Información Importante

Metacognitive Awareness and Enhanced Autonomy through the use of Collaborative Writing and Storybird

Yeison Edgardo Herrera Ramirez

La Sabana University

Metacognitive Awareness and Enhanced Autonomy through the use of Collaborative Writing and Storybird

Yeison Edgardo Herrera Ramirez

La Sabana University

A research report submitted for the degree of Master in English Language Teaching – Autonomous Learning Environments

Directed by: Nicholas Peachey

Master in ELT – Autonomous Learning Environments

Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures

Universidad de la Sabana

Chía, Colombia

November, 2012

METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

Abstract

This action research study aims at presenting how the use of Collaborative Writing through Storybird, a web 2.0 tool which promotes the creation of stories collaboratively, led learners to improve certain specific aspects of their writing skill. Therefore, it shows insights from the participants with regard to the use of Collaborative Writing as a strategy and Storybird as the tool that supported the stories creation process. This study was carried out with two groups of Upper-intermediate learners who studied at Instituto de Lenguas de la Universidad Distrital (ILUD) along two pedagogical intervention cycles in October – November 2010 and March – April 2011. Along the pedagogical intervention, learners experienced synchronous and asynchronous learning through classroom instruction and the use of virtual tools. Data was gathered through pre and posttests, focus groups, surveys and reflective journals, and then and triangulated following coding procedures. The final results revealed that the collaborative writing supported with Storybird, encouraged learners to create their narrative texts fostering peer-correction and self-assessment. Moreover, it was noticeable a considerable improvement in learners' vocabulary and increased attempts to use more complex language forms when they wrote their stories. They felt more encouraged to write narrative texts and their positive attitude towards the production of stories increased. Furthermore, their enhanced metacognitive awareness towards the writing process, peers and self-regulation led to autonomous behaviours emergence.

Key words: Writing skills, Collaborative writing, CALL, Web 2.0, Storybird.

METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

Resumen

Este estudio de investigación acción tiene como objetivo presentar como el uso de la escritura colaborativa a través de Storybird, una herramienta web que promueve la creación de historias en equipo, llevó a los estudiantes a mejorar aspectos específicos en su habilidad para escribir. Además, presenta las percepciones de los participantes con respecto al uso de la escritura colaborativa como una estrategia y Storybird como la herramienta que apoya el proceso de creación de las historias. Este estudio se llevó a cabo con dos grupos de estudiantes nivel intermedio alto que estudiaron en el Instituto de Lenguas de la Universidad Distrital (ILUD) a lo largo de dos ciclos de intervención pedagógica en Octubre –Noviembre de 2010 y Marzo – Abril de 2011. Durante la intervención pedagógica, los estudiantes experimentaron el aprendizaje sincrónico y asincrónico a través de la instrucción dentro del aula de clase y el uso de herramientas virtuales. Los datos se recogieron a través de pre y postests, grupos focales, encuestas y diarios de reflexión que luego se triangularon siguiendo procedimientos de codificación. Los resultados revelaron que la escritura colaborativa apoyada con Storybird, llevó a los estudiantes a crear textos narrativos promoviendo procesos de corrección a pares y auto evaluación. Por otra parte, se notó una mejora considerable en el vocabulario de los estudiantes y sus intentos para utilizar formas de lengua más complejas aumentaron. Los estudiantes se sintieron más animados a escribir textos narrativos y su actitud positiva hacia la producción de historias aumentó. Además, su conciencia metacognitiva hacía el proceso de escritura, sus compañeros y su auto-regulación aumentó, dando como resultado a la aparición de conductas autónomas.

Palabras clave: habilidad para escribir, escritura colaborativa, CALL, Web 2.0, Storybird.

METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

Chapter 1: Introduction

Learners' interactional roles in the classroom and their engagement to examine real life issues and experiences encouraged by the use of internet tools, are essential aspects regarding second language learning in the 21st century. Scrivener (2005) believes that when learners attend language courses, they must have the chance to exchange information with real purposes: to buy food, invite a friend to a party, or just give directions. That is why the traditional methods focused on whole-class teaching represent disadvantages which go from limited communication and interaction, along to the lack of responsibility that learners take on their own learning process (Harmer, 2007, p. 162). Therefore, traditional approaches to language teaching barely match educational needs regarding the use of technological artifacts and the skills needed for the 21st century school (Prensky, 2010).

Bearing in mind that and the need to propel group dynamics and class work that promote autonomous learners aware of their learning process, their social interactions when they learn and are able to identify their weaknesses and strengths, diverse and new pedagogical approaches and strategies are needed. Nowadays, the internet and its daily updated web tools essential for people's lives, wisely and thoroughly used by educators, are more likely to lead learners towards effective self paced learning. Web tools created to carry out collaborative or individual language learning tasks, designed to help learners to strengthen their receptive and productive skills, might lead to more practice promoting their metacognitive awareness. With regard to learners' productive skills and the use of technology, more encouraging and challenging tasks that include the accomplishment of individual and/or collaborative tasks, might fulfill the need to interact and help learners strengthen their weaknesses and promote autonomous behaviours. Therefore, by having learners doing their duties synchronous or asynchronously, autonomous behaviours start

to emerge. When promoting speaking activities, it is natural that the group of learners is called to interact, however, when making reference to writing skill there is still much to explore regarding interaction and the benefits that the interactional experiences might convey in terms of collaboration. This action research study explored how those interactions led two groups of learners to improve certain aspects of their writing ability and took them to be more aware of their writing process, their weaknesses and strengths and their peers when they did collaborative writing tasks using the web 2.0 tool "Storybird". When having learners doing collaborative writing (CW) tasks, they excel above and beyond the individual knowledge, which offers advantages and more ideas and unlimited creativity emerge (Harmer, 2007, p. 329). Moreover, Roger, Kagan O. & Kagan S. (1992) outline that the promotion of interaction between the students creates more opportunities for them to reinforce their language skills and feel more encouraged to learn (p.1). Furthermore, they state the following:

> Careful structured interactions between students contribute to gains in second language acquisition (Long and Porter, 1985; Pica, Young, and Doughty, 1987) and in academic achievement (Aroson et al, 1978; Bejarano, 1987; Kagan, 1988, 1989a; Johnson et al., 1981; Johnson and Johnson, 1987, 1989; McGroarty, 1989; Sharan, 1989; Slavin, 1983a, 1990; Webb, 1985, 1998). Interactions such as restating, expansions, contextualizing allow students to clarify their meanings, elaborate explanations, and resolve discrepancies. (p.1)

When learners experience CW, there are positive social consequences that might be useful for future challenges and learners learn to recognize themselves and their peers as part of a whole and the individual knowledge and experiences get together to create meaning and work as a unit. According to Murray (1992), the writing experiences are tied to the community itself, they occur

in a community and have an impact in that community. If teachers expect to prepare learners for life outside the classroom, they must foster CW experiences (p.100). However, that literacy event that takes place when learners negotiate meaning and create their written texts using interactional rules needs to be underpinned by the use of the internet and the web tools, they are essential for people's lives in the post modern world and the new learning methodologies.

These days, the internet, web tools, software developers, technological artifacts, up-to-date devices and gadgets take people to develop new interactional skills, it leads to changes in life perspectives and the adoption of different methodologies and behaviours regarding "Education". According to Tapscott (2009) the teacher-focused approach models based on instruction need to evolve to a student-focused approached based on collaboration through the use of new technologies (p. 11). With regard to English Language Teaching (ELT) and particularly English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and based on the Colombian and international context, the use of web 2.0 tools to foster collaboration is an increasing area of study, particularly because collaboration is closely related to autonomy and learners' ability to self pace their learning. Gläsman (2006) believes that as long as learners want to succeed in using a collaborative learning environment, they need to develop autonomous behaviours (p. 203). In addition, the promotion of CW tasks using web 2.0 tools might integrate Tapscott's (2009), Peachey's (2009) and Laningham's (2004) arguments, which draw that the existence and use of web 2.0 tools is bound by the "interaction", leading to "Collective intelligence" (O'Reilly, 2005). In that sense, this action research project presents the emerging features, perceptions and pedagogical implications with regard to the use of Storybird to create writing tasks collaboratively in and/or out of the classroom settings.

Colombia is a developing country where the policies and regulations related to bilingualism were propelled by the national government with the National Bilingual Programme 2004 – 2019. The international standards outlined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) were selected to be the guide norm for this reform. In 2005 the government chose the British Council as the organization in charge of the administration of proficiency exams to teachers and students in cooperation with the University of Cambridge. Usma (2009) depicts how those regulations and the new decrees and policies as the law 1064 in 2006 or the decree 4904 in 2009 started to regulate those teaching programmes defined as non-formal (defined now as: "Education programmes for work and Human Development") academic and technical programmes in the law 115 in 1994 (the Educational System General Law). Those programmes were defined as an essential factor in the educative process and a dynamic component in technical programmes focused on productivity, arts and diverse occupations. The promotion of literacy in EFL is outlined in the 2006 law as part of those academic training programmes and the regulations were stated at a later in the decree 4904 in 2009.

Nowadays, many issues remain uncertain regarding the proficiency standards expected by the government in the National Bilingual Programme because of the outstanding differences in English Language proficiency between learners of the official and the private sectors. When they finish their high school programmes, learners from private institutions demonstrate B1 or B2 (intermediate or upper intermediate levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)) proficiency levels whereas most learners from public institutions are A1 or A2. As a result, when those A1 or A2 (beginner or elementary levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)) learners enroll official or private undergraduate programmes and they realize they need to become

proficient English language users, they enroll language programmes in diverse language learning centres.

Instituto de Lenguas de la Universidad Distrital (ILUD) supports and trains learners interested in improving their English language skills or being internationally certified. It was created in 2002 and formed an alliance with the British Council with the purpose of certificating English Language learners and teachers as well. ILUD is a renowned institution recognized by the University of Cambridge as an International Exams Training Center. Since its creation, it has been working with learners from diverse universities, schools, public workers and any person interested in learning or improving a foreign language. When learners culminate the English Language programme, they take the FCE[1] exam administered by the British Council. The language skills tested are reading, listening, writing, speaking and grammar. After analyzing the results the upper-intermediate groups of learners had at ILUD from 2007 to 2009, statistics of their performance showed that they had the lowest marks in the writing section of the exam.

1.1 Rationale

Students enrolled in the English language proficiency programme at ILUD are members of diverse social status levels, public and private universities, schools and institutions. Their ages vary from 7 years up to 65 and they are likely to attend classes from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m., they choose the most suitable schedules depending on their specific needs. Learners' needs vary significantly depending on the day and time they attend classes but what they have in common is the need to master their English language skills at a higher level of proficiency. After learners study for about two years attending six weekly hours, they are trained to take the FCE and the

[1] First Certificate in English Exam (Designed to test B2 English Language Proficiency Level).

challenges emerge for them when, at the same time, they need to improve their language proficiency and get familiar with the exam tasks and strategies, and gain crucial experience to deal with each part of the exam.

The time learners spend in their training needs to be used wisely in and out of the classroom settings, otherwise, it might seem too short for them to strengthen their communicative skills and accomplish their goals. They need to learn to take advantage of their partners' knowledge and experience when working collaboratively and the study time they have at home or work. The internet and the use of web 2.0 tools could foster the necessary consolidation tasks and achieve the desired effect on the learners. Despite having arguments for and against, the internet symbolizes a useful tool to promote learning experiences because it is related to work, specific tasks and relationships among family and friends (Castells, 2003, p. 157). Castells (2003) and Tapscott (2009) argue that the internet use has a positive effect on the social interaction because it increases the effects of sociability. Furthermore, Castells (2003) demonstrates that internet users are more interested in reading literature, artistic events, going to the cinema and doing sports since it triggers motivational factor in a unique and enriching way. Learners change their attitude towards life and that somehow increases their encouragement when studying.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The arguments that supported the promotion of a research study in which it was possible to find out strategies to promote effective practices in relation to learners' writing skill, emerged from an analysis made by the group of members of the academic board of the institution who are also in-service teachers. They informally dissected FCE mock tests results from exams presented along every semester from January 2008 up to June 2010 to analyze learners' weaknesses and

strengths. The analysis showed the necessity to strengthen learners writing skill because the lowest grades were perceivable there, particularly in the second writing task.

The writing paper learners have to manage when they take the FCE is divided into two parts, the first part is compulsory and there they must write a formal or an informal letter. In the second part, learners are given the choice to write a report, a review, an article, an essay, a story or a summary of a book. The academic board realized that in the first part of the writing paper, learners scarcely present difficulties. With regards to the second part, two features were recurrent: the first one was that learners' more common choice to write was a story, and the second one, was that they presented more problems when they wrote a story than when they chose a different option.

After analyzing learners' stories, it was noticeable that their written texts were commonly affected by thematic progression problems understood as issues learners have when there is not a logical relationship among the ideas; this is also defined as lack of coherence and cohesion. Furthermore, on a closer analysis and apart from these issues, other problems as the use of wrong formats, lack of paragraphing and vocabulary, inaccurate sequence of ideas, inappropriate register, gender omission and punctuation marks misuse emerged.

This action research project demonstrates how the use of CW to create narrative texts synchronously and asynchronously, in and out of the classroom settings through Storybird, a web 2.0 tool designed to do CW tasks, triggers learners' positive attitudes towards the narrative texts production. Moreover, it reveals the benefits that CW has on students' writing skill when they write their stories collaboratively. When learners work collaboratively online they write better pieces of work in terms of content, register, format and language forms due to the fact that online learning depends on collaboration, conversation and communication. Bonk (2009) argues that

when students do collaborative tasks they learn how to learn and if there is a combination of collaborative work, learners could find themselves surrounded by a different encouraging environment.

1.3 Research Questions

- What changes are evident in EFL intermediate students' writing skill when they write narrative texts collaboratively supported by the web 2.0 tool Storybird?
- What insights emerge from the participants with regard to the use of Storybird and collaborative writing for the creation of narrative texts?

