



CHAPTER 2

THE IMPACT OF THE FRESH TECHNIQUE ON DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPHS ON A BASIC LEVEL

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ABSTRACT: The FRESH technique introduces a structured approach to teaching descriptive paragraph writing by focusing on Fact, Reason, Elaboration, and Shift. This method helps students better organize their ideas and improve coherence in writing. Its use at Universidad de Guadalajara, where English is a required subject, highlights its significance in academic settings. Besides enhancing descriptive writing, the technique promotes critical thinking and logical organization—vital skills for academic success. This research targets adult ESL learners who struggle to write effectively in English. By strengthening their writing, FRESH empowers students to communicate more clearly, supporting their academic and professional development, while also offering educators a valuable instructional tool.

KEYWORDS: FRESH technique, descriptive writing, ESL education, academic development, critical thinking

RESUMEN: La técnica FRESH presenta un enfoque estructurado para enseñar la redacción de párrafos descriptivos, centrado en Hecho, Razón, Elaboración y Cambio. Este método ayuda a los estudiantes a organizar mejor sus ideas y mejorar la coherencia en la escritura. Su uso en la Universidad de Guadalajara, donde el inglés es una materia obligatoria, destaca su importancia en contextos académicos. Además de mejorar la escritura descriptiva, la técnica fomenta el pensamiento crítico y la organización lógica, habilidades esenciales para el éxito académico. Esta investigación

está dirigida a estudiantes adultos de inglés como segunda lengua que tienen dificultades para escribir eficazmente. Al fortalecer su escritura, FRESH empodera a los estudiantes para comunicarse con mayor claridad, apoyando su desarrollo académico y profesional, además de ofrecer a los docentes una herramienta valiosa.

PALABRAS CLAVE: técnica FRESH, escritura descriptiva, educación ESL, desarrollo académico, pensamiento crítico

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Even with the availability of various methods and techniques to improve writing skills, many adult English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Mexico continue having important difficulties in organizing their ideas coherently in written form. Historically, writing has been one of the most challenging skills for language learners due to its cognitive and linguistic complexity (Hyland, 2016). In recent years, the demand for proficient writing skills in academic and professional settings has increased, exacerbating this issue (National Institute for Adult Education [INEA], 2022). However, existing teaching methodologies often fail to address the specific needs of adult learners in Mexico, resulting in a persistent gap in their ability to produce well-structured and coherent descriptive paragraphs.

This problem is further compounded by several factors, including a lack of appropriate instructional materials, varying levels of prior education, and the diverse cultural backgrounds of learners (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], 2023). According to recent data, only 38% of Mexican adults aged 25–64 have gotten an upper secondary education level, which directly impacts their ability to develop advanced writing skills (OECD, 2022). Additionally, 62% of adult EFL learners in Mexico report difficulties in constructing descriptive paragraphs, which makes emphasis on a critical need for targeted writing instruction (British Council Mexico, 2021).

The ability to write descriptive paragraphs is essential for adult learners in Mexico, as it improves their academic performance, employability, and communication skills in an increasingly globalized world. Proficient writing allows people to articulate ideas clearly, participate in higher education, and access better job opportunities (Graham & Perin, 2007). Furthermore, improving descriptive writing skills promotes critical thinking and strengthens language competence, which is crucial for adults navigating professional and academic environments (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Addressing this gap is therefore not only a pedagogical necessity but also a means of empowering Mexican adults to succeed in an English-dominant world.

CONTEXT

This research is carried out in Universidad de Guadalajara (UDG) is one of the largest public universities in Mexico with 339,508 students (Numeralia UDG 2025A): UDG has 17 sites to offer Bachelor's degrees, master programs and PHD programs. It also offers classes at a highschool level. One of the sites is called Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades (CUCSH). This site has 10,406 (Numeral IA UDG, 2024A). The B.S In English Languages Teaching as a Foreign Language (LIDILE, In Spanish) is part of such a site. 147 students are enrolled in the program learning how to teach (Numeralia UDG 2025A). They are asked to get into groups of 4 people (micro-teaching group) to teach basic English classes in 6 levels. Each micro-teaching plans and performs class from 7 to 8 am or from 8 to 9 a.m. Monday through Thursday. LIDILE students are exposed to a teaching program called Programa Abierto de Lenguas (PAL- Ingles) during 4 semesters (third, forth, fifth and sixth semesters in LIDILE). The last two semesters in LIDILE, they coordinate PAL by administering students to observe microteaching groups and giving academic feedback. Teachers from LIDILE are also involved as observers to evaluate micro-teaching groups. Currently, groups were formed in 2025A. 6 groups of level 1, 2 groups in level 2, 1 group in level 3, 3 groups in level 4, 2 groups in level 5, and 2 groups in level 6.

