid in order to maintain the trend of generic writing. Everything is laid out for the students, and they just seem to change the title of the essay, write about different topics than the example, and there it is. It is as simple as that. No extra effort, no imagination, no creativity, no self-expression. Follow the rules, stay stuck in a rut. This trend, later on, translates into something even worse and that is the students developing a habit of low retention. In other words, they do not pay as much attention to the things that they are doing now, in comparison to the past. Let us take as an example a simple road trip. As Holden, Dikkers, Martin, and Litts (2015) stated, "After the trip, students will often have no idea where they've been or how those places were connected" (p.45). It appeared that the students needed something easy and fun to use, something that will motivate them into remembering the whole road trip. Maybe what the students needed was a purpose, to make their trip unique and unlike anything else that they have experienced before. Just maybe.



### **3.3 Technology provides the optimal environment for the art of writing**

Thirdly, technology creates an optimal environment for the students to be able to find their own preferred style of learning and writing. As Oblinger (2012) stated, "Information technology is a tool of convenience - IT can change the game by making it easier for us to do the things we should" (p.37). That is what makes technology so versatile. Its ability to provide all the elements that are incremental to success given in one nicely wrapped package of opportunities and options. The times are changing, and so is the way new things are acquired. We live in a fast-paced society that makes us juggle a ton of information on a daily basis. As Palfrey and Gasser (2008) put it, "Just because Digital Natives learn differently from the way their parents did when they were growing up doesn't mean that Digital Natives are not learning" (p.240). In the end, no approach is perfect when isolated, but combined with another perspective, it might be just the option the students might need. By connecting learning and the students' interests, a far more serene and supportive classroom can be created. As stated before, technology has proven to be the perfect place for enrichment. As Gomez (2008) put it, "a computer screen can be an inexhaustible source of endless information" (p.12). It provides the needed comfort, privacy, and the option to choose. It gives time and lots of possibilities to find the suitable way, so the students can improve their writing skills. The ability to choose might be the best motivation they can get in life. Imagine how life would turn out to be if everyone would try to implement more than one way of learning. They would have the standard way of learning with the help of technology while in school, and then they could try to add a new way of learning that would work just for them. That is an unbelievably strong force that shapes the world of successful people. Knowing that the students will have two different sources of learning is taken for granted. Most of the students do not take advantage of this power. I am calling it power since it has everything one person could desire, it is up to the ones using it, and whether they will find its potential. We need to clear one thing solely; the students need to study at home if they want to achieve the best results. I would advise them to use every opportunity for self-learning, which as Davidson and Goldberg (2009) stated, "Self-learning has bloomed; discovering online possibilities is a skill now developed from early childhood through advanced adult life"(p.26). This is great for all people, students in general



because whether they chose to read, take an online course, watch tutorials, play games, they are the ones in charge. What could present an issue is that every activity is considered as a learning opportunity. Let us take playing games as an example. As Weber and Dixon (2010) put it, "So many children play videogames that scholars, teachers, and parents are scrambling to make sense of this leisure activity" (p.15). The best way to teach through games is not telling the students that they are learning by playing games. There is nothing else to it. The problem is that if the students know that they will play games and the reason for it will be learning, they will lose all interest and will not want to play games due to the fact that they will connect it with work and study. This will just create additional pressure and anxiety since the students will never, ever connect playing games and learning. I am sure that not a single student will ever put the words games and learning in the same sentence, at least not in this connotation. The best approach for solving this issue would be unconscious learning. That presents learning without knowing that the students are learning. It is a very powerful technique, yet incredibly hard to master. Giving the students a piece of information that will teach them the actual information and something more beyond the given information can be considered as pure insanity. It is not. Imagine the following situation. The students need to read a text that will explain the rules of formal writing, the language, the format, and so on. The students need to actually go through the example and remember the rules and structure. This presents the perfect opportunity for unconscious learning. Why? Well, it is quite simple. The topic of the text will present the unconscious learning part. It can range from literally anything to everything. While the students will only pay attention to the rules and the structure of the given text, they will unconsciously remember the text as well without paying any attention to it. Basically, they will be getting double the knowledge from a sole example, but as I said before this is an incredibly hard technique to master. All that will contribute to making the students feel like they are not put under pressure and they will try to work their best. By allowing the students to choose on their own, they do not feel pressured that school is yet another chore that cannot be avoided.



### **3.4 Recent Studies**

Now we will look at some of the recent studies conducted in our field of research.

#### **3.4.1 Alhusban (2016)**

A study conducted by Alhusban (2016) aimed to summarize the impact that technology has on students writing skills while learning English as a second language. Alhusban in a couple of occasions stated that the students used technology as an easy way out, using shortcuts, having the technology do the work for them, not put any effort into understanding the art of writing, and the most concerning part was the part that the students do not use critical thinking and imagination as they used to. The participants were college students aged between 18-22 years old, which made them the perfect group since technology is a major part of their lives. The research questions revolved around the implications of modern technologies on writing practices of college students learning English as their second language. The setting was an average classroom in which the participants had to write two separate assignments, informal and formal writing. The results showed that some students only used technology as a shortcut since they were too lazy to do otherwise. Those students did not follow grammar rules, guidelines, punctuation, structure, spelling, and they lacked critical thinking. Personally, I would somewhat agree with this study, because in every class there are the students that do not want to put extra effort or any effort at all, so it would only be fair not to put everyone in the same category just because some students want an easy way out. I do not think that technology is the issue here because if those particular students are slackers, they will find another way to slack, with or without technology.

#### **3.4.2 Kutlu (2013)**

A study conducted by Kutlu (2013) focused on showing how technology could be used in developing writing for an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) class, more specifically Business Class. The participants were 30-35 years old ESP students, with A1 level of proficiency, and the group contained six students that took participation in the study. The research questions were the following:



1. Is there a change between the attitudes of ESP students towards learning writing via technology?

2. What are the views of ESP students about learning writing via technology?

The setting was a normal classroom, but the study lasted for a month. The students were taught how to write an e-mail, using only chalk and a blackboard, by writing it down on a piece of paper, and after a month they were taught how to write an e-mail with the help of a tutorial. The results compared the pre and post thoughts of the students on how technology helped them, and whether their mind about using technology has changed. The students were positively surprised as to how technology helped them to get better. They have thought that technology did not possess the requirements that will make it such a great asset. After the study was conducted, all of the students increased the use of technology in their education, since they have realized its full potential. I would completely agree that nowadays, teaching and existing without technology would be unbearable, for both the professors and the students.

### **3.4.3 Bakeer (2018)**

A study conducted by Bakeer (2018) aimed to explore the issues that undergraduate students have when it comes to writing skills. To prove that without Information and Communication Technology (ICT), learning is significantly harder and the options are limited as to what they could accomplish. The participants were 72 undergraduate students divided into two groups: controlled (40 students), and experimental (32 students). The controlled group was exposed to traditional teaching methods only, while on the other hand, the experimental group in addition to the traditional teaching methods had the help of Information and Communication Technology and social media. The research questions were the following:

1. What are the challenges and difficulties that face students majoring English in learning writing skill?

2. What are the attitudes of undergraduate students regarding the use of social media in writing English language at university level?