1.4 Research Objectives

- To determine the changes on EFL intermediate students' writing skill when they write narrative texts collaboratively.
- To analyze participants' perceptions with regards to collaborative writing mediated by the use of Storybird.

1.5 Constructs

Writing skills, Collaborative writing, CALL, Web 2.0, Storybird.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter depicts the constructs outlined in the previous section and draws the basics regarding the use of the internet, web tools and the collaborative learning principles to promote the creation of narrative texts synchronously and asynchronously. First, it presents some generalities about the implications and basic conceptions regarding the writing skill, the classroom environment and the teachers' role in the promotion of strategies, methods and approaches to guide learners through their writing learning process. Then, it outlines concepts related to the CW principles and results of national and international research studies carried out synchronously and/or asynchronously mediated by communicative tools, with and without the support of technological applications on the Internet. Those experiences lead to reflections about learners' roles when doing CW. Finally, it explains how the technological improvements convey the creation of virtual and computer assisted environments and tools which support learners in their literacy process. Through this chapter, the reader will find information that shows ways to foster students' development of writing skill and draws the importance for teachers to get familiar with web tools and integrate them in the classroom of the 21st century.

2.2 Writing skill

The classroom language must give learners opportunities to explore and discover the language when they expose arguments and communicate ideas. To exchange information and communicate successfully, a speaker or writer must follow some organizational steps to communicate their ideas in accurate ways so that the hearer or reader responds to what they say.

METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

When teachers tackle productive skills in the classroom, it is crucial to choose appropriate teaching strategies and approaches which go hand in hand with the specific features of the language. Elbow (2000) argues that speaking and writing skills have their own defined features and they intend to foster particular cognitive processes or "mentalities" (p.149). However, most syllabuses or textbooks are devoted to one productive skill and teachers usually focus on either speaking or Writing (Hyland, 2002, p.49). According to Hyland (2002) "Speech is more highly contextualized, depends far more on shared situation, allows less planning, involves real time monitoring, and relies to a greater extent on immediate feedback." Conversely, Elbow (2000) asserts that speech is "nothing but wind" but writing "stays there," it is permanent and takes life separate from the writer (p.150). Writing requires more commitment and dedication from learners and teachers.

The writing skill is linked to literacy levels and when it is thoroughly developed, there are opportunities to accomplish academic or professional tasks more efficiently. According to Hyland (2002), "writing is central to our personal experience and social identities, and we are often evaluated by our control on it." The writing skill needs to be re-considered as vital in the classroom language, a skill that is part of a system, a system known as language, a skill which is a natural part of the process of living that cannot be studied in isolation (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Daily life interactions are part of those processes when people use the language to negotiate and create *texts*. This simple but meaningful conception of "process" highlights the importance of devoting time to instructing learners in writing skills. Tutors, instructors and teachers, aware of the complexity of teaching writing know that they need to dedicate time and efforts to teaching students to deal with this skill.

METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

The most noticeable and common challenges when teaching writing comprise time constraints and feedback effectiveness. Regarding time, there are two main aspects that might affect learners' encouragement towards the development of writing tasks. On the one hand, most of the time in the classroom is spent in training learners to deal with other skills and more communicative real-life situations (Scrivener, 2005); as a result, learners might consider that the writing ability is not an essential skill to master. On the other hand, responding and commenting on learners' writing texts consumes most of teachers time (Sommers, 2002), in that sense, many teachers with little time to check written tasks might avoid asking learners to do them. Urquhart & McIver (2005) believe that teachers' duties in their jobs and the time they spend planning lessons, grading, teaching, supporting parents and children, scheduling and attending academic meetings, take most of their time and state: "There just isn't enough time for the many responsibilities that have been entrusted to schools." As a result, teachers hardly handle written texts in class and it brings lots of issues when, in higher levels learners are supposed to produce accurate and appropriate texts that meet international standards.

At ILUD, when learners list reasons for their enrolment in English courses, their replies vary but what they have in common is that they do not want to learn another language to be proficient writers. They just want to learn how to handle daily-life situations and that probably explains why most teachers working at ILUD spend insufficient time to instruct learners on writing skill and also why most of the writing tasks are supplemented or assigned as homework. With regard to feedback, the written production functionality becomes useless when its impact sums up to a piece of paper covered with red ink marks and a grade at the bottom or the top made by a teacher who reckons that the feedback delivered is comprehensible enough. Nonetheless, that feedback is not usually as comprehensible as expected and the writing tasks end up into

English books and dictionaries, and finally into the rubbish bin. Effective feedback must enrich learners along the writing process and not at the end when it is commonly used to grade a final draft, and then learners move on to a new task (Connors, 2002).

Educational communities must raise awareness of the importance of having feedback under the regular basis and not at the end because a final draft scarcely shows learners improvements and measures the writing skill. Elbow (2000) outlines various aspects to consider when giving feedback on drafts which might enrich learners' production, they involve positive treatment towards learners' products: Instead of pointing out what did not work, teachers should outline what should work on future papers; learners should have the chance to comment on their tasks expressing their feelings; teachers should read the whole draft before commenting; after learners receive their commented drafts, they should take five minutes to write down a note expressing their reaction towards the comments; and finally, learners must feel that their drafts go further for them than just having a good or bad exercise (Connors, 2002, p.4). Furthermore, learners written assignments must be considered as a natural human condition that emerges from the need to express what they feel, it is a transaction between humans that reflects their reality. Whithaus (2005) suggests that teachers should ask themselves and their students questions about the criteria for assessing writing, in that way, they situate assessment "not only in local classroom practice but also in an authentic communicative environment (p. 59)." Sommers (2002), adds that teachers should develop comments that give learners reasons for them to revise their drafts, "a sense of revision as discovery (p. 91)." Finally, Urquhart & McIver (2005) believe that it is vital to deliver corrective on-going feedback while the process as an opportunity to encourage learners (p. 28).

METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

Improvement in writing takes time and effort, and diverse considerations and approaches are to be considered depending on the learners' needs, institutional objectives and teacher's expectations. Being aware of the constant support, another factor which demands thorough consideration is the process itself. Writing must be considered as a skill in which the production process becomes enriching for learners. A "process approach" could fulfill most educators and researchers' expectations in terms of applicability and suitability for learners. The old fashion "product approaches" where learners are limited to imitate, copy and/or just transform models (Nunan, 1999) must be redirected to more meaningful and inspiring experiences that foster autonomous learners. According to Elbow (2000), after having understood the process writing dynamics with its essential features, anyone can take charge of oneself to learn.

The very first ideas towards a "process approach" to writing are presented by Rohman (2002) in his article "pre-writing". His early definition outlines that "Writing is usefully described as a process, something that shows continuous change in time like growth in organic nature." In the process approach there are four steps and strategies that guide students thought it. The steps to follow include prewriting, drafting, revising and editing (Nunan (1999) and Urquhart & McIver (2005)). Nonetheless, Harmer (2004) defines them as "planning, drafting, editing and final draft" (p.5), and includes the revision section into the editing process. These steps combined with the appropriate assessment and guidance from class instructors embody key points that might guide learners to succeed in their writing production. A prewriting stage defined as "the stage of discovery in the writing process" (Rohman, 2000, p.7), symbolizes an essential stage which needs strategic planning with the use of diverse strategies and tasks to really encourage learners to plan what they will write in the following stage (Urquhart & McIver, 2005, p.12). The drafting stage involves learner's first approaches to the blank paper where they will materialize

their thoughts. The revising stage refers to the presentation of ideas and how comfortable the writer feels about what he or she wants to express. Finally, the editing process, involves spelling and grammar revision (Harmer, 2004, 2007). With reference to this study, the process approach is associated with the CW principles to try and help learners strengthen their writing skill. Having learners going along each stage with a partner might represent a more enriching experience for them.

To sum up, all academic institutions should prioritize writing practices since most learners enroll in English for academic purposes (EAP) classes because they are hoping to become proficient English users. Learners face the challenge of taking and passing international exams with high levels in their results because it is a defining factor regarding the opportunities to succeed in their professional lives. The educational institutions' mission is to teach writing as a part of communicative real language, where learners feel the necessity to learn to write with real purposes, bearing in mind diverse audiences, and also a space where they enjoy the writing process self assessing their improvement. Therefore, a process approach where learners are aware of the texts construction; formative feedback; and the use of technological tools to support the tasks production, might encourage learners to do their writing tasks and somehow improve their writing skill. Educators must propel fruitful writing experiences and help learners like writing, help them trust themselves, find their voices, and work with others encouraging the use of writing in their lives (Elbow, 2000, p. XV).

2.3 Collaborative Writing

The basis that supports the concept of collaboration is associated with the definition of cooperation. Most researchers and educators use those concepts interchangeably making

reference to the same idea (Harmer (2004 – 2007), Kessler (1992), Nunan (1999) and Schwartz (1998)). Although Oxford (1997) states distinctions among what she defines as "the three strands of communication in the foreign or second language classroom" (p.443): collaboration, cooperation and interaction, most linguists into the field of collaboration conversely use those concepts to illustrate the same idea. Schwartz (1998) states that "collaboration involves the notions of agency and an individual's ability to represent other people's agency (p. 199)." Collaborative learning then, is broadly understood as an instruction method learners use to work together and reach common goals (Gokhale, 1995). Joint long-term work leads learners to be engaged in discussion, take responsibility for their own learning and become critical thinkers (Totten, Sills, Digby & Russ, 1991). Benson (1996) and Little (2000) believe that the collective development of learning tasks lead learners to take greater control over their learning process propelling autonomous behaviours. Therefore, they state that learning is a process that needs to be supported by interactional rules in a community.

CW refers to the opportunity that learners have to enhance writing and increase academic achievement in groups. Speck (1999) defines CW as "the writing accomplished by more than one author." It symbolizes a way to gain confidence when learners share what they write helping each other by offering suggestions, corrections or alternatives and everyone feels like building something together. "Successful CW allows students to learn from each other" (Harmer, 2004, p. 73) when they negotiate language and peer correct. CW promotes participation and when learners share personal experiences they experience a functional approach to use spoken and written language with objectives, strategies and stages defined by learners on their own.

Methods, strategies and tools to propel collaborative writing experiences vary from the teachers' perspectives, knowledge and expertise. Some teachers might find groups of learners

who prefer individual work; however, it depends on the teacher to encourage learners to do collaborative tasks. Schwartz (1998) strongly believes that educators are able to control an agent's desire to take part in collaborative tasks and define personal and group goals in a collaborative task. However, it is possible to intertwine collaborative and individual work and the outcomes might be more enriching. Elbow (2000) suggests a strategy that might enrich the writing process combining both collective and individual efforts. He believes that learners should work in isolation along some stages of the process because they would not fully strengthen their weaknesses completely supported by a partner. CW might not entail many benefits specially if there are learners with special characteristics and the opportunities to interact symbolize challenges for them:

1) The tacit decisions learners make at the time of writing when they are working on their own are marked by a slow pace when they need to negotiate and agree with others. Learners might experience unpleasant experiences since the collaboration means more time and more disagreements.

2) The writing texts that result from a collaborative experience are often below standard because learners' negotiations just meet the lowest-common-denominator thinking.

3) The collaborative experiences often silence weaker learners or minorities.

The previous reasons might obscure the benefits derived from collaborative experiences; that is why, before deciding whether promoting collaboration or not, a learners' needs analysis and characterization is fundamental. Elbow's (2000) combination of Collaborative and individual stages to have strong collaboration from the participants might promote greater advances and the use of CW could be a bridge to better solo writing (p. 376).

National and international research studies on CW experiences show useful information about learners' improvements in their writing skill proficiency and social interaction. Murray (1992) presents a research study conducted with ESL learners entitled: "Collaborative writing as a literacy event: implications for ESL instruction." Her conclusions are: "If we apply some of the principles of successful CW in our classrooms, we will help our students write for the real-world contexts in which they must write" (p.117).

The qualitative action research study carried out by Beltrán (2010) with a group of learners at "La Salle University Language Center," documents, observes and analyzes the role of digital storytelling using storyboards and the role of collaboration in the classroom. The results showed that the use of storyboards promote students' self expression and helps learners to improve their writing skills. Therefore, the group dynamics, negotiation and cultural and world knowledge were enhanced.

Aguirre (2010) did a qualitative case study called "Writing Hyperstories Collaboratively for an Authentic Audience" at Minuto de Dios University with fifty-four (54) elementary learners who worked in small groups creating stories. The results after a period of thirteen (13) sessions showed that CW appeared to increase audience awareness when learners did their writing tasks and helped improve their writing skills as well.

There are diverse approaches, methods or strategies that lead students to interact in groups and result applicable depending on the particular characteristics of each group, that interaction might lead to the promotion of creativity, negotiation of meaning and self regulation when learners assess their performance and become aware of their learning process. The main aim of those collaborative methods and approaches is centered on the promotion or creation of activities

in environments that help students improve their writing skill, and give them the opportunity to find writing as a fun process where creation and imagination go together as well.

2.4 Computer Assisted Language Learning (*CALL*)

Views towards the new changing and evolving world and the way learners discover knowledge by using new technological artifacts, rise inquiries about the way teachers meet learners' needs when they attend English classes (Donaldson & Haggstrom, 2006, p. VII). Learners belonging to this new era have changed the way they learn too, and they are getting used to learning things on their own using technology. They have new perceptions of the world and those perceptions are changing the educative contexts, teachers should rise awareness of the importance that the technological advances have for them (Prensky, 2010, p. 3) and adopt new attitudes towards the education process (Donaldson & Haggstrom, 2006, p. VII; Chapelle, 2003, p.1).