JUSTIFICATION

The FRESH technique represents an innovative technique for teaching descriptive paragraph writing, offering a structured method for organizing ideas and improving coherence. This technique, which stands for Fact, Reason, Elaboration, and Shift, provides a clear framework that helps students organize their thoughts more effectively. Its application in the Universidad de Guadalajara, where English is a mandatory requirement, is particularly important. The FRESH technique not only improves students' ability to write descriptively but also increases critical thinking and logical organization, key components of academic writing.

The beneficiaries of this research are adult students who often struggle with writing in English as a second language. If this technique improves their writing skills, this will empower them to communicate in written form more effectively, thereby contributing to their overall academic and professional growth. The potential benefits of this technique extend beyond individual students, as it also provides educators with a new tool to enhance their teaching practices, ultimately improving the quality of English language education in Mexico.

First of all, The research paper of Permatasari and Kamaruddin (2024) was taken into consideration due to its similarities on the characteristics of the investigation. It conducted a study to find out if the Applying Fact Reason Elaboration Shift (FRESH)

technique can develop the student's skill to write descriptive text. This research applied a quasi-experimental research design that involved experimental group and control group. The sample of this research was 48 students. The results of this study showed that the writing skill of the eleventh grade students of SMAN Model Terpadu Madani Palu could be improved by applying Fact-Reason Elaboration-Shift (FRESH) technique.

5 years previous Permatasari and Kamaruddin's paper, Somsai and Buttapeng (2020) executed a study aimed to determine whether there are any significant differences in descriptive paragraph writing competence before and after practicing "FRESH" of students majoring in English. The methodology used is a quantitative design that included 54 students studying English at the Department of Liberal Arts. The results showed that the students' descriptive paragraph writing competence improved after practicing FRESH technique.

Then, Ria and Novtapianti (2019) performed a quasi-experimental study at SMP PGRI Sukamoro, involving 212 eighth-grade students. The study aimed to investigate the impact of the FRESH technique on writing achievement in descriptive text. The result revealed a significant difference in writing achievement between the experimental group (taught using FRESH) and the controlled group.

Next, Achmad and Fitriani (2019) implemented a study in a highschool in Banda Aceh to examine whether the FRESH technique improves students' writing ability. Using a quantitative pre-experimental method, they tested first-year students with pretests and posttests. The results showed an increase in mean scores across all writing aspects.

Andriani (2017) administered a study to know the effectiveness of the use of Fact, Reason, Elaboration, and Shift technique (FRESH) in the SMPN 1 college in Kasihan. It used a quasi-experimental design and a technique of sampling using simple random sampling. The population of the research was 8th grade students.

Finally, Anggaraini Latifah (2016) undertook a study to discover if there was one difference in descriptive writing achievement in English Language teaching (ELF). The population (56 students) were taught towards using the FRESH technique (Fact, Reason, Elaboration and Shift). The design used was a quantitative study using a Pre-test and a Post-test. There was a significant improvement.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The first term to be understood is English Language Teaching (ELT). As HarperCollins (2011) explains, ELT is "the instruction of English to non-native speakers, encompassing not just language transmission but also cultural and communicative

competence” (p. 45). However, ELT is not as simple as that definition suggests. It includes a variety of methods, techniques, approaches, and objectives. For example, some key objectives are helping students understand spoken and written English and teaching functional language for real-world use. Common methods include the communicative approach and the direct method, while techniques may focus on pronunciation, listening skills, or reading comprehension.