3. Do students in the experimental group develop their proficiency in writing better than those in the control group with face-to-face traditional teaching method?



4. How do learners in the experimental group perceive the potential achievements of integrating ICT and social media in developing their writing skill?

The setting was a normal classroom, in which the participants had to fill in the given questionnaire. Before the actual questionnaire, the students were encouraged to implement technology and social media on a daily basis. The results showed that the students really enjoyed implementing technology in their education for a couple of reasons that they stated - “accessibility of information, improved communication, feedback, efficiency, creativity, increased confidence”, and so on. I agree that technology is getting more and more accepted in education, due to the fact that trying to function without technology it is not very hard, it is impossible. I know that the world will need some time to adjust to it, but when they do, they will be happy that they gave a chance to technology to be in every part of their lives.

#### **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Recent practice showed that without the best methods, no proper research was valid or conducted. In order for the purpose of the survey to be achieved, a mixed-method was used. The reason behind it was very simple. People tend to get nervous if they felt like they were put in the spotlight, or were bombarded with questions that were rather extensive. In this case, in particular, the participants received an online survey that contained two parts - the first part that contained two exercises, and the job application letter that contained numerous mistakes such as, incorrect use of vocabulary, bad grammar, poor organization, and poor punctuation. The participants were asked to correct all the mistakes they found. The Microsoft Word option of auto-correct was deactivated for the purpose of the survey. Since the main aim of this research was to prove the level of impact that the technology had on improving students' writing skills, this presented a perfect blend. The participants had the necessary privacy, thus they answered the questions honestly and without any distractions. Without being judged for any opinions or knowledge they possessed, they felt more relaxed and calmed, and tried to show themselves in the best light possible. Conducting an online survey had become quite a popular and effective way to collect large amounts of data, without losing credibility when it came to gathering the results. This was an excellent way to collect data that allowed both



quantitative and qualitative results, which covered the most important aspects when it came to collecting data that was valid and credible.

#### **4.1 Research Questions**

Without proper research questions, no research was fully completed. The research was specifically designed for one purpose only, and that was showing the impact of technology in improving students' writing skills. The technology was not appreciated even though it provided so much for every member of the society, not just the students and the professors. Another important aspect was showing that we were dependent on technology, one way or another. The research focused on the following questions:

- 1) Was there a required level of knowledge of the students and professors when using technology in classes?
- 2) In what ways did technology improve students' writing skills?
- 3) Was technology providing the students' space and the opportunity for enhancing their writing skills?

The first issue explored whether the professors were using all the benefits of the technology without undermining its usefulness in teaching. It also showed whether professors were ready and made the next step because the technology was becoming essential. It showed the familiarity and the level of knowledge that technology required alongside many programs for both, the professors and the students. The second issue gave some insight into what methods the professors used and which ones were useful for achieving the goal. It also showed what kind of exercises and approaches were most popular amongst professors, and how well were they accepted by the students. The third issue investigated the students' point of view, and analyzed whether it was distracting or it gave a kind of familiar comfort and made their research easier? It was all a matter of preference of the students.

#### **4.2 The first part of the online survey**

The first part of the online survey showed that there were two exercises where the participants' filtering skills were tested. In other words, it was testing their ability and judgment



of the validation and credibility of a piece of information. As Palfrey and Gasser (2008) stated, "Digital Natives are quite sophisticated in the ways that they gather information" (p.241). The first part of the online survey was filled with different types of questions in length and purpose. The true or false exercise was a great starting point for analyzing how the participants behaved when they were introduced to a new modifier into instructions they knew from experience. The modifier was writing the true statement for every false statement they found. This was a great way of testing their beliefs on common misconceptions, whether they were in the group that believed in those misconceptions, or they did not. This was very important because it showed whether they believed everything they saw on the internet, or they researched the information before using it, thus being sure that it was valid and coming from a credible source. It showed whether they had good filtering skills or they did not, or that was the crucial skill that they were missing. As Palfrey and Gasser (2008) claimed, "They are perfecting the art of grazing through the huge amount of information that comes their way on a daily basis" (p.241). This was rather tricky because if more than 3 sites contained the same information, then that information was considered credible. Having the information double checked, especially after the first time it was researched was considered crucial. The chances were that the used information was not credible, even though it was researched before. Another important fact was noting the dates when the information was researched and what source provided that information. There were many cases where the information was considered as valid, just because no one sat in front of a computer and researched it. It was mostly considered about things such as word of mouth. It seemed that all these inaccurate information had the opportunity of becoming a reality with the right amount of coverage and spreading. Not everyone accepted it, but for the beginning, it was enough for just one tiny group of people. Then they started spreading it, and before they knew it, the lie that was now reality altered other people's reality, and it was accepted by everyone. That was how spamming worked. Seeing the same information every day, all the time shared and posted on every imaginable site was proving to the people that it was credible. If there was one thing that was deducted from the internet, it was the fact that the more one thing was shared, the more it was inaccurate. The social media was spreading this trend lightning fast. Sharing and opening the bombastic titles those "news" had, it was just another



way of being scammed. How? Those types of news were created for one purpose only, and that was drawing the attention of the readers. Just like every normal human being, when something was opened, checked or read, it was expected to contain the news promised in the title. Now, this was called click-baiting. Click baiting presented the action when the publisher of the news created an incredibly juicy title that grabbed everyone's attention and in a way intrigued them into opening the news. The publisher collected the views, made a profit of every click that they scammed, and the reader got nothing, but being angry as to why they did not get the information that was promised to them. The second exercise was designed for proving the definitions of slang and abbreviations students used on a daily basis. Abbreviations presented a trademark of today's society. By providing the definitions of the required terms, they showed that informal writing was far more used and accepted in comparison to the formal writing. There were not many people that would consider texting with their friends, posting on social media and similar things like that informal writing, but the question for them was, how would they call it then? Overall, the method was effective due to the fact that it was perfect for collecting large amounts of data that was later analyzed and divided into specific categories, both quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative results of the online survey accounted for the part of the opinions of the participants, beliefs, and ideas. The quantitative results served to provide the statistics. When combined together, the research contained all the data that was required and it turned out quite nicely without leaving any loose ends.

#### **4.3 The second part of the online survey**

The second part of the online survey was consisting of correcting the job application letter. The main reason why that was a more logical and effective way of gathering information was that there was no pressure when giving the answers, and also because the research required an input that revealed whether the participants' writing skills were sharp, average, or nonexistent. It proved whether they used the technology in a basic manner and that they did not invest the time, or explored its options and potential, or were cunning enough and used its advantages. There were many ways of solving the online survey since they had total freedom. One option was finding the job application letter online. The other was simply enabling the



auto-correct option in Microsoft Office Word. That proved whether they used technology properly, or they took it for granted just because it was always there. There was more to technology than scrolling through social media and taking selfies. It also showed whether they were cunning enough, and tried to find a loophole, or they were not sure and continued implementing the traditional way of solving the problem with the given instructions and nothing else, or they tried avoiding the predetermined pattern of problem-solving and worked by the pattern they invented and worked for them? Furthermore, it showed how they answered questions that were new in an environment that was familiar to them.