Prensky (2010) and Chapelle (2003) believe that the learners of the 21st century living in a new technologically evolved society need new educative models. The "Digital natives" or learners of the future demand more attention because they probably know more about some aspects than any other and are able to use technology to enhance their own learning. Chapelle (2001) strongly believes that anyone concerned with second language learning and teaching in this new era needs to be engaged in technology mediated tasks. In addition, Prensky (2010) suggests a new pedagogical model called "partnering pedagogy," where the use of technology is the students' job and the teachers' job is to guide the use of that technology for effective learning (p. 3).

The technological improvements offer new possibilities to access information far more quickly and easily. Along the last decade, the inclusion of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) technologies in overall subjects has shown to lead students through a non-traditional learning model supported by technology. Thomas & Reinders (2010) argue that the two advantages of the use of CALL technologies are the teaching and learning perspectives we have access to from around the world and the multi-dimensional nature that this fact spreads in the classroom (p.2). Therefore, CALL might lead teachers to improving the learning conditions anywhere (Hubbard, 2009, p.2)

CALL makes reference to the use of software applications or programs that integrate interactivity to promote language learning and teaching (Davies, Walker, Rendall, & Hewer, 2010). It is a subject intertwined with various areas of knowledge, especially computer science, but its main focus on applied linguistic and classroom learning makes it absolutely useful for language teachers. In addition, Beatty (2003) outlines that it involves "any process in which a learner uses a computer, and as a result, improves his or her language." CALL consists of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) applications that go from the traditional to the most recent methodological approaches.

Thomas & Reinders (2010) highlight three specific evolutionary stages in CALL: a very fist "structural" or "behaviourist" stage, a "communicative" stage and an "integrative" stage. These three stages go from the basic drill-and-practice programmes to web learning environments and web-based distance learning including interactive whiteboards, Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and language learning in virtual worlds. CALL covers plenty of materials divided into two: the ones created with specific purposes and the existing ones taken from the Internet and used or adapted to fulfill the

classroom necessities. Among the existing ones there are videos, podcasts, magazines, etc. The technologies surrounding CALL include PDA's (Personal digital assistants), mobile phones, mp3 players, DVD players and electronic whiteboards since they have computers or varieties implanted in them (Hubbard, 2009, p. 2).

Software and web development show innovative programs, CD rooms and enriching websites easy to access with free downloadable applications and tools to support students with learning tasks. Nonetheless, educators need to adapt the use of technology so that it really enriches the learning process since, according to Donaldson & Haggstrom (2006), "there is little probability that our students will be able to adjust their learning styles to truly take advantage of the new technologies (p. VII)," they need to be guided by teachers who carefully are to follow pedagogical principles to mediate students' learning offering effective scaffolding through the use of computers (Levy, 2006, p.1). Provided that teachers learn how to guide learners towards meaningful experiences supported by the use of computers, they will be more likely to enhance their language proficiency. Granted that the teaching preconceptions towards the use of technology in the classroom evolve, instructors and learners will benefit from more realistic or authentic experiences in the classroom (Donaldson & Haggstrom, 2006). Levy (2006) argues that there are essential preliminary decisions teachers should make before using technology in the classroom; after planning what to teach, they might choose the appropriate tool, pedagogical approach and methodology. For the effective implementation of CALL, understanding the strengths and limitations when choosing the technologies is vital (p. 2).

When learners access CALL they are more likely to strengthen their reading and writing skills because to understand any type of material, they must read thoroughly; moreover, the most usual way to communicate their ideas is by writing. Educators involved in the use of multimedia

environments and aware of that fact, give significance to the reading and writing skills fostered in a different, meaningful and unconscious mode. With regard to that Whithaus (2005) and Hubbard (2009) highlight the urgent necessity for teachers to start valuing the writing learners produce in chat rooms, blogs, web sites and instant messages. Rogers (2008), in his article "Using Technology to Facilitate Process Writing and Interaction among Adult Students," shows how the use of software and the CW and interaction can be promoted amongst learners and how it propels language learning and autonomy.

Most institutions set "Computer labs," "Language Resource Centres" (LRCs), "Virtual Language Resource Centres" (VLRCs) and "Self Access Rooms" (SARs) where learners find support they need to be embedded in autonomous learning environments and learn in a self-directed way. Chapelle (2003) defines these spaces as "places where people come to meet with their peers while they are working or playing" (p.12). When learners access computer tools with encouragement, autonomous behaviours start to rise in their learning process (Benson, 2002; Ding, 2003). Nevertheless, learners do not necessarily need to attend those places to do reinforcement tasks since they can do it at home as well. With reference to the www use and the possible effects that it might have, Chapelle (2003) affirms that it is a venue for the expression of creativity (p.12) and connects learners to a large variety of discussions and information (p.14).

CALL research has been longer associated with the evolution of ICT and learning methodologies. Although much CALL research has been carried out at a micro-level intertwined with studies based on Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), researchers have identified and learnt principles for learning tasks design in multimodal e-learning environments (Thomas & Reinders, 2010). Those new trends on task design are centered on the idea of fostering e-learning or b-learning environments where learners become lifelong learners and develop autonomous

attitudes towards learning work. Researchers and educators might find CALL exciting owing to its connection with the ICT but at the same time frustrating because of the amount of time required to look for, adapt, use and evaluate the sources. Anyone interested in CALL must be aware of the multi-dimensional features that technology-mediated tasks have and the micro and micro-processes the learners follow when they develop the collaboratively or working on their own. With regard to that, and the fact that learners are not always able to cope with learning environments, tasks must be scaffolded, supplemented and supported appropriately considering their virtual nature (Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v, 2010). Since CALL is focused on second language learning, its use needs to be reinforced and updated daily with new software, involving current approaches to language learning and teaching (Hubbard, 2009, p.1).

2.5 WEB 2.0

More than two decades have passed since Tim Berners-Lee created the first browser interface, and from that time, daily technological improvements bring something new to everyone's lives. When the Berners-Lee browser interface was updated by Mozilla and Netscape citizens were likely to access what had exclusively been used for military and academic purposes (M. Vallance, K. Vallance & Masahiro, 2009, p. 7). That graphical browsing built on the Internet, designed to provide users with information about news, music, personal and institutional profiles, and available to any audience was known as web 1.0. Berners-Lee depicts that web 1.0 was planned with the purpose of connecting people in an interactive space (Laningham, 2004, para. 46). However, most web 1.0 tools driven by text based content provided by big companies or people with web skills did not offer interaction between users because there was not possibility to modify, complement or create the content which was controlled by its authors. Pegrum (2009)

adds that the initial web 1.0 referred to "*information-oriented web"* consisted of static web pages (p. 20). Those web tools had slow connections, expensive software, and conversely to what Berners-Lee affirmed, limited interactivity (Peachey, 2009; Pegrum, 2009).

Improvements and innovative technological advances attempting to meet the new educative and social needs in terms of interaction and collaboration resulted in the creation of web 2.0 tools. Berners-Lee affirms that "Web 2.0 is, of course, a piece of jargon that nobody even knows what it means" and that the main role of the web is in general place where people can interact (Laningham, 2004, para. 46).

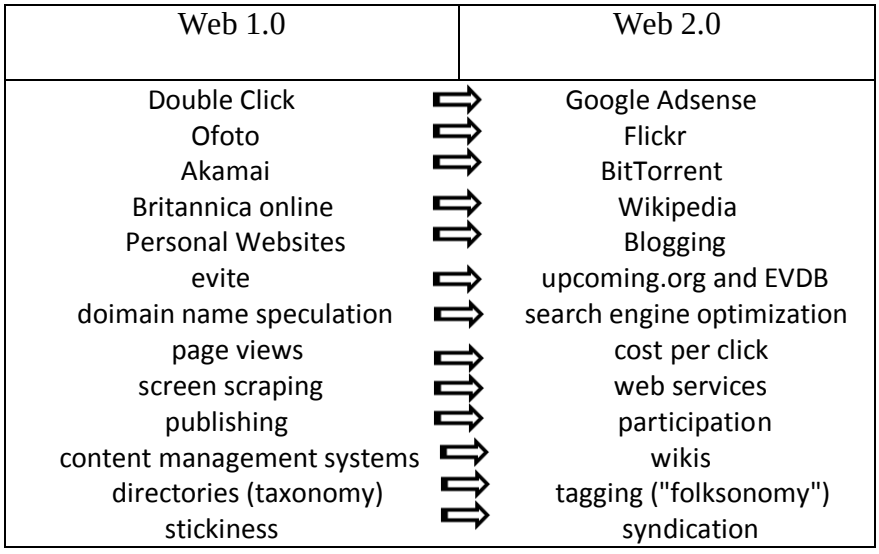


Figure 1. Web 1.0 and web 2.0 tools. O'Reilly (2005).

When O'Reilly (2005) and his company presented the term Web 2.0 in 2004, they suggested using the World Wide Web (WWW) as a strategic platform to lead users to a collective intelligence by means of inserting data and creating meaning, something that was not with the web 1.0 tools. Therefore, O'Reilly provides illustrative examples and explanations regarding the

differences between 1.0 and 2.0 tools and outlines the web 2.0 tools derived from web 1.0 that offer interaction and cooperation presenting the main features and contrasting them (Figure 1).

The web 2.0, also known as social web (Pegrum, 2009, p. 21), is defined by Vallance M., Vallance K. & Masahiro M., (2009) as a "knowledge-oriented environment where users cooperatively create malleable content with shared presence that is synchronously and asynchronously distributed in wired and wireless networks to fixed and portable technologies." The perspectives towards the use of the Internet and the pedagogical implications that emerged, changed learners and educators' perspectives towards the matter of collaboration and creation of meaning (Pegrum, 2009, p. 21), learners were more likely to share opinions by means of blogs and also work together in the creation of definitions to words, biographies, stories, bibliographies and also music. The web 2.0 advances include: high speed, free web based software and applications, platform based services, users generated content, rich media content, complex social interactions, new business models, and maybe the most essential factor democratisation since people create content making contributions from what they know (Peachey, 2009). In addition, Hrastinski (2008) concludes that the 2.0 tools emphasize the use of the web to support social relationships.

In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Vallance M., Vallance K. & Masahiro (2009) affirm that the use web 2.0 tools emphasize social communication which is in turn intertwined with a constructivist approach to learning and teaching focused on constructing knowledge and not receiving it; on thinking and analyzing, not memorizing; understanding and applying, not repeating back; and being active, not passive (p. 8). In 1998 Schwartz stated that: "Bringing computers into the cooperative equation is a promising new approach." Although some research studies have shown the great benefits of using web 2.0 tools, there is still much research to

implement in this field and the outcomes could lead newer educative methodologies. For example, a current research study shows how in the United States at the University of Arizona, learners work together to build a wiki-based glossary of technical terms they learn during their course (Anderson, 2007). In Colombia, the use of "Hot Potatoes" to improve writing has shown how this web 2.0 tool helped elementary students improve their spelling, vocabulary, and awareness of simple sentence construction (Beltrán, 2009).

A study carried out at La Sabana University shows the implications and the impact of using WebQuest™, a tool designed to promote critical thinking and collaboration, in the improvement of critical reading skills in a group of undergraduates. The results draw that this tool had the expected effect in terms of language skills improvement and also because it helped them increase autonomous behaviors (Jimenez, 2009). Elola & Oskoz (2010) from Texas Tech University and the University of Maryland in the United States, show how the use of wikis and chats has brought new considerations in terms of CW. The results showed how the use of wikis and chats help learners to concentrate on their writing tasks when they did CW.

In general, the fruitful experiences presented where the use of web 2.0 tools was essential, indicate that their use promote opportunities for learners to improve their communicative and social skills. After teachers identify learners' needs in terms of language, and they must to choose the most appropriate web tools to help learners overcome their issues. The implications of using the web tools available in the Internet go further because they provide exposure to diverse cultures and a wide range of communication styles, learners can take control of their own learning and they become more confident (Ding, 2003).

2.6 Storybird

Regarding the essential considerations that educators must examine when choosing a web 2.0 tool to promote interaction in the classroom, the collaborative learning psychology outlines certain features which might determine learners' engagement to do writing tasks and their will to produce much more accurate tasks. Schwartz (1998), Obringer (2001) and Graetz (2006) state that the features that determine learners' willingness to take part in computer based tasks designed or adapted with any learning purpose are defined by the learners' motivation to take part in those learning tasks. Therefore, educators must make efforts to choose appropriate tools, design tasks, define paths and plan what learners are to do fostering the interaction needed and the possibility for them to produce more accurate tasks. In that sense, the psychological parameters include appealing tasks and friendly user tools that do not impede the accomplishment of those tasks.

Storybird is a web 2.0 tool created by Mark Ury that supports the collaborative storytelling with the use of art galleries that inspire people to create stories (Storybird, n.d; Nordin, 2010). It is available at www.storybird.com and by signing in, people activate a free personal account that provides the possibility to create stories using images, working online individually or collaboratively and interacting synchronously or asynchronously with another person. Regarding the matter that Storybird is designed to promote art-inspired storytelling, there is a huge list of galleries and users are able to decide whether they prefer to start writing a story getting inspired by art or by exploring themes associated with key words. Users have the chance to read and comment on stories others created as well. After choosing a gallery or a theme, the images can be arranged in slides as preferred and there is space on the screen to write beside the images. Users decide whether finishing creating the story on their own or inviting another person

to collaborate. To invite others to collaborate, users send an e-mail via Storybird and two users might finish writing the stories switching turns and working asynchronously, delivering feedback, making comments, peer correcting and negotiating meaning and content. Storybird can be used to create storyboards before having learners writing their stories, which might work as a prewriting strategy that might foster meaning and content negotiation and more creativity because of its nature as a collective creation. This tool contains the necessary features that an educational web 2.0 tool must have to be used in or out of the classroom settings and students are able to modify its content.