Building upon these foundations, ELT focuses on developing learners’ communicative competence through structured skill acquisition. As House and Scott (2023) assert, “ELT skills encompass the integrated abilities required to process and produce English effectively, forming the foundation for meaningful communication” (p. 12). These skills are traditionally categorized into four core domains: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Mastery of these skills is interdependent; for instance, reading enhances vocabulary acquisition, which in turn supports writing fluency (Nation, 2020). Proficiency across all four skills is often regarded as indicative of advanced English competence, as they enable learners to engage in academic, professional, and social contexts seamlessly.

Among these skills, writing involves effectively communicating ideas through written text, including the correct use of grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and organization. It is a complex cognitive activity that needs control over various elements simultaneously. As Nunan (1999) states, “Writing is potentially the most difficult skill for Foreign Language (FL) learners to master.” Proficiency in writing is essential for learners because it not only makes academic success easier but also improves critical thinking and the ability to organize and analyze information. Gautam (2019) emphasizes that “writing skill possesses an invaluable importance for the sake of enabling students to understand how the distinct components of a language harmoniously act together.”

A specialized form of writing, academic writing is a formal style used in universities and scholarly publications. It is characterized by a formal tone, precise word choice, and a clear focus on the research problem under investigation. According to Swales and Feak (2012), “Academic writing is a formal and structured mode of communication that adheres to the conventions of a specific discipline. It is characterized by clarity, precision, and a focus on presenting evidence to support claims.” This style of writing uses evidence-based arguments and logical reasoning to guide a reader’s understanding of a subject. Lillis and Scott (2007) mention, “Academic writing is not merely about conveying information but about constructing knowledge through a formalized process of inquiry, argumentation, and critical engagement with sources” (p. 12). Writers use this format to identify and analyze concepts, propose theories, or draw rational conclusions.

To achieve clarity in writing, organizational patterns are essential—different ways writers arrange their ideas to make them clear and easy to follow. According to Graham and Perin (2018), “Effective writing organization provides readers with clear pathways through complex information” (p. 112). Some common patterns include braided organization that mixes related ideas together, modular organization with separate sections that connect like puzzle pieces, circular organization that ends where it began but with deeper meaning, and collage organization that combines different writing styles like quotes and facts. These patterns help writers present information in the way that works best for their topic and audience.

Closely related to organization, cohesive writing requires careful attention to how ideas connect throughout a text. Brown (2019) identifies lexical cohesion as fundamental, stating it “is achieved through the repetition of key words or the use of synonyms, ensuring that ideas flow smoothly and logically” (p. 67). This technique works in tandem with other cohesive devices. As Lee (2021) explains, “Referential cohesion involves the use of pronouns or demonstratives to refer back to previously mentioned ideas, maintaining clarity and continuity in writing” (p. 34). Together, these cohesion patterns create texts that are coherent and easy for readers to follow, which is particularly important in academic and professional contexts where clarity is paramount.

Within well-structured texts, paragraphs serve distinct purposes depending on their type. As Smith (2020) explains, “Paragraphs can be descriptive, narrative, expository, or persuasive, each serving a unique purpose in writing, from painting vivid images to telling stories, explaining ideas, or convincing readers” (p. 45). This variety allows writers to adapt their communication style to different contexts. Taylor (2019) further clarifies this distinction by noting that “Descriptive paragraphs focus on details, narrative paragraphs tell a story, expository paragraphs explain concepts, and persuasive paragraphs aim to influence the reader’s opinion” (p. 23). Understanding these paragraph types is essential for effective written communication across various genres and disciplines.

One particularly important type, the descriptive paragraph, vividly portrays a person, place, object, or experience, allowing the reader to visualize it clearly. As Zemach and Islam (2016) define it, “A descriptive paragraph uses sensory details and precise language to create a mental image, engaging the reader’s senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell” (p. 72). Unlike simple explanations, effective description goes beyond basic adjectives because it selects striking, unusual words that make the subject come alive. For example, instead of saying “The flower is pretty,” a strong descriptive paragraph might say “The crimson petals curled delicately, releasing a sweet, honey-like fragrance.” The writer must use concrete, tangible details so that the reader can almost feel the texture, see the colors, or imagine the sounds being described.