#### **4.4 Research Procedure**

The study showed that without including the best techniques and the most optimal environment for the participants, no results turned out valid. It showed that the little details that dictated the validity and credibility of the research had a huge impact throughout the whole research. For the purpose of the research, we used an online survey which contained simple and clear instructions, concise exercises, and a relaxing environment. The procedure was quite simple, following the next steps - the participants received the online survey via email in accordance with the given deadline for completing the survey, so any reason for stress was annulated. The online survey was done from the comfort of their own homes, so the participants were the ones in charge; regarding how and when they answered the online survey. There were not any prohibitions regarding the usage of additional materials and help from the Internet, since that was the whole point of the online survey, showing the impact that technology had on improving students' writing skills. Before sending the online survey back, the participants all agreed that they gave consent for further use of their answers. After completing the online survey, the participants sent it via email. It was important to note that the whole procedure of the online survey was simple and user-friendly, avoiding any unnecessary stress or confusion. From there on, the data was deeply analyzed and divided into two main categories - qualitative (empirical) and quantitative (statistics). By covering every aspect of the data analysis, the online survey was a big success, since it gave answers to the research questions stated above.



#### **4.5 Organization of the online survey**

The research organized in that manner tested things that were not usually noticed. It ranged from simple tasks such as opening the email, downloading the attachment, and using different options on the computer in order to complete the online survey. It took into consideration a variety of aspects that were crucial for the ending results of the research. There was also a checkbox to tick if the participant gave consent for further usage of their answers. With that being said, the online survey also showed how dependent we were on technology since the technology was in every aspect of our lives.

#### **4.6 Participants of the online survey**

*Participants* - The participants in the research were university students who were studying English Language and Literature. The total number of participants was 10 because that was considered one average group that was attending classes together. The participants had a higher level of English proficiency and were skilled users of technology. They presented the perfect fit, due to the fact that the way they have been taught in high school was different than the way they expected when they enrolled at the university. That seemed like an insignificant modifier, but it was actually very important. By being the children of the new generation, they were surrounded by technology from the day they were born. Their parents were already very accustomed to technology, and the children draw from the people that they were around every day. They tried and copied what their parents were doing. That was all beneficial for the students; they just needed some guidance in finding the correct reasons for what they were doing. The participants were of different ages, sexes, and occupations. They were having different backgrounds and possible work experiences. Coming from different upbringings, the students showed different beliefs on the same topic. What was strange for one group of students was totally normal for another group of students. Another fact that was taken into consideration was that they all finished high school in different places. Some were attending public schools, some were attending private schools, some were enrolled in a totally different stream from what they were studying right now at university, some just continued in the same stream from their high schools. This was important because even though all high schools



provided the same curriculum, not all high schools had the same teaching methods. Some schools had mandatory use of technology in their classrooms, encouraging the students and using technology in their education as well, but on the other hand, some schools did not have such practice. Maybe it was because of the school's infrastructure and there was no way of implementing technology in teaching, other than for the professor bringing a laptop and a projector and demonstrating the students how teaching through presentations worked. With the influence of technology growing bigger every day, even the schools that did not have the infrastructure, now changed. They have at least the basic technology needed to show the students how things through technology worked. This was only the beginning of the appreciation of technology. People liked looking back at the past, comparing it with the present. Sometimes it was good to look back and see how much they grew, but it was not good for lingering. It was called the past for a reason after all.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS**

The results showed their usefulness through the analysis of the data that was conducted. The analyzed data proved my hypotheses and explained my research questions. From the results, it was clear that valid and reliable data was very valuable for the purpose of the research, of course with the right methods used properly, everything that was much easier, faster, and less stressful. It also showed that any research contained two very important aspects. Firstly, the survey was straight-forward with the instructions, the exercises, and what was required from the participants. Secondly, the participants knew what was required from them, and because they were in a comfortable environment, they gave the best and the most honest answers they could.

### **5.1 Design and content of the online survey**

Firstly, there was the overall design and content of the survey. The online survey was a delicate thing and while the creator was in the process of creating one, there were many components that were included in a successful survey. The most important components were - clear instructions, proper exercises, the language used must not cause any ambiguity for the participants, the level of proficiency of the participants, how the survey was formatted, the



purpose behind implementing those exercises, and lastly the expected results matching the research hypotheses and research questions. At first sight, these things mentioned above seemed insignificant but were very annoying, especially for the participants that were dealing with them. Imagine answering a question that was ambiguous, or had a lot of words that were unknown to the person that had to answer the same question. They did not understand the question because of the unknown words used in it, and if the question was ambiguous their mind would not register it the right way and usually answer it in a way that caused a strong reaction from the person that asked that question. Simple was always better. Most of the creators of content forgot the straight-forward instructions. That was a common thing that was happening in the past, and it was happening in the present as well. The reason behind that was the fact that the creator spent so much time analyzing, researching, writing and creating the survey that they did not bother with putting simple instructions. What happened during creating the survey was that the creator devoted so much of their time, they did not take into consideration that some participants might not know anything about the topic they researched. This caused frustration on behalf of the participants and the creator. The creator was angry because no one answered their questions correctly, and the participants were angry because the instructions were not clear, or misleading. It was a vicious cycle; every action had its own reaction. Next, was choosing the best exercises that reflected the research. That was a very important step that most of the creators did not pay as much attention as they should. Sometimes what happened was that the creator thought that one exercise was good for one thing, but every exercise tested at least two things. It did not matter if its organization and grammar, or spelling and ideas, no exercise tested one thing solely. The best example was true or false exercise. The true or false exercise was one of the most common exercises in education per se. Why? The reason why was because it was so versatile. With one true or false exercise, the participants were tested on - text comprehension, personal beliefs, grammar, writing, common misconceptions, vocabulary, listening, and so on. It all depended on what the creator needed and they would just tweak the true and false exercise and implemented it in their research. Without having the proper exercises in the online survey, the creator was not fulfilling their aim of achieving valid and credible results, thus making it extremely difficult for further