Educators might find Storybird useful to promote the creation of stories at any educative level, from primary school with literacy purposes where English is spoken as the native language up to higher education and Adult courses for ESL or EFL students. Moreover, the interface and images are daily updated intending to be more appealing for people and integrating real and imaginary situations that might lead to the creation of more catching stories. Storybird meets the parameters Thomas & Reinders (2010) defined because it is integrative in nature and helps students work meaningfully with creativity when they produce texts from images interacting, collaborating and creating meaning. Storybird is friendly user and free and there is a special account teachers are likely to sign in to use in the classroom by paying a fee; by using that account, educators are able to use more applications that make it easy to follow up learners' progress.

Storybird promotes the synchronous and asynchronous CW and learners can use it create storyboards collaboratively. A research study in which learners created storyboards as a prewriting strategy carried out at Universidad Distrital, showed that it definitely helps learners develop their writing skill (Linares, 2010). In the past the digital storyboards were created using

pictures and images from the Internet and it was distracting and time-consuming for the writers. Storybird can be used as a technological artifact that provides in one place the images learners need systematically organized. Learners create their storyboards by simply dragging and dropping pictures and do not need to waste time looking for images in the Internet or drawing pictures. Avery (2011) outlines that "Storybird is an extremely engaging site that allows students to focus more on the content of their writing rather than drawing pictures." In addition, the regulations that nowadays rule the copy right laws, impede the use of most of the images that can be retrieved from the Internet.

Although no previous research projects are found locally or internationally related to Storybird and the promotion of writing skills, educators' opinions towards its use demonstrate that it might be enriching for literacy and storytelling. Dabbs (2011), Storybird (n.d.) and Nordin (2010) believe that Storybird encourages creativity and it is fun for any group of learners. Dabbs (2011) adds that it brings learners' abstract thoughts to real life and Nordin (2010) argues that it help students to "learn effective communication and collaboration" (p.4), and learners are more likely to develop self-concepts and social developments. Furthermore, Storybird (n.d.) believes that Storybird "allows for independent work" (p.2), it fosters autonomous behaviours.

Storybird can be used to promote collaborative or independent work and it is available for family and friends, teachers and artists interested in sharing or selling their arts and being connected with fans (Ury, n.d.). In Canada and New Zealand, a collaborative project called "Our Storybird Collaboration with Canada" was carried out using Storybird between a group of students of 2/3 and 4 classes; it shows that it is a tool that can be used to interact with learners from different parts of the world. Therefore, Storybird is appealing to people of all ages and

offers creativity, imagination and deep thinking, it is a promising tool for storytelling in the future (Storybird, n.d.)

Chapter 3: Research design

This qualitative action research study was carried out during two pedagogical intervention and implementation cycles with two different groups of learners. When doing qualitative research, it is vital to look for appropriate methods, procedures and instruments to describe phenomena, classify and interconnect the emerging concepts (Dey, 2005). This chapter depicts the researchers' role, the context, the participants, the data collection instruments, and the data collection procedures that the researcher followed to analyze and show the outcomes.

First Cycle:

3.1 Type of study

During the process the researcher defined the type of research study contemplating factors such as learners' linguistic and communicative needs, the researcher's role, institutional policies and facilities, and pedagogical implications. However, the two factors considered vital when choosing the type of study were time and researcher's role. The time learners used to take part in the pedagogical interventional stages was short. They attended classes six hours every week for eight weeks, which corresponded to 48 hours of instruction every two months. Moreover, the researcher was to carry out the study as participant and researcher, thereby offering appropriate instruction concerning the use of web tools, writing skills and strategies, and class content. It was necessary to choose a type study that matched participants' needs.

The interventional principles of "Action Research" were appropriate because of the time constraints from the participants and the fact that the teacher was involved as participant and researcher as well. Furthermore and regarding its simplicity, integrity, reliability and validity, it covers most theory and empirical research literature about learning and teaching in higher

education (Norton, 2009; Burns, 2010). When doing action research, Sagor (2005) highlights the importance of a researcher who takes part in the process: "It is an investigation conducted by the person or the people empowered to take action concerning their own actions, for the purpose of improving their future actions" (p 4). Therefore, Dick (1993) argues that the most evident benefits of doing action research appear when practitioners increase their awareness and learn from the experience. Additionally, an action research cycle can also be regarded as a learning cycle where time is defined by participants (Kolb, 1984).

More benefits might be perceived if the action research project provides the possibility to develop critical thinking in researchers, colleagues and educators, and when it specifically empowers future actions at ILUD and diverse institutions based on results. According to Norton (2009), since action research is derived from the social practice, with not rigorous systematic enquiry, reflective, participative and determined by the practitioners. The benefits are likely to be noticeable when the results lead to institutional improvements and inspire future studies.

3.2 Researchers' role

As depicted in the previous lines and bearing in mind that the action research principles suggest a researcher that takes part of the study as participant and researcher as well, the nature of the researcher was defined by that principle. Nowadays, the reality leads educators to look for practical solutions that work better to help learners overcome their weaknesses (Burns, 2010). The educators build up daily research practices to find the most appropriate and efficient ways to help learners improve skills or simply modify behaviours. Along this action research study, the teacher was a researcher who instructed and at the same time collected data systematically from his teaching practice (Wallace, 1998). Then, after a reflective data analysis, the results intended

to promote future actions looking for the enhancement of students' performance in the classroom. Action research helps researchers to reach their own solutions and conclusions; it is immediate to particular teaching situations and leads to positive changes in the classroom (Burns, 2010).

During the 48 hours of instruction per cycle the teacher was a reflective tutor and researcher who looked for teaching practice reinvigoration, raising awareness of the complexities involved in the practice (Burns, 2010). The instructor was also an observer who collected data reflecting and redirecting thoughts based on a reflective teaching practice (Norton, 2009). Later on, after thorough analysis, reflections and conclusions the report was written and published.

3.3 Context and participants

ILUD (Instituto de Lenguas de la Universidad Distrital) was founded in 2002 as an institution with non-formal education programmes. Among its mission and vision, ILUD tries to create an environment that generates meaningful experiences and contributes to build learners' awareness of their social context through the study of a second language. Students attend lessons six weekly hours and every two months they are promoted to a higher level. The group of learners taking part in the first stage of the implementation includes 8 undergraduates from 18 to 24 years old, attending different undergraduate programmes at Universidad Distrital. Most of them have been studying English for two and a half years and their proficiency level is B1 according to the Common European Framework. This group of 8 learners needs to focus on taking and passing the FCE exam at the British Council because of various reasons: as a graduation requirement; to get a better job or just because they want to get an international certificate that demonstrates their English language proficiency. Learners seem to be highly encouraged to take this preparation course.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

The instruments selected to collect data were chosen based on learners' characterization and context, the accuracy that they provided and the easiness to be managed when triangulating the data collected. The first instrument was a reflective Journal used by the researcher on the daily basis as an introspective method that gave the possibility to process data and reflect on "thoughts, feelings, motives, reasoning processes and mental states to determine the ways in which these processes and states determine his or her behavior" (Nunan, 1992, p. 115). This personal reflection instrument was used to write down daily activities, information about the students' interests and behaviors, teaching tips or insights and samples from the students' tasks. Journals have among its advantages, the possibility to provide access to all those hidden affective variables which control class development from the researcher's personal perspective and they are not private. Wallace (1998) argues that "Journals are written to be read as public documents" (p. 62);

A data collection technique which was appropriate for this qualitative research study was the focus group. When a researcher applies this technique and elicits questions from a group of learners, they are not biased to they express what they truly feel when they are interviewed. Morgan (1997) highlights the relevance of focus groups for qualitative research and defines them as "a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" (p. 6). Focus groups allow participants to express their matters more effectively and it is a useful tool when in-depth feedback is required (Phillips & Stawarski, 2008). In the two focus groups conducted in between the two pedagogical intervention and implementation cycles learners talked about their perceptions, feelings, beliefs and attitudes towards the use of Storybird

and the CW strategy. Learners reflected in focus groups and it was noticeable that they felt more confident when they answered questions and shared ideas with their partners.

Another collection instrument learners completed was a survey that showed learners' individual impressions and feelings concerning the whole process (see Appendix A). Surveys are defined by Phillips & Stawarski (2008) as "a specific type of questionnaire with several applications in measuring programme success." (p.1). They state that surveys are more suitable to capture beliefs, opinion and attitudes. At the end of the pedagogical implementation, students answered the survey questions individually to match the information from the focus group. Phillips & Stawarski (2008) believe that when using focus groups and surveys there is specific follow-up on the initial results.

When doing research, the pre and posttests are the preferred instruments commonly used to measure the level of change after pedagogical treatments or interventions. Phillips & Stawarski (2008) argue that pretests are essential to identify participants' current skills and knowledge and based on that, effective planning of additional skills can be done. Therefore, a posttest needs to be applied under similar conditions to obtain data and contrast them with the pretest outcomes. In this study, the pre and posttests led the researcher to visualize the effects that the CW had on learners' writing skills. The four instruments and their triangulation led the researcher to answer each of the research questions. The pre and posttests determined the impact of CW and Storybird on learners' writing skill and the surveys, the focus groups and the reflective journal led to answer the second question outlining the impressions that emerged with regard to CW and Storybird.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

The first instrument the group of learners handled was the pretest, the assignment they did was a real task for the FCE, writing a short story using from 180 to 200 words and including the part of the story suggested in the task instructions. The short story led the researcher to identify learners' weaknesses, strengths and then outline a pedagogical instruction plan to follow. After the pedagogical intervention and implementation cycles, a posttest to measure learners' degree of change on learners writing skill was applied. The pre and post tests were conducted under similar conditions as highlighted by Phillips & Stawarski (2008) and the tasks were the very similar.

The two focus groups directed by the researcher and applied in between the two pedagogical intervention cycles led learners to share ideas in groups of 4 people; their appreciations about Storybird and the CW strategy were audio recorded and then transcribed. Learners answered some questions in small groups that told the researcher about their expectations, feelings, what they liked about writing collaboratively, using Storybird, what they were not absolutely convinced of and generalities.

Finally, at the end of the interventional stages learners completed a survey containing the same questions the researcher asked in the two focus groups. Along the two cycles of implementation, a Reflective Journal was the reflective instrument used by the researcher to illustrate the impressions and reflections on what happened in the classroom.

3.6 Validity and triangulation

When we do action research, the data collected needs to be valid and reliable to influence the decisions on learning and teaching appropriately. Validity is defined by Golafshani (2003) as trustworthiness and he states that although some researchers think it is not applicable in qualitative research, it is vital to qualify any study. In a research project, the data validity is

demonstrated when the different instruments definitely test what they are supposed to test (Wallace; 1998). Regarding reliability, Golafshani (2003) states that in a qualitative study its purpose is to generate understanding. In this study, the use of surveys, focus groups, reflective journals and a pre and posttests, demonstrated how accurate the data is regarding the research questions and the objectives. When there is more than one source of data and more than one perspective on the topic researched, it is called triangulation (Wallace, 1998). That is the strategy action researchers use the most because it corroborates every bit of testimony or evidence and those additional independent pieces lead to the same conclusion (Sagor, 2005; Golafshani, 2003; Olsen 2004).

3.7 Ethical concerns

With regard to the ethics and protocol needed to carry out any research practice, Norton (2009) believes that the principles to be considered are: informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and protection from harm. The following aspects drawn by Wallace (1998) and Norton (2009) were contemplated along this action research project:

- The learners who took part in this project did it of their own free will, they were invited some weeks previous to the beginning of the project and they accepted.
- There was consent from staff authority and permission to carry out the two pedagogical interventions. Implementation cycles were granted.
- The activities designed for the pedagogical intervention were designed or adapted to contribute in their studies success.
- Learners knew that the results were to be published but their names not.

- The ideas presented in this document and the activities which were used in the pedagogical implementation that did not belong to any author, were documented and referenced.
- The use of good manners and consideration of others was highly significant and the appropriate letters were designed with regard to the recommended protocol.
- Learners were protected from psychological harm and the intervention did not affect their self-esteem or academic confidence.

Second Cycle

For the Second cycle, the type of study, the researcher's role and pedagogical considerations were the same outlined for the first cycle. It is essential to highlight that there was not viability to carry out a comparative study with two groups in which one of group of learners used CW and Storybird to produce their stories and the other group did not. The arguments that supported that decision are noticeable because of the significant difference in their profile, interests and language proficiency. Regarding that, there were meaningful changes.

A group of 10 adult learners volunteered to take part in the second cycle of pedagogical intervention and implementation. They expected to take and pass the FCE exam as well, and the main difference from the first group was that most of these learners were not undergraduates. They had different jobs and worked for diverse enterprises, companies and schools. They studied English to be updated in terms of bilingualism, the opportunity to get a promotion at work and a better standard of living. There were four men and six women, and their ages varied from 26 to 58. The data collection procedures and instruments used were the same, there was a pre-test and a post-test to identify the evident changes in their writing skills; a focus group, a reflective journal,

and a survey, were the instruments holding the main impressions, view points, opinions and suggestions from the participants.

In the first and second cycles the questions used in the focus groups and the surveys were the same, that was because the triangulation process would show its straight validity easily and fast because of the data consistency. The questions used for the first and the second cycle barely changed due to the fact that the reflection on the first experience helped to strengthen the existing questions (Appendix B).

Chapter 4: Pedagogical intervention and implementation

This chapter describes the pedagogical design and outlines the interventional steps that the researcher followed along the two cycles to make the necessary attempts to help students improve their narrative writing skill. The factors that encouraged the implementation of a pedagogical model based on a collaborative strategy for the production of stories supported by a web 2.0 tool like Storybird, emerged from the learners' interests and the necessity to get better results in their narrative written assignments and improvements in short time. The will they had to write stories when they took FCE mock tests at ILUD, along with their perceptible weaknesses in their narrative writing skill, led the researcher to try to make the necessary attempts to guide them to write better stories. On the other hand, since the two groups of learners who took part in this study were attending English classes 6 hours per week, the researcher found it necessary to create an environment for the pedagogical intervention and implementation where learners did not have to attend face-to-face sessions four more hours.