To facilitate the teaching of descriptive writing, the **FRESH technique provides learners with a clear structural framework. As Reynolds (2019) explains, “Scaffolded writing techniques like FRESH offer students a systematic approach to developing both content and organization in their descriptive writing” (p. 15). This acronym-based method breaks down the writing process into four key components: Fact (F) establishes the central observation or concrete detail; Reason (R) explains why this fact is significant; Elaboration (E) develops the description through sensory details and examples; and Shift (SH) provides a thoughtful conclusion by changing perspective or linking to broader ideas. Particularly effective for EFL learners, this technique helps writers move beyond basic descriptions to create vivid, well-structured paragraphs that engage readers.

Underlying this technique is rhetorical structure, which refers to how writers arrange their ideas to communicate clearly with their readers. As Hyland (2016) explains, “Rhetorical structure provides the framework that allows writers to shape their texts to meet disciplinary conventions and reader needs” (p. 89). When writing descriptive paragraphs, this means putting information in the best order, focusing on important points, and using words that help readers follow the ideas. The FRESH technique helps with this by giving writers a clear way to: 1) choose a main idea (focus), 2) add good details (rich details), and 3) use words that appeal to the senses (sensory language). This structure is especially helpful for English learners who need to write for school or work.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Determine how to teach writing at a basic level using the FRESH technique.

- I **Objective 1:** To understand how the writing process works referring to coherence.
- I **Objective 2:** To analyze how Ss write and think in English.
- I **Objective 3:** To test and evaluate the effectiveness of the FRESH technique to organize the information in descriptive paragraphs.
- I **Question 1:** What are the issues in ELT when teaching a basic level?
- I **Question 2:** How do students write with and without training?
- I **Question 3:** How does the “FRESH technique” work to improve SS writing coherence at a basic level?

HYPOTHESIS

This study has the objective to prove if the FRESH technique helps EFL beginning adult learners to improve their organization when writing descriptive paragraphs. The hypothesis of this study is that students who have been taught with the FRESH technique have better organization skills when writing a descriptive paragraph than the students who have not.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can FRESH technique help EFL beginning learners to improve the organization of the information in writing when performing descriptive paragraphs?

METHODOLOGY

The study's research design is qualitative, since it has the goal of exploring and understanding how the FRESH technique can help EFL adult learners improve their organizational writing skills. Qualitative research is ideal for this study because it focuses on participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections on their writing process. The approach that has been used in the research paper is a quasi-experimental method. It was opted to use this method because there is already an existing group which fits the characteristics of the research. However, it's important to be careful about arriving at strong conclusions because there may be level, the duration and method of instruction, and other contextual factors like the classroom environment and participants' demographic characteristics, all of which may influence the observed outcomes.

INSTRUMENTS

Based on the research paper, the pre-test will be an instrument used to assess students' first descriptive writing abilities. For this activity, students will be presented with four different pictures. The instructions will require them to select one of the four pictures, analyze it, and then write a descriptive paragraph about its main characteristics. They will be specifically asked to use a variety of adjectives and details, and the paragraph will need to be between 60 and 80 words long. You can revise the worksheet of the activity in the Appendix section. (Image 1.1)

The research paper indicates that a post-test will also be administered as part of the methodology, typically used after the instructional period to measure any changes or improvements in writing skills, specifically related to the FRESH technique. However, the provided text from the research paper details the instructions for the pre-test but does not explicitly state the specific instructions given for the post-test

activity within its description of instruments. The paper's methodology implies a similar task will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the technique after the teaching intervention. You can revise the worksheet of the activity in the Appendix section. (Image 1.2)

ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTED DATA

Before learning the FRESH technique, the students' writing samples in the pre-test showed some common problems. Many paragraphs felt disorganized, like a list of ideas rather than a smooth description. Students often used simple words and sentences, and didn't include many details to make the picture come alive for the reader. Their writing wasn't always easy to follow.

The research paper explains the FRESH technique, which stands for Fact, Reason, Elaboration, and Shift. This method gives students a clear plan to follow when writing descriptions. It helps them start with a main point (Fact), explain why it's important (Reason), add details and examples (Elaboration), and then wrap it up nicely (Shift). The goal is to make their paragraphs better organized and more detailed.