implementation in their research. Furthermore, there was the problem of the ambiguous language used in plenty of online surveys. It was not about the language, but it was about the message they conveyed. The problem was that the creator looked for a way and tried showing the participants why they thought their survey was the best. They thought that polishing the survey with fancy, sophisticated, big words, showed the participants that they were experts in the field of the research they conducted. In most cases, the truth was the opposite of what they thought in the first place. They failed with conducting the successful research based on their desire and gave more importance of becoming acknowledged and appreciated, rather than achieving the goal set in the first place. It was impossible, the thought of becoming an expert in a field of research overnight. It took more than using big, fancy words and some kind of advanced language which made even the easiest things extremely difficult showed that the creator was unsure of their survey, because what was the point of using such language in their surveys? They secretly hoped that the survey was unsolvable, and masked their insecurity because they did not know their goal of conducting the survey in the first place. Without proper results, no research was valid. Moreover, there was an important aspect that was the level of proficiency of the participants. The line between underestimating and overestimating someone's level of proficiency was thin, almost nonexistent. It was not always about using fancy vocabulary or giving different types of instructions. It was about staying true to the essence of what was done in the survey. We all knew that the professors had a vast corpus of words that they used every day. Have you ever wondered why they use normal, average language when teaching? The answer was easy. They wanted every student in the classroom, understanding the message they conveyed. It was because when things were explained in a plain, simple way everyone understood the message of the professor. Proficient or less proficient, it did not matter. It was the skill that mattered, the ability that showed that even the most difficult piece of information was easily understood after the plain and simple explanation. Similar things happened with the level of proficiency. Unless someone was invited for an embassy for an interview where the interview itself required a more advanced corpus of vocabulary for leaving a good impression, the best advice was staying as simple as possible, instructions wise. The standard way of setting the instructions was the best choice. The



standard way of instruction was considered the way the instructions were set during any examination, making sure there was no place for dubiety. That way, the participants were not pressured, because they were not worried about misunderstanding the instructions and writing something completely different. There were also cases where some students were afraid when they saw long instructions, and because they were under a lot of pressure, their minds misread even the simplest instructions possible, and they usually ended up not following the instructions, or semi followed them. Furthermore, there was the way of how the survey was formatted. The topic of formatting in education was divided. People either fell in the category of appreciating the format, or they fell in the category that did not give much importance to how the text was formatted. Both sides were right and wrong at the same time. We started with the facts of appreciating the format. Reading any kind of text that was badly formatted was causing confusion for the reader. Imagine answering a survey that was poorly organized. There was one question burning in the back of the minds of the participants, and that was constantly wondering whether if it was a test, or it was not. All those distractions were leading the participants into giving vague answers, not knowing what was required from their answers, so they were not sure whether their answers were successful or they were not. That accounted for inaccurate data. On the other hand, there were the facts of not giving much appreciation of the format. This was the case when good writing was noticed. They gave emphasis on the content because the format did not require much fixing, in comparison when the text itself was in question. What that being said, the best thing for any creator was making sure that the given survey was a combination of good formatting with solid content, and the results were presented themselves. Next, there was the purpose of implementing the chosen exercises. It was very important what kind of exercises were implemented in the survey, and how the aim was achieved. It was all about the type of survey. If the survey was about spelling and vocabulary, a mixed method was used. It all depended on what was the aim of the creator. If the creator was testing their spelling, grammar, and vocabulary skills, one simple way was presenting them with dictation in an audio form. The participants were listening to the dictation, wrote it down, and then the creator analyzed how many of the participants made grammar, spelling, or vocabulary mistakes. It was all about finding the best route for fulfilling



the purpose of the survey. Sometimes it was worth going the extra mile. Lastly, we looked at the expected results and how they matched the research hypotheses and research questions. The creator knew what were the reasons, and the motivation that got them into that specific topic. What they tried proving by doing the research and conducting the survey? Simply put, what was the aim of the research, and what were the hypotheses that were answering those established research questions. The creator knew the aim and the purpose of achieving that aim. They had the research questions and research hypotheses ready as a guideline of what was included in their research. Without having the aim, there was no successful research, no matter how well the creator prepared the rest of the research. It was as crucial as having a topic for an essay. Without a topic, there was no essay. Even if they were brainstorming and scrambling down ideas, they were still brainstorming about a topic, whether they were aware or not.

## **5.2 The participants and the comfortable environment**

Secondly, we talked about the participants, explaining what was required from them, and made sure that they were in a comfortable environment, so they could give the best and most honest answers they could. As it was stated before, the participants knew what was required from them in terms of answers during the online survey. The nature of the online survey was very flexible, not limiting the participants into using whatever additional materials, or methods they normally used and provided the best answers possible. By knowing what was expected from them, the participants felt at ease because their mind was not all over the place, trying to connect things and circumstances that were not real. Instead, they focused on solving the online survey, making sure that they were precise and honest with their answers. This was in the psychology of every human being. There were many cases even when everything was given to the participants, they would still make mistakes like, not following the instructions properly, still looking for an agenda that was not existing. It was how the mind worked. If there was something unknown, something that the person had not been in contact before, the mind tended and played tricks, presenting something as a reality, when in fact it was not. They could not focus on fulfilling the task that it was required from them, just because their mind was



preoccupied with finding out the truth that they already knew. Providing the environment that was relaxing and comforting helped the participants with solving the online survey without any kind of unnecessary stress. Technology provided that kind of peace and assurance for the participants. By having the proper peace of mind, the participants focused only on solving the online survey and presenting themselves in the best light possible. Since it was an online survey with a given deadline, the participants chose the best time for completing the survey, not feeling any pressure, because pressure did not work well on everyone. There were some participants when under pressure gave the best results, while others did not give anything at all. With knowing themselves and what kind of learners they were, the participants worked on their own time, feeling relaxed and calm as they were finishing the online survey. When optimal conditions were achieved, nothing was impossible. Now, there was the matter of the data analysis. The obtained data was divided into two main parts - qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative data was projected through various charts and tables, fulfilling different requirements that only complemented the research. The qualitative data focused on analyzing the responses from the participants, with the given consent that if their response was chosen as an example, it was for statistical purposes only. The survey was anonymous of course; it was just used to collect the data needed for further analysis. Providing that kind of privacy was crucial and ethical when conducting research. By implementing both qualitative and quantitative analyses, the results covered different angles and added more perspectives towards the issue, and achieved a deeper understanding of the impact of technology on students' writing skills was inevitable. As Johnston and Barker stated, "This information is useful for adopting and adapting instruments to different settings" (p.128). Knowing what the online survey required before creating it, I did my best and created my online survey in a matter that was not confusing, ambiguous, or distracting in any way. I included simple and straight-forward instructions, I chose the proper exercises with making sure that the survey was not too long and hard for the participants, there was no use of any ambiguous words in the instructions or anywhere in the survey, I took in account the level of proficiency of the students creating a friendly approach towards it, I was being careful and kept the format of the survey simple not leaving any source for confusion or distraction for the students, I used logical reasoning when



finding the perfect exercises for my survey making sure that they delivered the results that I was expecting, and I made sure that the results answered my research questions through the previously set up hypotheses.

### **5.3 Qualitative data analysis**

As it was stated before, the qualitative data was empirical, which meant that it was concerned with the opinions of the participants, beliefs, observational skills, background, and experience, rather than theory or pure logic. This was also known as common knowledge. The thing about common knowledge was that it differed from society to society. It was known that what in one society what was considered as common knowledge, in another society it was not. Therefore, we must always take into consideration the background of the participants. We should not judge them for their knowledge, because in their society they were right, and we were wrong. That was one way of how we enhanced. When people with different backgrounds and different experiences were put together in the same classroom, they learned so much from each other, they only needed the right mindset and accepting the fact that there were people more knowledgeable or more skilled than them. Now, it was time for presenting the most interesting aspects regarding the qualitative data. Since all of the participants gave consent for further use of their answers, I used their answers and provided a full qualitative data analysis based on the given exercises in the online survey.