Learners who volunteered to take part in this study needed to pass the FCE exam as a graduation requirement, to get a job promotion and/or to get an international certificate. Because of their careers, jobs and busy lives, the time they had to invest was limited and a blended learning environment in which learners attended two face to face weekly hours, and did two or three hours of online work out of the classroom settings was appropriate. In that sense, and bearing in mind the English lessons they were attending, learners were exposed to 8 weekly face to face hours of instruction and two or three hours of online work. The time they were to spend for this study was 27 hours and they were expected to do it while attending their 48-hours English course in a period of two months.

METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

The Internet offers web tools to promote synchronous and asynchronous writing and most of those tools and/or social networks learners use in their spare time, are now encompassed in the classroom to reinforce language skills. After searching for a web tool that promoted learners narrative skills in a collaborative way in and out of the classroom, the researcher found Storybird. This web tool fostered joint work and could be used anywhere at any time because it was on the Internet. Moreover, Storybird was appropriate because it was designed with the purpose of promoting collaborative synchronous and asynchronous narrative skills through the use of images. Learners were able to create storyboards by using a huge set of galleries; those storyboards were useful for the researcher to carry out the process approach to writing. Then, the storyboard led to the collective creation and negotiation of meaning during the synchronous organization of images and content, and the asynchronous online work when they switched their stories.

During the production stage online, commitment from the learners was noticeable and partners worked together adding more ideas to publish their stories. Learners needed autonomy, responsibility, deep analysis and concentration to use the appropriate language forms and vocabulary so it was possible to understand the story. The edition of the story was carried out in a face-to-face session and after the whole class approved, pairs were able to publish their stories onto Storybird to get external feedback and comments from the Storybird community around the world. By using Storybird to create stories from storyboards, learners did not have to draw images on papers (a time consuming job) or download images protected by copyright regulations from the net. Therefore, learners experienced a truly blended environment that supported the collective creation of stories.

METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

Storybird supported the synchronous and asynchronous collaborative writing process carried out in and out of the classroom settings. Along the course, learners went through a genuine blended-learning experience where the collaborative learning approach went further the classroom settings. CW in face to face (F2F) and synchronous and asynchronous virtual sessions, guided learners to learn the basics to write stories using *"Storybird,"* a web 2.0 tool to promote asynchronous CW available at www.storybird.com

The pedagogical intervention and implementation cycles were challenging in terms of instruction because learners' writing skill needed to be reinforced in terms of grammar, specifically the use of narrative tenses, the use of linkers, coherence and cohesion of ideas, format, register and punctuation. It was a challenging matter since learners were to do the FCE exam in little time and their proficiency level was below standard according to the CEFR. In the FCE exam learners deal with two compulsory writing tasks, the first one is writing a formal or informal letter, in the second task they decide if they want to write an essay, a report, a review, a story or an article. The analysis done on their pretests showed that it was vital for them to improve their writing skills if they expected to get a pass grade in their exams.

The pedagogical intervention and implementation cycles took 27 hours, the first one was between October and November 2010 and the second between March and April 2011. Each week was divided into two sessions of two hours, two F2F hours and two virtual sessions of one hour with the teacher and another hour of synchronous or asynchronous pair work in Storybird. In those six weeks learners created 3 stories, one story every other week working in pairs. When it was time to create a new story, they were randomly paired to follow the process approach to writing they were trained to track and then they published their final products.

Pre- Intervention stage

The week previous to the pedagogical intervention, learners were invited by the researcher to take part in the project. They read the "participant information sheet" (appendix C), a formal invitation that outlined the implications of taking part in this study and they showed their agreement with the terms and conditions by signing a consent form (Appendix D). Then, the researcher introduced Storybird and instructed the learners on its use. After they were aware of what they had to do along the pedagogical intervention cycles, they did the pretest. In the pretest learners wrote down a story working on their own so that their individual weaknesses and strengths were evident, in that way, the researcher prepared the upcoming lessons trying to lead learners to overcome their weaknesses.

While- intervention Stage

The two pedagogical intervention and implementation cycles took eight weeks *(table 1)*. The action plan designed was based on the steps Urquhart & McIver (2005) and Harmer (2004) suggest to track when following a process approach to writing: *(a) pre- writing, (b) drafting, (c) revising* and *(d) editing.* Learners followed every step collaboratively with another peer and every week they chose a different mate to work with. According to Harmer (2004) "one way of encouraging drafting, reflection and revision is to have students involved in Collaborative Writing (p. 12)." When students work together in pairs or groups they can respond to one another's ideas in terms of content and meaning, and also make suggestions and contribute to the success of the final product.

Week	Activities	F2F Session	Virtual session	No. of hours
Previous Week	Instruction week Pre – test	X		
First Week	Writing our First Story	X	X	4
Second Week	Feedback, Consolidation and Reinforcement activities	X	X	5
Third Week	Writing our Second Story	X	X	4
Fourth Week	Feedback, Consolidation and Reinforcement activities	X	X	5
Fifth Week	Writing our Third Story	X	X	4
Sixth Week	Feedback, Consolidation and Reinforcement activities	X	X	5
Seventh Week	Post - test Presentation Final Report	X		Total: 27 h

Table 1. Action Plan.

During the pedagogical intervention and implementation, learners had a F2F session and a virtual session weekly for a total of 4 hours. For the learners who took part in this project, a genre approach to writing was vital because they study English for specific purposes. Therefore, a series of lessons focused on developing strategies, language skills and aspects to consider concerning the FCE, guided the learners through this process. Learners wrote their stories following the same patterns and strategies:

1. Synchronous CW in a F2F class onto Storybird for the pre-writing section where learners negotiated and talked about the topic of the story, they dragged and arranged the images they would probably use to create their Storyboards. They talked about the events to happen regarding the characters they had chosen and defined an introduction, a problem and a resolution.
2. Asynchronous CW onto Storybird: One student started writing the story using from 45 to 50 words approximately, then, they switched their stories three or four times being likely

to modify the writing content if they wanted. They wrote from 45 to 50 words because they were to have a story within 180 - 200 words regarding that it is the acceptable number of words in the FCE. When they considered that the story was finished, they printed it or sent it to the tutor via e-mail.

3. Synchronous CW onto Storybird supported by Skype or Messenger: When learners finished their stories, the tutor met them synchronously to deliver feedback through Skype™ or Messenger™. Next, learners edited their drafts improving their tasks to hand in a final version and publish it onto Storybird.

By following this pedagogical intervention model learners spent 9 hours every two weeks to create each story working collaboratively synchronously and asynchronously. The tasks to be achieved were divided in two weeks as follows:

The first week in the F2F class learners did tasks related to language forms, FCE specifications and the collaborative pre-writing stage of their stories. The same week, they spent one hour online writing down their stories in Storybird and another one receiving support from the teacher via Skype at the stipulated hours, or doing supplementary activities on different web pages. The online activities promoted autonomous work and learners were responsible for their own learning process. The second week in the F2F class learners printed and presented their stories, by using a printable version of the stories, learners felt more confident to deliver feedback. They peer corrected and made recommendations regarding language forms and content. That second week, learners were asked to meet with the teacher through Skype to edit their stories and publish their final versions onto Storybird (Figure 2). A total of 12 hours for the F2F sessions are covered in the Action plan (table1). In the six hours for the three sessions in the first, third and fifth weeks, undergraduates did the first stages for the creation of their stories.

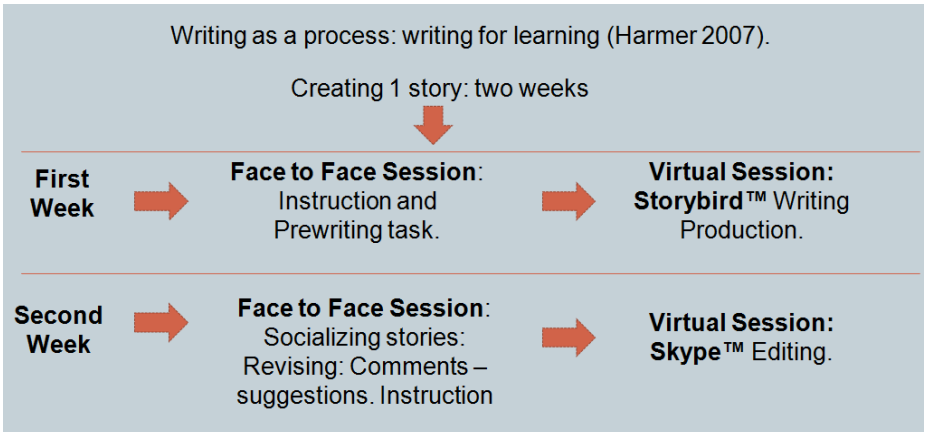


Figure 2. This graph illustrates the writing process learners followed to create their stories following the principles of writing for learning.

Working in pairs with a different partner they did collaborative *pre-writing* with different strategies (see appendix E) and *drafting*, learnt about the FCE exam specifications and the proper use of the language regarding those specifications and the assessment model they use (see appendix F). The online tasks for those weeks included 1 hour for the students to keep doing the CW task online through *Storybird* and a second hour for them to have contact with the teacher online to do tutorial sessions and have support in case they needed it or to reinforce knowledge doing strengthening activities online. After the learners finished writing their stories in pairs, they got ready to present it the next week in the F2F session.

On the F2F session contemplated for the second, fourth and sixth weeks outlined in the action plan as *"Feedback, Consolidation and Reinforcement activities",* learners revised and offered suggestions to their partners' stories. The comments were related to the topic of the story, the pictures used, any changes and the things they liked the most from their partners' stories. Learners listened to their peers and that facilitated the *editing* process and the preparation of the final version. Therefore, the researcher delivered feedback in groups and individually, suggested

changes where necessary and made recommendations related to the use of the language, format, range and the FCE exam.

Post-intervention Stage

At the end of the study the researcher administered the posttest having learners working on their own in which they wrote a story. The main purpose was to check to what extent the pedagogical intervention and implementation helped learners to overcome their weaknesses in their writing skill. Although there were slight improvements, learners developed metacognitive awareness towards their writing process and their peers, and developed communicative skills when they negotiated meaning together. Therefore, learners answered the surveys which contained the questions the researchers asked in the focus groups. Finally, after the triangulation of the instruments, the outcomes confirmed the validity of the study and then final report of the findings was depicted.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

This chapter describes the methods and procedures used to analyze the data collected and depicts the actions taken to manage data and the validation techniques used. Evidence displayed from the data collection instruments supports the emerging data derived from the categories reduction process, validating the study and supporting the outcomes with the theory illustrated in the theoretical framework chapter.

The data analysis procedures used had their foundations on the qualitative bases to analyze information. Data gathered from the surveys, focus groups, reflective journals and pre and posttests were broken down and then, after a methodical analytical process, the exposure of characteristic elements and structures, led to the categories generation. The qualitative analysis implied interpreting, understanding, explaining and generating theory.

Qualitative research is generally defined as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). When carrying out qualitative analysis a researcher needs to: 1) discover new information, 2) understand diverse perspectives from the participants, and 3) get richer detailed information from focus groups, surveys and instruments when there are open-ended questions Norton (2009, p. 116). Qualitative analysis offers detailed information and supports the generation, discovery or validation of theories after data are methodically analyzed and interpreted. It involves the discovery of meaningful patterns that describe a particular phenomenon (Auerbach & Silverstain, 2003, p.3). In addition, "The core of qualitative analysis lies in these related processes of describing phenomena, classifying it, and seeing how our concepts interconnect (Figure 3)." (Dey, 1993, p. 31).

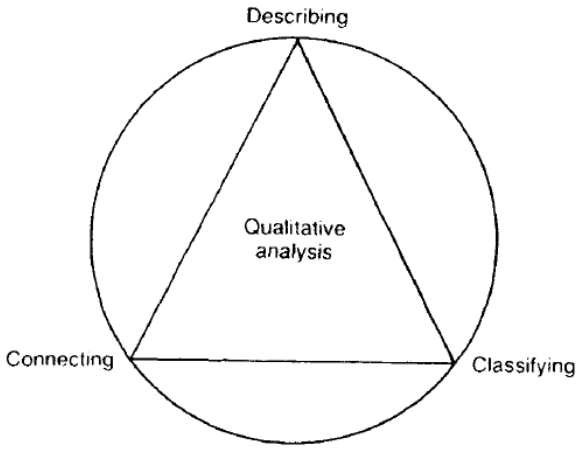


Figure 3: Qualitative analysis as a circular process.

Data Analysis Procedures

An accurate data analysis leads to the description, classification and interconnection of concepts that expose the results of actions taken on the group of participants. The qualitative data analysis method used was based on the grounded theory enlightened by Norton (2009) as a type of qualitative analysis to discover theories or hypothesis from data. When a researcher follows the grounded theory principles, an inductive approach is tracked using a "constant comparative method of analysis" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.62). Strauss & Corbin (1990) and Auerbach & Silverstain (2003) argue that the main purpose that constitutes the foundation of the grounded theory is the "construction of a theory", a theory that provides required firmness to the research process, supports the researcher to shatter biases and assumptions, and matches the reality it embodies. In addition, Glasser & Strauss (2006, p.1) emphasize that the foremost strategy leading to the discovery of grounded theory is the comparative analysis method.

Most of the learners taking part in the two cycles of instruction along the pedagogical intervention, contributed to the completion of the data collection. Due to ethical concerns and for

learners to remain anonymous, they were nicknamed. The interpretation and analysis of the information extracted from the instruments aimed to answer the research questions as follows:

1. The first question, *What changes are evident in EFL intermediate students' writing skill when they collaboratively write narrative texts supported by the web 2.0 tool Storybird?*, emphasizes the search of evident changes on learners' writing skill. The instruments selected with the purpose of noticing learners' variations on their writing performance were the pre and posttests. Some participants' judgments captured from the surveys, the focus groups and the reflective journal corroborate the data examination.