After the students learned the FRESH technique, their writing in the post-test looked different. The paragraphs seemed better planned and easier to understand. Students included more specific details, and their ideas flowed more smoothly from one sentence to the next. This improvement matches what the students themselves said in the survey since most of them felt the FRESH technique helped make their writing clearer and better connected.

RESULTS

After class the students were asked 4 questions, two questions were close and two were closed.

The first question was closed-ended, in this question was considered 4 possible answers, option one "Muy util", option two "Algo util", option three "Poco util" and option four "No estoy seguro/a". And three students answered "Muy util" and three "Algo util". You can see the image 2.1

¿Qué tan útil fue la técnica FRESH para organizar tus ideas antes de escribir un párrafo descriptivo?

6 respuestas

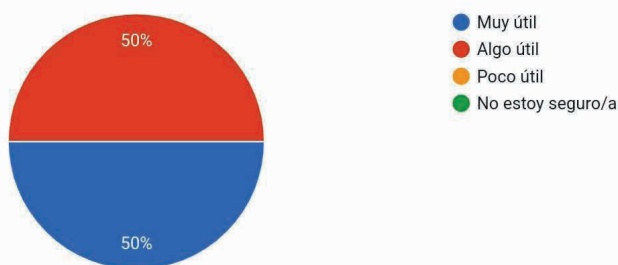


Image 2.1

The second question was closed-ended and offered four possible responses: option one “Totalmente de acuerdo”, option two “De acuerdo”, option three “En desacuerdo”, and option four “Totalmente en desacuerdo”. Three students selected “Totalmente de acuerdo” and three chose “De acuerdo”. You can see the image 2.2

¿El uso de la técnica FRESH facilitó estructurar tu párrafo descriptivo de manera clara y efectiva?

6 respuestas

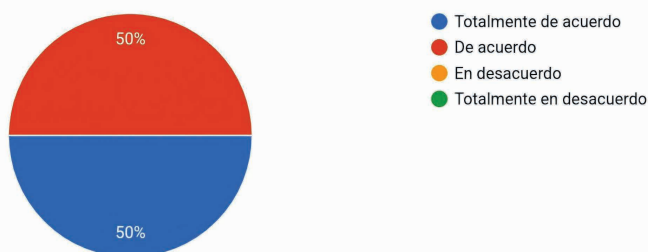


Image 2.2

The third question was open-ended and asked students to specify which part of the FRESH technique helped them the most when writing their paragraph. The six responses varied: some students mentioned that the technique helped them express ideas more clearly or structure their texts better, one highlighted the elaboration step, and another pointed out the usefulness of all the steps for maintaining order in writing. One answer was unclear (“S”), and another student referred to the expression of how the image makes one feel. You can see the image 2.3

¿Qué parte de la técnica FRESH te ayudó más al escribir tu párrafo?

6 respuestas

- Si me ayudó a estructurar mejor la forma de darme a entender
- En todo sentido pero si es algo complicado para formular bien los párrafos
- S
- Elaboración
- How la parte de expresar como no hace sentir la imagen
- Todos los pasos de la técnica ya que me ayudó a tener un orden en la estructura del texto

Image 2.3

The fourth question was open-ended and asked students to mention any difficulties they encountered while using the FRESH technique. Responses varied: one student mentioned that the time was too short, another struggled with describing according to the sections, and one pointed out vocabulary as a challenge. Two students reported no difficulties, and one student indicated that the only challenge was memorizing the steps of the technique for future use. You can see the image 2.4

¿Qué dificultades (si tuviste alguna) encontraste al usar la técnica FRESH?

6 respuestas

- El tiempo. Es muy poco tiempo 1 hora es poco.
- Al describir por las secciones
- Ninguna
- El vocabulario
- ninguna me parece una esstructura facil de entender
- Solamente aprenderse el orden de la técnica para futuras ocasiones

Image 2.4

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APPENDIX



Descriptive paragraph Pre-test



Instructions:

Select 1 of the 4 pictures. Analyse it and write a paragraph describing its main characteristics. Use a variety of adjectives and details. Your paragraph must contain between 60-80 words.

Image 1.1 (Pre-writing activity)

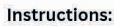


Image 1.2 (Post-writing activity)