#### **5.3.1 True or False analysis**

Firstly, we started with analyzing the data regarding the true or false exercise. This exercise presented the king of all exercises. It was so versatile that it was used for almost anything ranging over text comprehension, vocabulary, writing, listening, personal beliefs, and testing common misconceptions. It just needed a little tweaking and it fulfilled the requirements of the case in which it was used. There was nothing more simple, and yet so powerful considering the exercises. I included the most important results that I extracted from the survey, regarding the true or false exercise. The results included examples on the following discoveries - different backgrounds lead to different understanding of the identical instruction; by possessing a good set of filtering skills they recognized the common misconceptions that



were taken as truth; and worked on the credibility, validity, and the source of the information, plus there was always space for improvement, as long as the participant was willing and aiming for the stars.

### **5.3.2 Understanding instructions**

The results showed how the participants understood the instructions, but with a new modifier included, and that was writing the correct statement for every false statement they found. The true or false exercise usually did not include this modifier, it was basically the same instruction with a little bit of modification. That was where the background and experience of the participants came surfacing. Since they all came from different backgrounds, each participant understood the instruction in their own way. Some were wrong, some were right, some were half-right. What was fascinating about this phenomenon was even though every participant was given an identical survey, they all understood the instructions in their own way. Some of the participants saw that the exercise was true or false and they did not bother reading the rest of the instruction, they just worked from their memory. This was actually quite common. Even during my undergraduate studies, there were many students that did not read the instructions at all and then were surprised how they did so poorly. Even though the professor explained the instructions, gave us time and answered questions regarding the instructions, there were still students that misunderstood the instructions.



**Section (1) - True or False:**

Please mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F). Write the correct statement for every false statement you find.

1. Only 10% of the brain is used on a daily basis. [F]
2. When you flip a coin, the odds of getting heads or tails are 50-50. [T]
3. Clouds are weightless. [F]
4. Bulls react aggressively when they see the color red. [T]
5. Moles are blind. [F]

*Figure 1: The participant was not following the instructions and worked from memory*

There were other students that partially followed the instructions, but stopped midway because they were uncertain whether they were right or wrong.

**Section (1) - True or False:**

Please mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F). Write the correct statement for every false statement you find.

1. Only 10% of the brain is used on a daily basis. [T]
2. When you flip a coin, the odds of getting heads or tails are 50-50. [T]
3. Clouds are weightless. [F] – Clouds have an average weight of 1.1 million pounds!
4. Bulls react aggressively when they see the color red. [T]
5. Moles are blind. [F]

*Figure 2: The participant was partially following the instructions*



Lastly, there were the students who read the instructions and followed them properly.

### Section (1) - True or False:

Please mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F). Write the correct statement for every false statement you find.

This is just a myth. The percentage of the brain in use at any given time varies from person to person. It also depends on what a person is doing or thinking about.

1. Only 10% of the brain is used on a daily basis. [ F ]
2. When you flip a coin, the odds of getting heads or tails are 50-50. [ T ]
3. Clouds are weightless. [ F ]

Researchers have calculated that the average cumulus cloud - which is that nice, white fluffy kind you see on a sunny day - weighs an incredible 500,000 kg or 1.1 million pounds.

4. Bulls react aggressively when they see the color red. [ F ]

The color red isn't what causes bulls to attack. In fact, bulls don't seem to have any color preference at all.

5. Moles are blind. [ F ]

Moles aren't blind, but they are colorblind and see very poorly.

*Figure 3: The participant completely followed the instructions*

Overall, the participants did a good job answering the true or false exercise of the survey, but it was taken into consideration that during high school, no one taught them that following instructions was a very important step, no matter the type of writing. Not so long ago, I found myself in the same situation. Luckily they were given one more chance and the opportunity of fixing the previous knowledge with enrolling at a university, just like me.

### 5.3.3 Filtering skills and common misconceptions

Next, the results showed the common misconceptions that were taken as truth. This was a very tricky situation, because it was testing the participants and tried placing them in one of the two groups – the ones that were belonging in the group of the people that just went with the flow, or they were in the group that checked the information before using it. This was where their filtering skills came into question. This was mostly considering myths and information that were the type of from word of mouth, but if the information was used on a daily basis or periodically, the participant should have at least checked the validity of it. As



always, we had two types of participants as well, the ones that checked the information before using it, and the ones that just wrote from experience.

**Section (1) - True or False:**

Please mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F). Write the correct statement for every false statement you find.

1. Only 10% of the brain is used on a daily basis. [ F]because we use all of our brain on a daily basis
2. When you flip a coin, the odds of getting heads or tails are 50-50. [ T ]
3. Clouds are weightless. [F]clouds aren't weightless but they displace air to make them buoyant
4. Bulls react aggressively when they see the color red. [F] Bulls are color-blind to red,they get aggressively because of the cape's movement.
5. Moles are blind. [F] They aren't blind,they are colorblind and see very poorly.

*Figure 4: The participant checked the statements online*

On the other hand, there were the participants that believed in these common misconceptions, and because of the fact that everyone was using them, the lie was becoming truth without even realizing that what they were doing was wrong. Now they started checking the information before using it.

**Section (1) - True or False:**

Please mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F). Write the correct statement for every false statement you find.

1. Only 10% of the brain is used on a daily basis. [T]
2. When you flip a coin, the odds of getting heads or tails are 50-50. [T]
3. Clouds are weightless. [T]
4. Bulls react aggressively when they see the color red. [T]
5. Moles are blind. [F]

*Figure 5: The participant used the knowledge gained from word of mouth*



The most important thing was remembering that these kinds of filtering skills did not come overnight. They were developed, nurtured, and enhanced before producing the desired effect. It was not surprising if many of the participants did not know what filtering skills were. It was not their fault. There was a lot going on in education right now, and they were in search of the optimal flow so they could keep up with what was going on. Speaking from my own experience that enrolling at a university granted the students the missing knowledge they required and then using it on a daily basis was a complete game changer.

#### **5.3.4 The knowledge of the “digital generation”**

Secondly, we continued analyzing the second exercise, and that was the knowledge of acronyms or slang. That was quite normal when talking about slang and technology. This was informal writing at its finest. While analyzing the data regarding the slang, the participants did very well, with a couple of mistakes from all the collected data from the participants. Here, the participants had no problems with understanding the instructions, because this was their territory. They felt confident and good because they were proficient users of technology. Whether it ranged from playing games, watching movies, listening music, reading books and so on, the participants did not feel any pressure because this was a topic that they were very well versed in. I am pretty sure that they researched some of the acronyms, but in the end, that was the whole point of the research. Making them realize that technology had a huge impact on their lives, and instead of ignoring it, they could use it for achieving their goals easier and faster.



### **Section (2) - Slang:**

Please write the expressions behind the acronyms.