2. With regard to the second question, *What insights emerge from the participants with regard to the use of collaborative writing and storybird for the creation of narrative texts?*, the reflective journal, the surveys and the focus groups highlight and draw participants' opinions and the necessary details concerning the use of the web 2.0 tool Storybird, and the CW strategy to create narrative texts.

Once data were transcribed and organized, a comparative analysis was carried out via the two basic principles used by the grounded theory method outlined by Auerbach & Silverstain (2003) as:

1) Questioning rather than measuring.

2) Generating hypothesis using theoretical coding.

For Strauss & Corbin (1990), the analysis based on coding procedures is tracked from the basics of open coding to the complex selective coding procedure that, at the end leads to generation of a theory. Consequently, after following the coding procedures the results were supported, expanded and/or depicted by theorists and researchers outlined in the theoretical framework and the state of the art.

Data management

The use of a computer supported the data management procedures to analyze data in an easier and more efficient way. Computers enhance the researchers' job and open new possibilities to organize and locate essential pieces of data easily (Dey, 1993, p, 83; Miles & Huberman, 1994. p. 44). The data assembling routes were organized as follows:

The pre and posttests connected to the first research question were scanned and saved in folders named in accordance with the respective cycle of implementation. In the same way, the three stories learners created were placed in folders; this organization made it possible to observe the transition and progression of the likely evident alterations in learners' writing skill due to the implementation of the strategy, the classroom instruction and the use of Storybird. This evidence helped to support information from the pre and posttests.

The instruments tied to the participants' perceptions needed to answer the second research question included: learners' surveys, focus groups and a teachers' reflective journal. The surveys for first cycle were filled in with handwriting and then scanned, in the second cycle learners answered it directly on their computers. After having finished recording the three focus groups, one for the first cycle and two for the second cycle, they were immediately transcribed and organized into a folder regarding the corresponding cycle. There is a reflective journal saved per session including the sessions and tutorials made through *Skype*™ or *Messenger*™.

A folder named "DATA ANALYSIS" was created and in that folder, three sub-folders were added relating each instrument (Figure 4): "Focus groups," "Surveys," and "Reflective Journal". In the folder named "Focus groups" two recordings with the corresponding transcriptions were placed. Two files: a reflective journal and a self evaluation of the implementation process are found in the "Reflective journal" folder. Six word documents with

surveys and another one named "Whole_SURVEYS" in which all the surveys were organized according to the answers learners gave per question, were placed in the folder "Surveys." The answers were organized per student as follows: S1, S2, S3, S4, etc.

For the purpose of following an organized system along the qualitative analysis process, the researcher adopted the three major phases of data analysis developed by Miles & Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification.

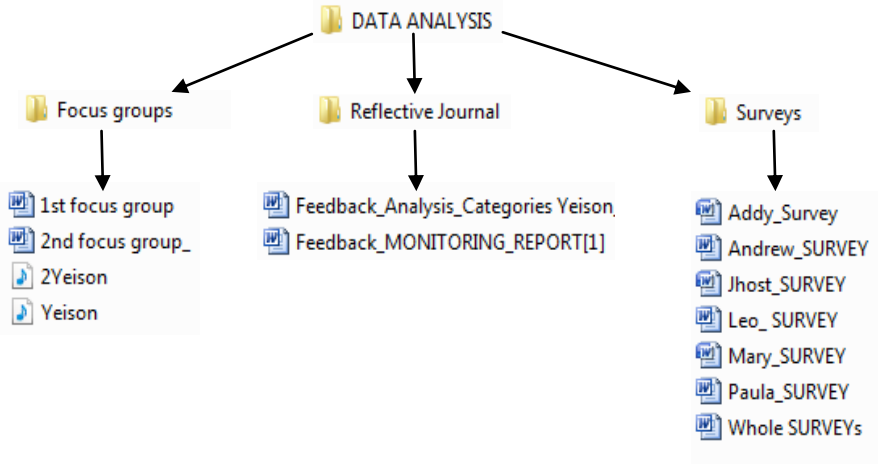


Figure 4. Data Assembling Process belonging to the second cycle of pedagogical intervention and implementation.

Data reduction

This first step is defined by Miles & Huberman (1994) as the process of "selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written field-up notes and transcriptions." Along this stage, essential stages linked to the grounded theory drove the researcher to use a coding method. Coding implies moving from raw text to research concerns, from "a lower to a higher (more abstract) level of understanding" (Auerbach & Silverstain, 2003, p. 35). Furthermore, Corbin & Strauss (2008) define coding as the process of "taking raw data

and raising it to a conceptual level." They argue that the coding process goes further from paraphrasing ideas or making notes on data collection instruments, it involves interaction using techniques as: comparing data or asking questions e.g. to finally develop and group "lower-level" concepts into "high-level" concepts or "categories" in terms of dimensions and properties. The natural procedure that follows the coding process goes along three stages of analysis: open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

Alongside the first stage of analysis or open coding procedure, it was crucial to establish that the same levels of analysis of the instruments were likely to determine, on the one hand, the changes evident in EFL intermediate students' writing skill, and on the other, insights emerging with relation to the collaborative writing strategy and the web 2.0 tool Storybird. The repeated observation and reading of the data held in the research instruments led to the identification of the most frequent patterns.

The thematic data analysis followed by the researcher is explained by Norton (2009) and it sums up in three stages the views of Strauss & Corbin (1990) about open coding. The stages contemplated: 1) The Immersion that the researcher did to note down any general themes closely related to the questions that support the conceptualization of data. 2) The discovering and labeling of categories where the concepts have to be grouped. 3) The deleting of categories which had one or two examples. Along this preliminary stage a color was assigned to gather parallel themes. That procedure called "color coding" is a course of action (Appendix G) in which data is classified with diverse colors matching the question the colored piece of information intends to answer. All the relevant data regarding the research questions was gathered in one document coded with the same colors used in the color coding process (*Yellow* for the first question and *Blue* for the second one) (Appendix H). Afterwards, the following stage that validated the study

was the triangulation where data were categorized.

Data display

This action process referred as the organization, compression and assembling of information which permits action and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.11) was done on a chart with the two research questions as a heading with the purpose of writing down positive and negative insights from the surveys, the focus groups and the reflective journal. Every time that any perception or insight from the participants appeared repeatedly, a sign was added, and it gave the researcher a frequency for each piece of event. After exploring the data gathered the insights and perceptions collected were divided into four, Generalities, Storybird, Collaborative writing and Pedagogical Implications. The data reduction stage was done in the same document assembling insights and perceptions which drove the researcher to answer the two questions (Appendix I). After finishing grouping the information, a chart in which the properties and themes appeared was drawn.

Once data were broken down, the researcher's found similarities, differences and how information was intertwined according to the questions and the objectives of the research study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Two analytic procedures supporting the open coding technique with precision and specificity were used: 1) *the making of comparisons,* and 2) *the asking of questions*.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

Considered as the "Third stream of analysis activity" by Miles & Huberman (1994), this stage helped the researcher to validate the preliminary conclusions that emerged along the previous stages. In the open coding process it was noticeable how data were broken and matched

with colors to the individual phenomena categorized with themes. After that, it was necessary for the researcher to reduce the number of codes or themes and grouped them into two "core categories." The codes or properties that emerged were compared and contrasted repeatedly, and then matched considering their relationship with the research questions outlined at the beginning of the study. Since the grounded theory represents a method of comparative analysis, the constant comparison of similarities and differences among groups not only generates categories but generalized relations among them.

According to Glasser & Strauss (2006, p. 55), the process of comparing and contrasting groups provide control over the development of any emergent theory because minimizing or maximizing differences increases the possibility for the researcher to collect more similar data and link themes while spotting important differences not noticed in the early data collection procedures. This process that helped to the integration of categories is defined by Strauss & Corbin (1990) as "axial coding" and it contemplates the casual and contextual factors and properties when linking subcategories to categories, comparing categories and searching disparities in the phenomena.

The validation of this study took part in this stage. It was supported by the triangulation principles because it was necessary to get several sights from the data collection instruments about the changes evident in learners writing skill, and the insights and outcomes that appeared regarding the collaborative work they did using Storybird as a web 2.0 tool that supported that process asynchronously on the net.

The corroboration of data was essential because it defined de validity of the study and the triangulation technique offered the necessary support to do it. Olsen (2004) defines the triangulation in sociology as "the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or

standpoints cast light upon a topic." Therefore, she argues that the generation of a dialectic of learning is achievable by triangulating two or three viewpoints upon what is being studied. Triangulation is a strategy that improves the validity and reliability of research or evaluates findings (Golafshani, 2003, p. 603). According to Miles & Huberman (1994) it is necessary to pick sources with different biases and different strengths so that they are more likely to complement each other. In this study the participants did fourteen (14) pretests, thirteen (13) posttests, eleven (11) surveys, three (3) focus groups and there was a reflective journal filled out by the researcher at the end of each session.

The final step suggested by Strauss & Corbin (1990) called "selective coding" guided the researcher to integrate and develop the categories and interrelations noticeable in the previous stages; it was the last step in the generation of the theory. The "Selective coding" suggested the selection of the core of the "core" or "main" category related to the other categories to form a "storyline" that described the phenomenon.

The core category of this study was defined as **"the collaborative creation of narrative texts using Storybird encourages learners to be mindful of themselves, their peers and their writing process leading to improvements on particular sub-skills of their writing ability."** Two more categories emerged after linking the subcategories:

1. "Enhancement of specific sub-skills of the written language" supported by Major attempts to produce more diverse and accurate sentences making use of new vocabulary and complex grammar rules and structures.

2. "Increased metacognitive awareness and motivation towards the writing process," through: a) Increased willingness to peer-correct and self-assess writing tasks; b) Encouragement and autonomous behaviours towards written tasks; and c) Increased affective awareness towards

peers and awareness of the writing process, tied to their willingness to adopt a process approach to writing. The following graphs (Figures 5 and 6) show the preliminary analysis and the categories naming process done using information retrieved from the data collection instruments with the participants' written tests and insights.

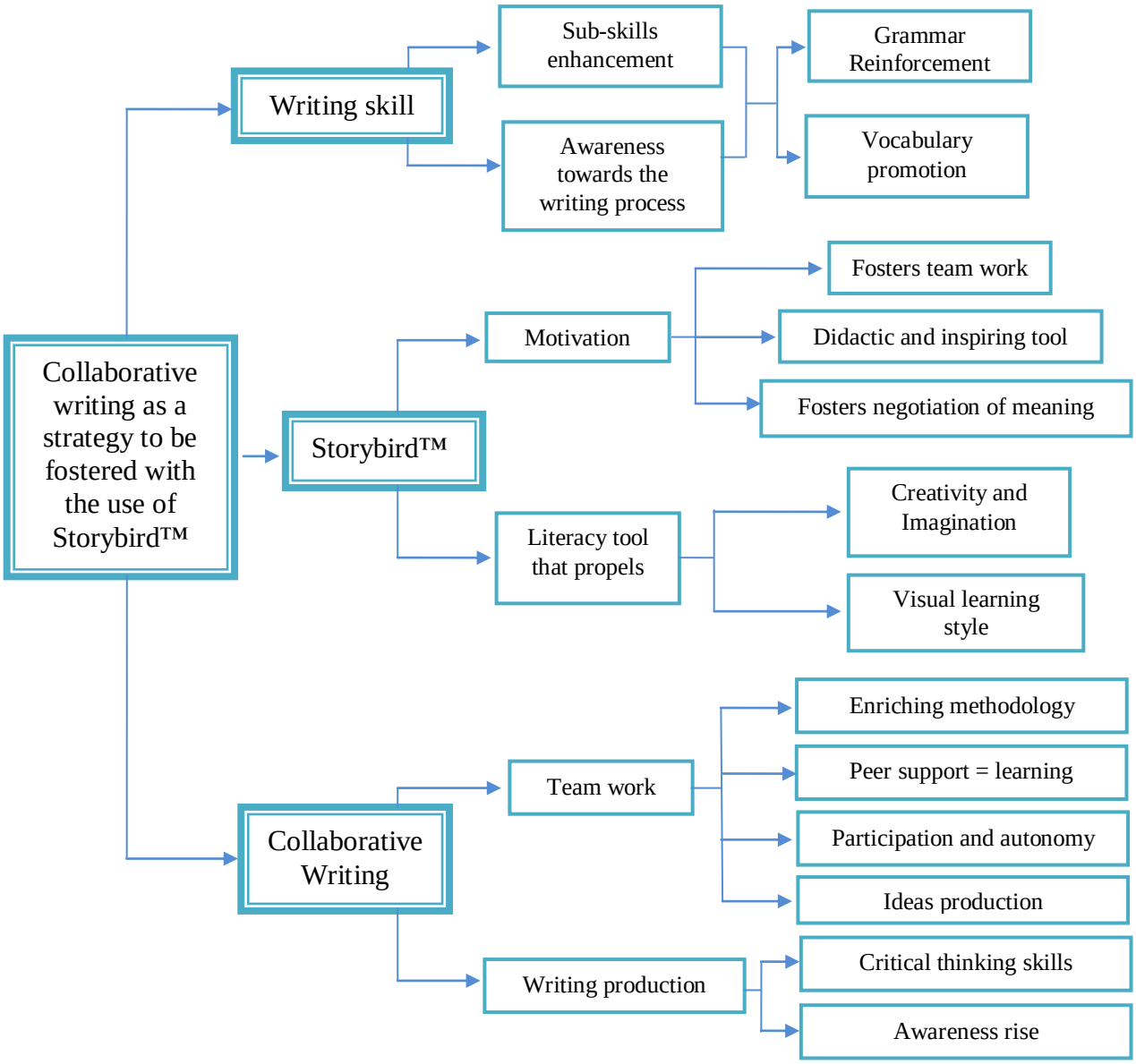


Figure 5. Preliminary data analysis carried out directly from the data collection instruments.

Regarding the first question, the "pre" and "posttests" revealed the necessary evidence to identify the evident effects on learners' writing skill; those changes were later compared to the students' opinions about the improvements they felt they had in their writing skill. The figure 6 shows the research questions and the categories that emerged from the triangulation process.

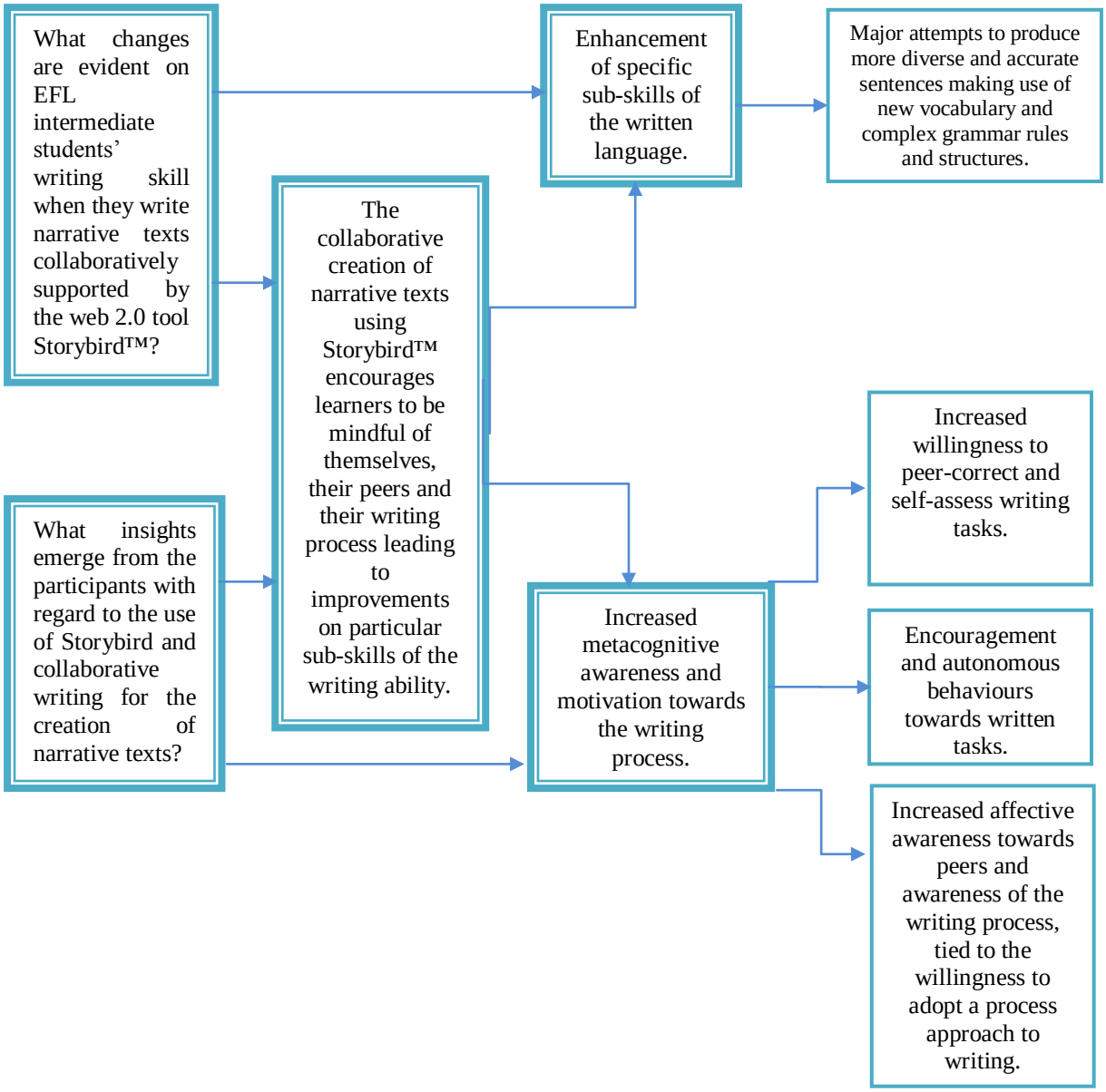


Figure 6. Emerging categories and sub-categories derived from the preliminary data analysis procedures.

Analysis of results

According to the display of the results that emerged from the triangulation process and the two cycles of implementation, the spots that emerged in the second cycle regarding learners' writing skill enhancements and their judgments concerning the strategy and the web 2.0 tool, were used to corroborate, consolidate and confirm the results revealed in the first cycle. Additionally, evidence from the data collection instruments and theory support the categories developed from the data analysis procedures. The core category describes how learners felt encouraged to take part in the creation of narrative texts using the web 2.0 tool Storybird. Therefore, it shows that when learners worked collaboratively, they get immersed in the negotiation and analysis of grammar structures and vocabulary. That awareness and reflection towards the language is what takes them to reinforce or learn new vocabulary as well as strengthen their knowledge in relation to the use of diverse and more complex language forms.

From the core category, the category that provides support and responds the first question is:

Enhancement of specific sub-skills of the written language

With regard to the first question and the variations that learners showed in their writing ability when they wrote narrative texts, this category draws the most relevant learners' improvements. Additionally, it is supported and depicted by the following sub-category:

Major attempts to produce more diverse and accurate sentences making use of new vocabulary and complex grammar rules and structures:

Learners showed slight improvements in their writing skills but they were more aware of the importance of using higher range of vocabulary and language forms. According to Elola &

Oskoz (2010), it is still uncertain the extents to which learners improve their writing skill using web 2.0 tools to do collaborative or individual assignments in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. Nonetheless, Beltrán (2010), Aguirre (2010), Rogers (2008), Jimenez (2009) and Linares (2010) show how the promotion of collaborative tasks through the use of web 2.0 tools and new technologies helps learners strengthen their language in specific and varied aspects. According to Kessler (1992), Nunan (1999), Harmer (2004 – 2007) and Murray (1992), and making reference to the CW, when having students negotiating meaning, tutors provide opportunities for them to enhance their writing skill and increase their academic achievement in groups. Regarding the data analysis results, learners' attempts to use more complex and advanced grammatically structured language and vocabulary indicate perceptible improvements in their writing skill. In addition, with respect to the specific matters of the written language, Richards & Rogers (2001) affirm that a collaborative learning experience "enable focused attention to particular lexical items, language structures and communicative functions through the use of interactive tasks" (p. 193)

The pre and posttests were checked and analyzed by the researcher and two experienced colleagues. The two colleagues are certified teachers with a professional Certificate in teaching English to speakers of other languages (CELTA) awarded by the Cambridge University. Therefore, they have their teachers' degrees and huge experience dealing with international examination training courses. The analysis was based on the **Task-Specific Mark scheme** (*table 2*) outlined in the Handbook published by the University of Cambridge[2] that includes the aspects to consider when assessing writing tasks. Furthermore, the guide for the interpretation and description the writing tasks was done based on the **General Mark scheme** (Appendix F)

[2] *First Certificate in English* (2008)

provided by the British Council to assess B2 writing tasks based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) describing learners' writing performance and qualitatively grading them with bands from 1 to 5.

- Content The **story** should continue from the prompt sentence.	**-Appropriacy of register and format** Consistently neutral or informal narrative.	**- Target reader** Would be able to follow the storyline.
-Organization and cohesion Could be minimally paragraphed. Should reach a definite ending, even if it is somewhat open-ended.	**- Range** Past tenses. Vocabulary appropriate to the chosen topic of story.	

Table 2. task-specific mark scheme.

Based on the analysis did of the "pre" and "posttests", the examiners decided to classify learners in three groups regarding repeated features that emerged in their performance and proficiency level. The following features came to light from the pre-tests:

1. The first group of learners with the weakest writing tasks did not communicate the message to the target reader clearly.

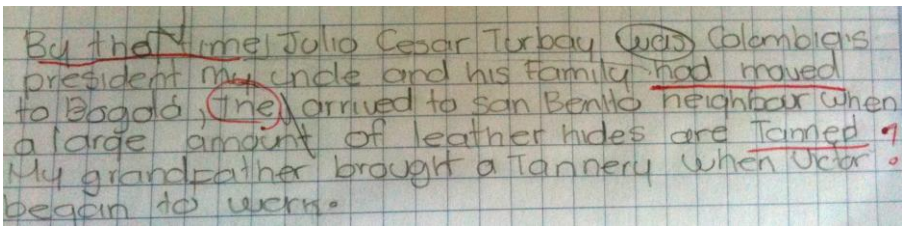


Figure 7. This picture shows an extract from Lily's pre-test in the first cycle of implementation.

Although they made attempts to write clear sentences, the ideas were inadequately organized, the linking devices rarely appeared, and the range of structure and vocabulary was narrow.

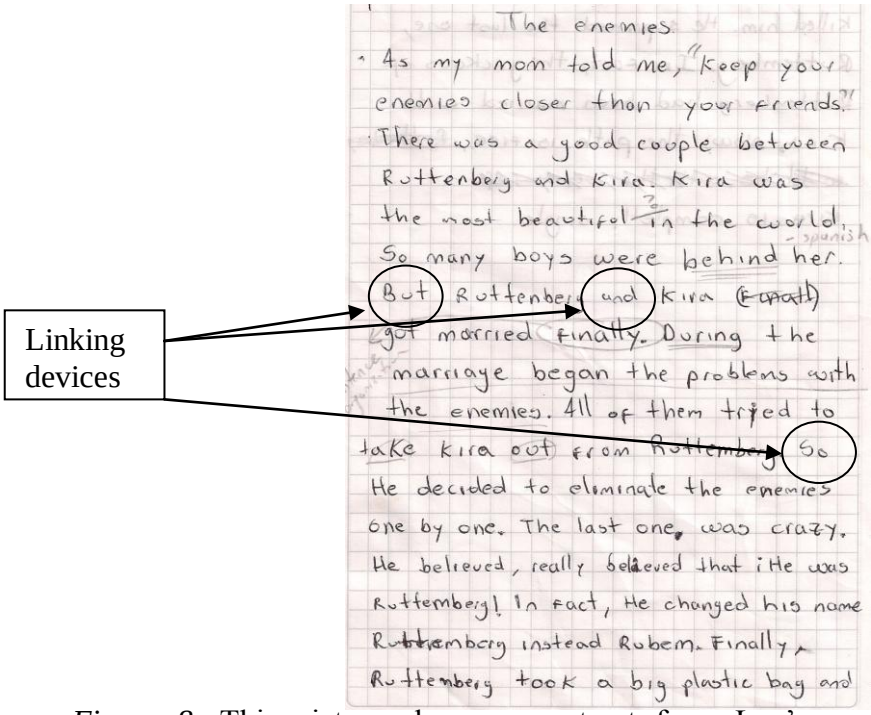


Figure 8. This picture shows an extract from Leo's pre-test in the First cycle of implementation.

They barely used paragraphs and some errors distracted the reader and impeded communication. Furthermore, the attempts at appropriate register and format were unsuccessful or inconsistent and there was little evidence of language control.

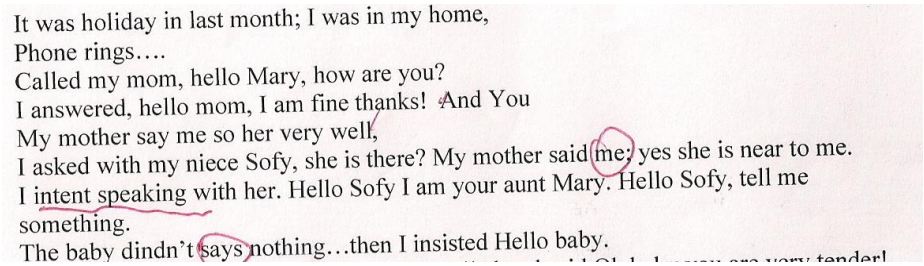

It was holiday in last month; I was in my home,
Phone rings….
Called my mom, hello Mary, how are you?
I answered, hello mom, I am fine thanks! And You
My mother say me so her very well,
I asked with my niece Sofy, she is there? My mother said me; yes she is near to me.
I intent speaking with her. Hello Sofy I am your aunt Mary. Hello Sofy, tell me something.
The baby dindn't says nothing…then I insisted Hello baby.

Figure 9. This picture shows an extract from Mary's pre-test in the Second cycle of implementation.

2. The second group of learners with a pass mark in their performance demonstrated they knew how to write a story since they tried and covered the content and wrote an appropriate introduction, a problem and an expected resolution to the problem.

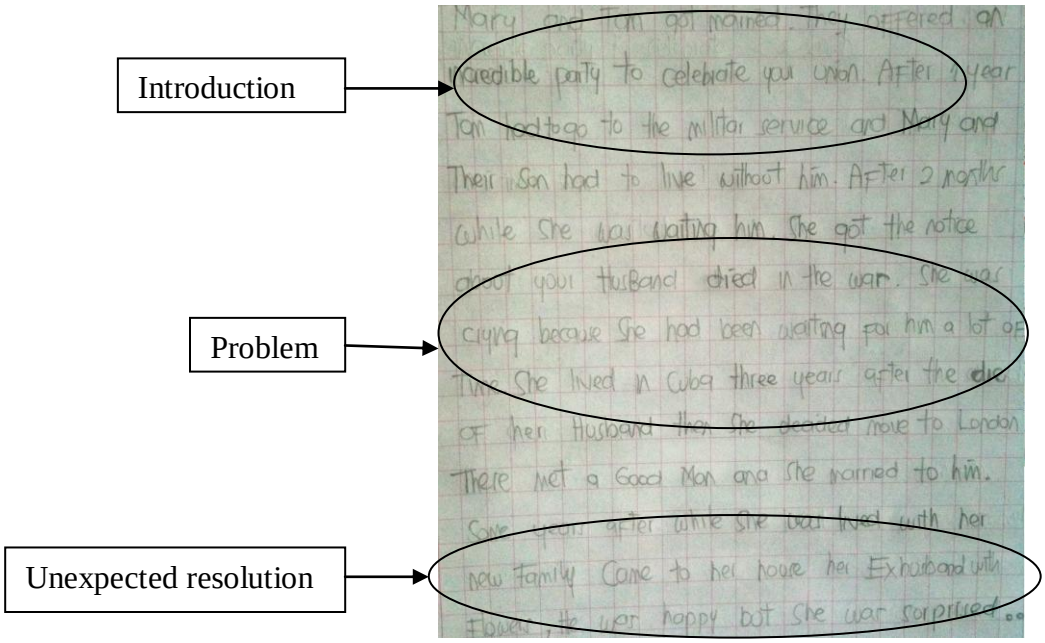


Figure 10. This picture shows an extract from Leon's pre-test in the Second cycle of implementation.