1. GOAT - Greatest Of All Time
2. SMH - Shaking My Head
3. ELI5 - Explain Like I'm 5
4. ICYMI - In Case You Missed It
5. YOLO - You Only Live Once
6. AMA - Ask Me Anything
7. FTFY - Fixed That For You

*Figure 6: The proper knowledge of acronyms*

### **5.4 Quantitative data analysis**

The quantitative data analyzed the statistics, which in this case were presented through several charts and tables. One data could exist without the other, but it was so much better if they coexisted together. By having established the importance, each analysis could focus on one important aspect and when everything was finished, the pieces of the mosaic fitted quite nicely. Accurate data were only obtained if the participants knew what was required from them, and the survey was created in a manner that fulfilled the purpose it was designed for. Data was a very sensitive matter. If analyzed correctly it gave the wanted results, thus presenting a solution for the research problem. On the other hand, if the data was not analyzed correctly, we were dealing with inaccurate data that was easily manipulated. This was the first thing that every researcher was afraid of. Dealing with any data that was corrupted in any way only brought confusion. Since the data was not properly analyzed, the results were masked, and the real results were forever lost. What I gathered from conducting an online survey was that technology played a huge role in improving students' writing skills. Even though I turned off the autocorrect option for the survey, the participants were able and found a way, fixing all of the grammatical and spelling mistakes. They did struggle with the formatting of the actual



letter, but as I said before, not much attention was given to the format of the text. It was overdue for a change, but one step at a time, since putting even more pressure on the students when they were already having a hard time fully implementing technology in their education was not a good decision. It was a process that needed time and patience. With the proper mindset, they realized how much they have missed on with not using the technology in their education. For me personally, technology was, is, and will be the first medium that I would advise anyone who needed help achieving numerous tasks. The students were still failing and did not understand the full potential that the technology offered. For example, the letter that I included in the online survey was available online, with properly citing the website. The students could just search for it online and type "how to write a job application letter" and the second result contained the letter. Another way was turning on the autocorrect option in the Microsoft Office Word and they could just correct the mistakes that way. That was the best thing about technology. It offered a chance for using it in a way the users pleased. It was the tool that if you were just a little bit resourceful, anything was accomplished. The students needed more time and practice before fully implementing technology in their education. They were using it, but not as much as they should. Instead of using technology for scrolling through social media, they could prepare better for the world that was waiting for them. Social media was contagious. It could grab and hold your attention for hours and hours just staring at the screen, not doing literary anything, it was time-consuming. You said just one quick scroll through the news, and what was trending, and the next thing was 5 hours later you were still scrolling through the news, and you were not even halfway through. There, they just spent 5 hours doing absolutely nothing, learning absolutely nothing. I was just saying that there was not going much on social media anyway, and what was the point of knowing everything about every new single thing. It was not like they could keep up with everything that was going on anyway. The amount of news posted on social media and the upcoming trends were just too much. I was just saying that there were other more efficient ways of keeping up with the trends. Next, was the matter of analyzing and providing charts on behalf of the quantitative data. First, we looked into some charts regarding the mistakes that were included in the letter,



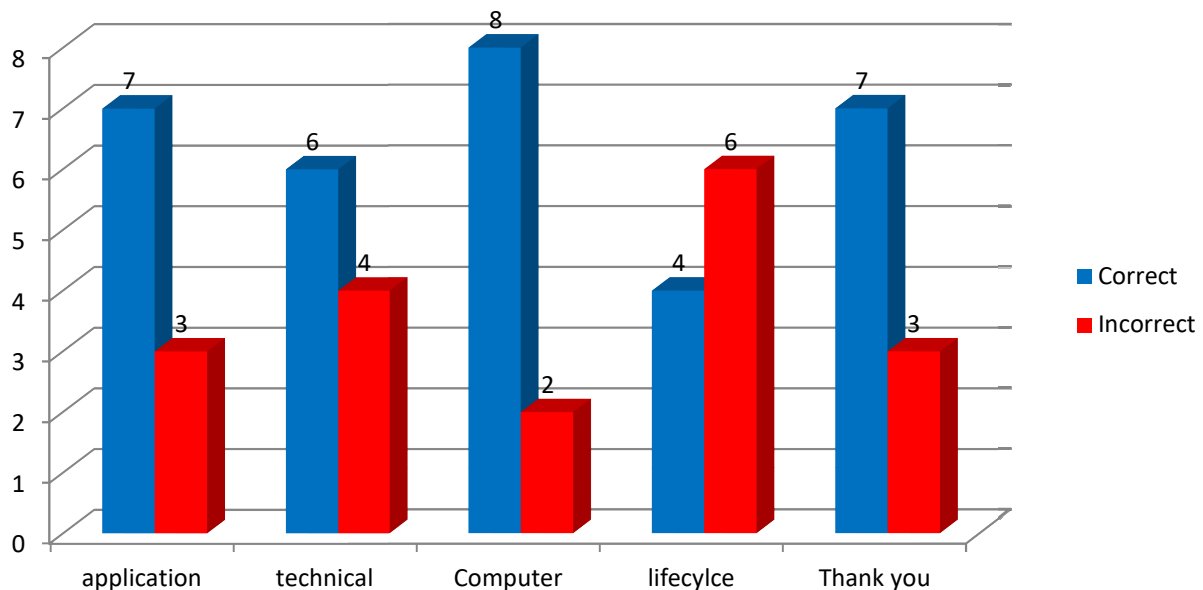
and how the participants corrected them. The results were spread across 3 main charts regarding, incorrect use of vocabulary, bad grammar, and poor formatting of the letter.

#### **5.4.1 Incorrect use of Vocabulary**

First of all, we started with the chart that represented the participants and how they corrected the vocabulary mistakes within the survey. I included a couple of mistakes for each group, not too much, but also not too little. As you can see from the chart below, these at first sight average, everyday words were quite tricky when implemented into a different context like the online survey. You see, the words given below were not in their original state. Some of the words were abbreviated, some had incorrect spelling, and some had altered form. Knowing the background and the aim that the participants did not, it was quite easy drawing a conclusion that it was strange that they would even make a mistake on such elementary words. The problem was the context. One word was correct and wrong at the same time, especially in formal writing. We all know that there were no abbreviations used in formal writing, nor any type of short forms. We always included the full form. Now, this was the case with the word application. In most cases, we would always use it as an app, which in formal writing was considered a mistake. The participants were already accustomed and technology created the fact that in their circles of friends, the word application was known as an app. They all knew that they were using the abbreviation for it, but when something became a habit, it was really hard changing. This might cause confusion for the participants and how they made a mistake when they knew that app was just an abbreviation for the word application. Well, as presented before, they must always know the context. Only then they could say that they made no mistake. This was a good experience for the students regarding writing and the overall procedure of writing. This was just a simple example that small corrections resulted in huge changes. As the old saying was, “the devil is in the details”.



***Table 1: Incorrect Use of Vocabulary***



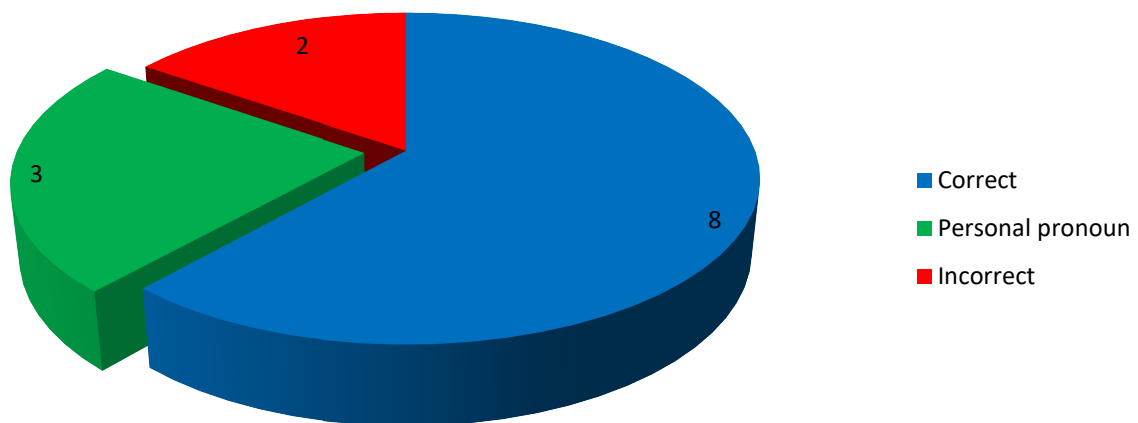
#### **5.4.2 Grammatical Errors**

Furthermore, there was the issue of grammatical errors. The grammatical errors were a part of everyday life. There were cases when the participant knew the correct answer, but committed an error anyway. Why? This was because of insecurity and the fear of being misunderstood. As we all know, grammar was the weakest and probably the hardest aspect of any language. Staring from our society, we did not pay attention even considering the grammar in our first languages. That was why different towns had different dialects. This was happening because of two reasons. The first one was that whoever was responsible for transferring the knowledge of grammar and teaching the students did not have a good teaching method, thus made them not like or appreciate the grammar. The second one was the fact that not a lot of attention was given and grammar was placed last during their education in elementary and high school. One thing was sure; we could not acquire the proper grammar without some help and guidance. These were the little things that made a huge difference. They just needed technology and some guidance from their professors. That was the reason why the students attended classes ranging from grammar, language acquisition, and literature. That resulted in acquiring and enhancing the language skills they had. Overall, the results from the online survey



regarding the grammatical errors were very good. Of course, some participants made mistakes, but those mistakes were easily fixed with a little more effort and practice. What was so interesting and fascinating about the grammatical errors, was that every participant missed capitalizing the personal pronoun “I”. The participants did not know that the personal pronoun “I” was always capitalized. It did not matter whether it was at the beginning, middle, or before the end of the sentence. I could guarantee that it happened because whenever they wrote something in Microsoft Office Word, the personal pronoun “I” was always autocorrected. Since I turned off the autocorrect option for the purpose of the online survey, the participants did not register that as a grammatical mistake, since it was not pointed out to them. This was one simple example of the impact of technology in improving students’ writing skills.

***Table 2: Grammatical Errors***



#### **5.4.3 Formatting of the Job application letter**

Moreover, the results analyzed the formatting of the letter. This was where the participants did not do very well. As I stated before, this was caused because of the lack of paying attention to detail, nervousness, and not being aware enough. When all three things were combined, they produced a lethal combination.



#### **5.4.3.1 The issue that students lack the ability to pay attention to detail**

First, we had the issue that the participants lacked paying attention to detail. This was a serious problem because it showed that the students were categorized even when the skill of paying attention to details was in question. It was not impossible for all of the participants noticing the same type of detail, it was just very strange. The reason behind it was that they just scanned the object, and not really looked into it. For example, if they used the same strategy for analyzing, they usually knew the results coming with it, so they made sure and followed the predetermined line. That way they fulfilled their task and knew that they were right. This was very wrong because not everyone was the same. Sure, they might notice the obvious details of the object, but writing required details that were not noticed by the others. That way the professor knew that the student was using critical thinking. This was very important because, without critical thinking, they could not write a good personal essay, just the usual generic text, which was similar to fill-in-the-blanks exercise.

#### **5.4.3.2 Nervousness as a modifier**

Next, there was the issue of nervousness. There was no use in elaborating on this never-ending lifestyle. Since every student reacted differently when put under pressure, we deduced that there were two types of students – ones that enjoy being put under pressure and gave their best answers that way; others that did very poorly when nervous. The reason behind that was their learning style. If they were accustomed and enjoyed fast learning, stress was their ally, but if they liked taking things slower, stress was their enemy. Knowing what kind of learners they were, stress was used as a good stimulus for both types of students.

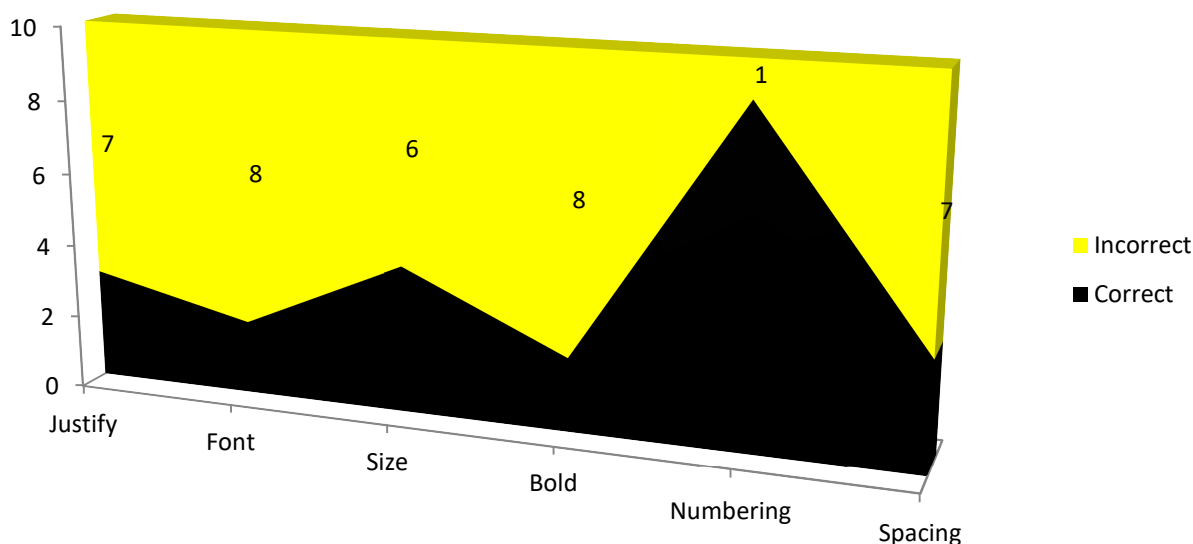
#### **5.4.3.3 Causing awareness about the structure of a text**

Likewise, there was the issue of awareness. This was because, in elementary and high school, no one was giving attention, and everyone avoided talking about the structure of the writing. The problem was that when it was time for grading, they always took into consideration how the text was organized and added a comment like “you should know how to organize an essay”. How, when no one told them about the importance of organization in the



first place? On the other hand, there were schools that did teach the students the matter of formatting, but the students did not accept it. They themselves thought that it was not important, but then they realized their mistakes and started paying attention. We could not judge writing based on one aspect only, there were many aspects that we included in the evaluation, each one was considered equally important.

***Table 3: Formatting the Job Application Letter***



In other words, taking into consideration that these were first-year students that were still adjusting, they were on the right path, considering the fact of having technology in their education. Some might have had technology in their high schools, others might not have. Switching one learning style for another learning style took a lot of time and adaptation. Higher education was a great opportunity for change. As Weller stated, “the engagement with new technologies is a core practice for higher education” (p.23). The change was not always negative; in this case, it was positive. It was not long enough before the students realized that this next advanced step in their education was filling in the cracks left before, and provided the opportunity of acquiring new knowledge. With having all this in mind, I could confirm that the online survey was successful because it did provide answers to all my research questions, just like I expected. As for the students, I would advise seizing this opportunity for enhancing, enriching, and becoming better, because learning presented a process that never stopped.



## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is undeniable that technology brought a completely new way to look at the world. It has so many new, incredible things to offer and implement. One of the best uses would be that it is the perfect tool for education. With the power of the internet, education has become even easier and more enjoyable. Professors can use a variety of techniques and methods that will create a positive learning environment. The easy access and the simplicity of obtaining the information through technology is one of the fastest, most reliable, and easiest. Technology has made this all possible to do from the comfort of your own home. That is why there are sites like Google Classroom, which allow students and professors to interact, exchange files, do homework, and so much more. There is also the email, social media, and all sorts of blogs that are becoming more and more popular due to the usefulness and the fast distribution of information. Technology has a huge impact on improving students' writing skills. The initial reaction when something is unknown to the students, they appeal to Google for help. By owning a nice set of filtering skills, the information that is required can be found and checked for its truthfulness in a matter of minutes. By reading books, watching movies, listening to music, the writing skills of the students improve. This is not a topic that students and professors usually pay attention to. By watching a good movie, or reading a good book, the attention to detail is bigger, paying close attention to "real English", idioms, expressions, new vocabulary, and how the words are spelled. By paying attention and enhancing their writing skills, they also enhance their listening, spelling, and pronunciation skills. Writing is more than just sitting in front of the computer and typing. Writing needs passion, action, motivation, colorful words, appealing characters, villains, and a good storyline to follow. If students are engaged properly, they will show interest because they will write about something they enjoy. The thought that their voices will be heard is sometimes the only motivation they will ever need. All this complements very well with my research, as it shows to both the professors and the students that one thing can be used positively if it is given a chance and a proper introduction. One more thing; never let anything come between you and your education because some things are just not worth the wait for we all are the masters of our own universe.



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## **APPENDICES**



## Appendix 1 - The Online Survey

### Participants' demographic information:

Please **fill in** the requested information.

1. Age: [ ]
2. Gender: Male - [ ] Female - [ ]
3. Study Programme:
4. Work experience: Yes- [ ] No - [ ]
5. Do you give permission for further use of your answers? Yes- [ ] No - [ ]

### Section (1) - True or False:

Please mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F). Write the correct statement for every false statement you find.

1. Only 10% of the brain is used on a daily basis. [ ]
2. When you flip a coin, the odds of getting heads or tails are 50-50. [ ]
3. Clouds are weightless. [ ]
4. Bulls react aggressively when they see the color red. [ ]
5. Moles are blind. [ ]

### Section (2) - Slang:

Please write the expressions behind the acronyms.

1. GOAT -
2. SMH -
3. ELI5 -
4. ICYMI -
5. YOLO -
6. AMA -
7. FTFY -



### Selection (3) - Job application letter

Please correct all the mistakes you find within the job application letter below.

September 1 2018

George Gilhooley  
Times union  
87 Delaware Road  
hatfield, CA 08065

Dear mr. **Gilhooley**

I was writing to apply for the programer position advertised in the *times union*. As requested, i am enclosing a completed job app, my certification, my resume, and three referenceses.

The role is very apealing to me and i believe that my strong tech experience and education make me a highly competitiven candidates for this position. My *key strengths* that would support my sucess in this position include:

- I have succesfully designaed, developed, and suport live use applications.
  - I strived for continued excellence.
- I provide exceptional contribution to customer service for al customers

With a BS degree in com programming, I have a comprehensive understanding of the full life-cycle for software development projects. I also has experience in learning and aplying new technologies as appropriate. Please see my resume for additional informations on my experience.

I can be reaching anytime via email at john.donaldson@emailexample.com or cell phone, 909-555-5555.

Thanks you for your time and consideration I look forward to speak with you about this employment opportunity

sinerely

John Donaldson



## Appendix 2 - The Online Survey with the correct answers

### Participants' demographic information:

Please **fill in** the requested information.

1. Age: [ ]
2. Gender: Male - [ ] Female - [ ]
3. Study Programme:
4. Work experience: Yes- [ ] No - [ ]
5. Do you give permission for further use of your answers? Yes- [ ] No - [ ]

### Section (1) - True or False:

Please mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F). Write the correct statement for every false statement you find.

1. Only 10% of the brain is used on a daily basis. [F] - The majority of the brain is always active.
2. When you flip a coin, the odds of getting heads or tails are 50-50. [T]
3. Clouds are weightless. [F] - The clouds weight over 1.1 million pounds, or 500.000 kg.
4. Bulls react aggressively when they see the color red. [F] - Bulls get aggressive because of the cape's movement.
5. Moles are blind. [F] - Moles are colorblind and have a very poor vision.

### Section (2) - Slang:

Please write the expressions behind the acronyms.

1. GOAT - Greatest of all time
2. SMH - Shaking my head
3. ELI5 - Explain like I am 5
4. ICYMI - In case you missed it
5. YOLO - You only live once
6. AMA - Ask me anything
7. FTFY - Fixed that for you



### **Selection (3) - Job application letter**

Please correct all the mistakes you find within the job application letter below.

September 1, 2018

George Gilhooley  
Times Union  
87 Delaware Road  
Hatfield, CA 08065

Dear Mr. Gilhooley,

I am writing to apply for the programmer position advertised in the Times Union. As requested, I enclose a completed job application, my certification, my resume and three references.

The role is very appealing to me, and I believe that my strong technical experience and education make me a highly competitive candidate for this position. My key strengths that would support my success in this position include:

- I have successfully designed, developed and supported live-use applications.
- I strive continually for excellence.
- I provide exceptional contributions to customer service for all customers.

With a BS degree in Computer Programming, I have a comprehensive understanding of the full lifecycle for software development projects. I also have experience in learning and applying new technologies as appropriate. Please see my resume for additional information on my experience.

I can be reached anytime via email at [john.donaldson@emailexample.com](mailto:john.donaldson@emailexample.com) or by cell phone, 909-555-5555.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you about this employment opportunity.

Sincerely,

John Donaldson