Although some learners wrote sentences that impeded the text comprehension the very first time the reader read it, there was an effect on the target reader. The ideas were organized adequately although the range of structure and vocabulary was limited. Some grammatical errors usually distracted the reader and obscured communication at times.

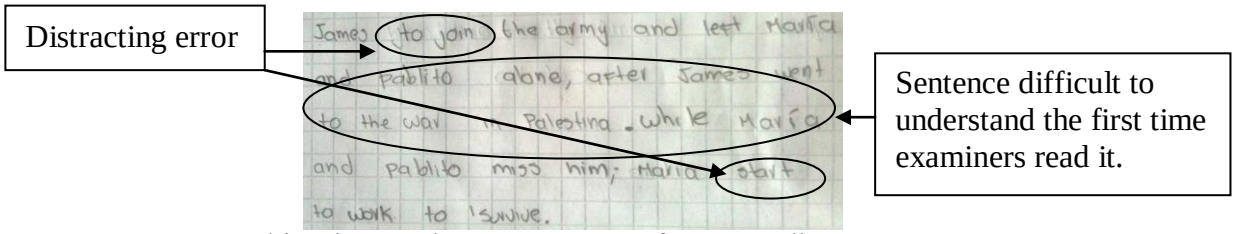


Figure 11. This Picture shows an extract from C. Eli's pre-test in the Second cycle of implementation.

3. The third group of learners with the strongest writing tasks showed an efficiently paragraphed story and it achieved the desired effect on the reader. All the points required in the task were included and the ideas were organized adequately with the use of linking devices (Appendix J). A number of errors especially when they used narrative tenses were present, but they did not impede communication. They made reasonable attempts at using appropriate register and format which was appropriate for the purpose of the task and the audience.

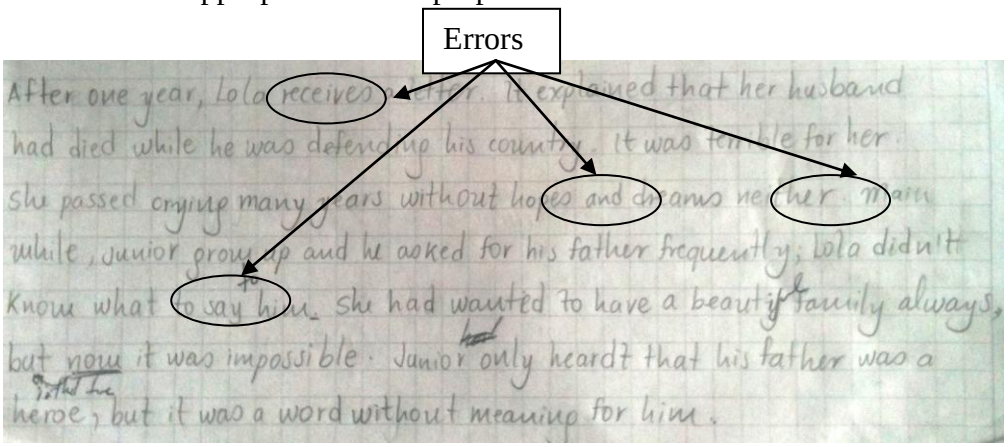


Figure 12. This picture shows an extract from Paula's pre-test in the Second cycle of implementation.

In the posttests analysis, the samples were gathered in the same three groups matching them to the participants' names. By doing so, the pre and posttests belonging to the same participants were assembled. Along the triangulation process the examiners highlighted the most recurrent and repeated trends to be written in the report as the posttests analysis outcomes. The analysis results show that:

1. The group of learners with the weakest tasks still presented issues and few of them barely tried to organize ideas logically using simple linking devices. Although they had to keep on working harder to improve their writing skill, the posttests showed how they expressed their ideas more logically using punctuation marks and capital letters efficiently.

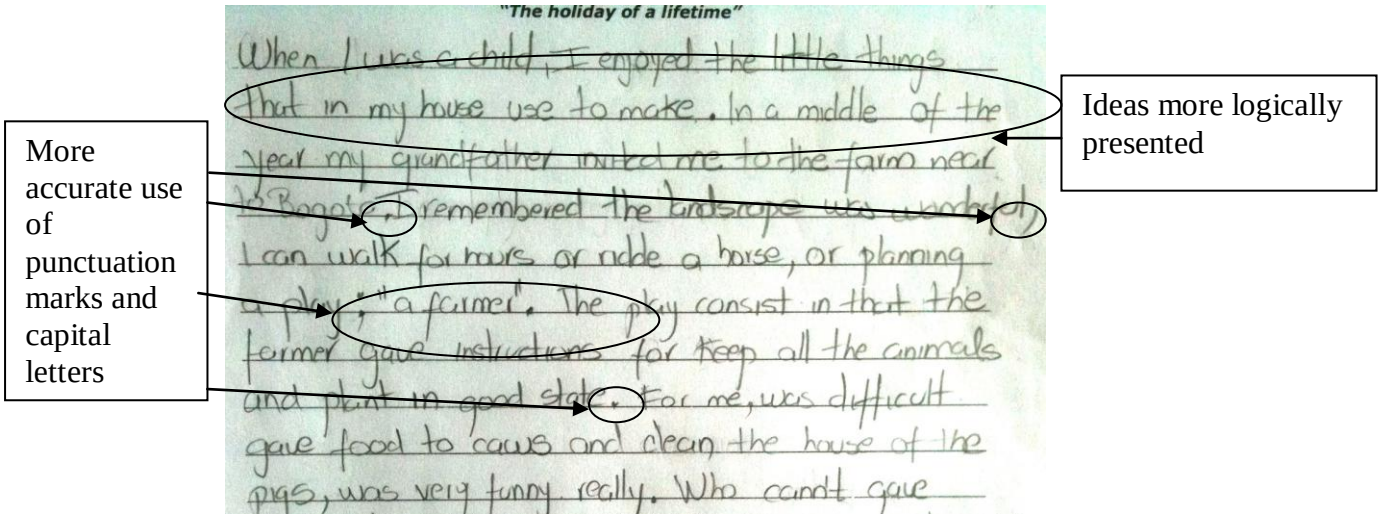


Figure 13. This picture shows an extract from Pipe's posttest in the First cycle of implementation.

Most errors were attempts to use more complex language forms and vocabulary. Their writing skill slightly improved since in most cases they showed more coherent texts even though they still needed to reinforce structures of the language and expand their vocabulary.

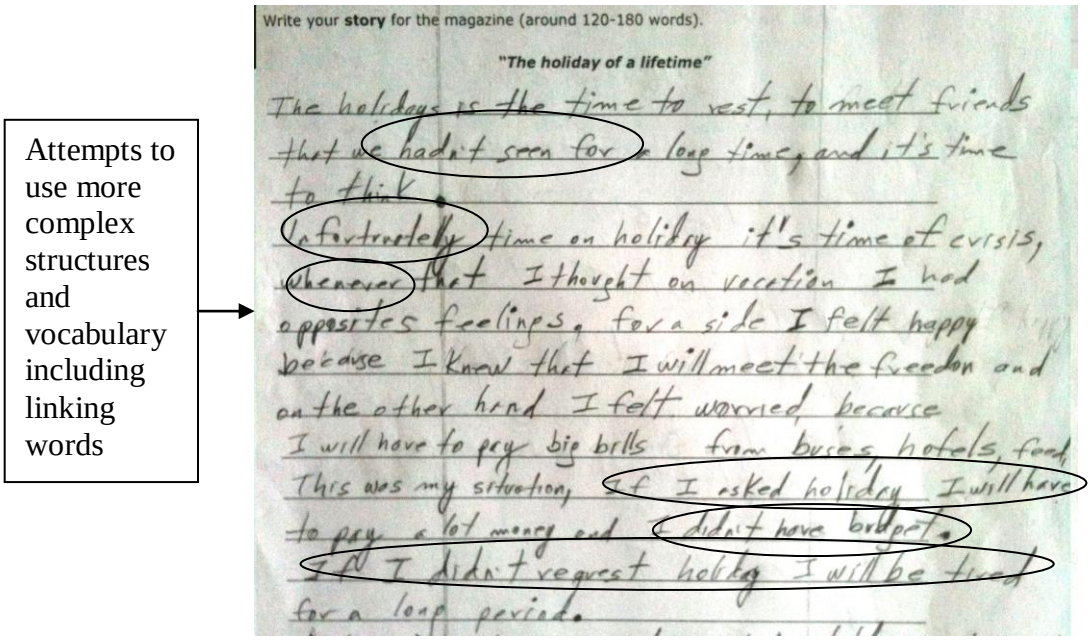


Figure 14. This extract belongs to Kata's post-test from the Second cycle of implementation.

2. The tasks the second group of learners did, achieved the desired effect on the reader and had a good introduction, problem and creative problem resolution as in the pre-test. There were still issues tied to the use of narrative tenses and grammar categories. However, they were attempts to use more complex language forms and new vocabulary.

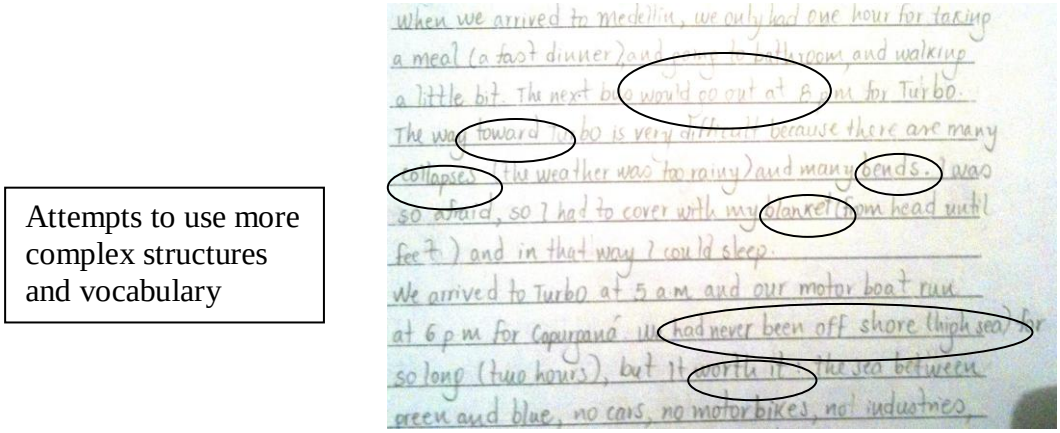


Figure 15. This Picture shows an extract from Dave's post-test in the First cycle of implementation.

Most ideas were organized adequately and they used simple linker and an adequate range of structure and vocabulary. Some errors were present but they did not impede communication. The format and register were appropriate and the target reader could be informed.

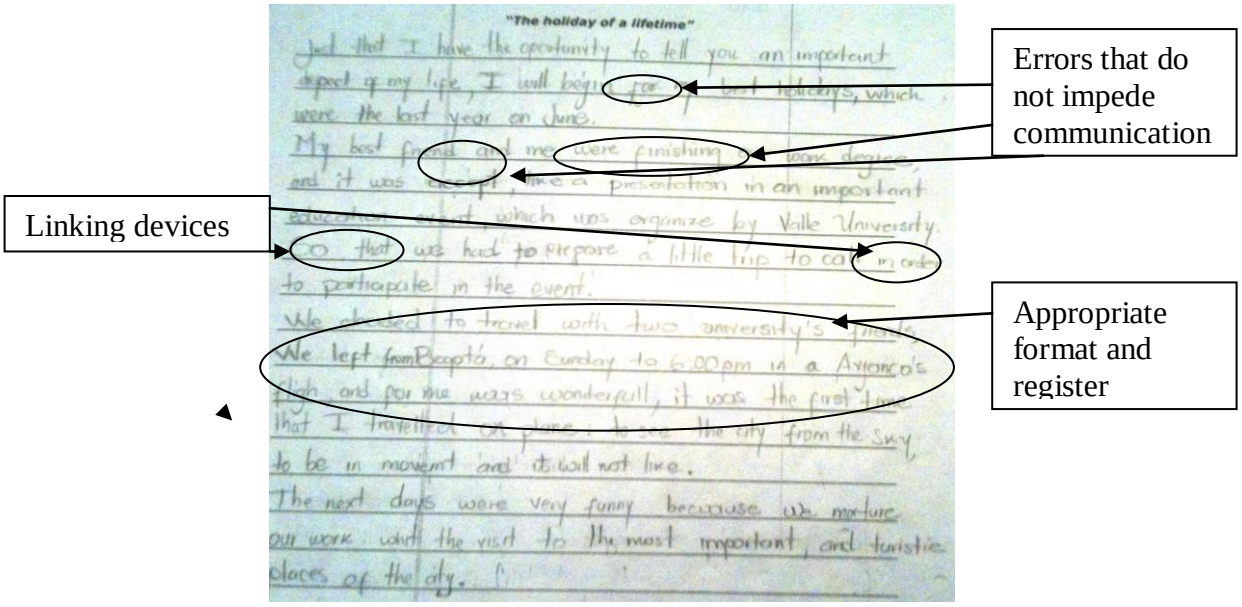
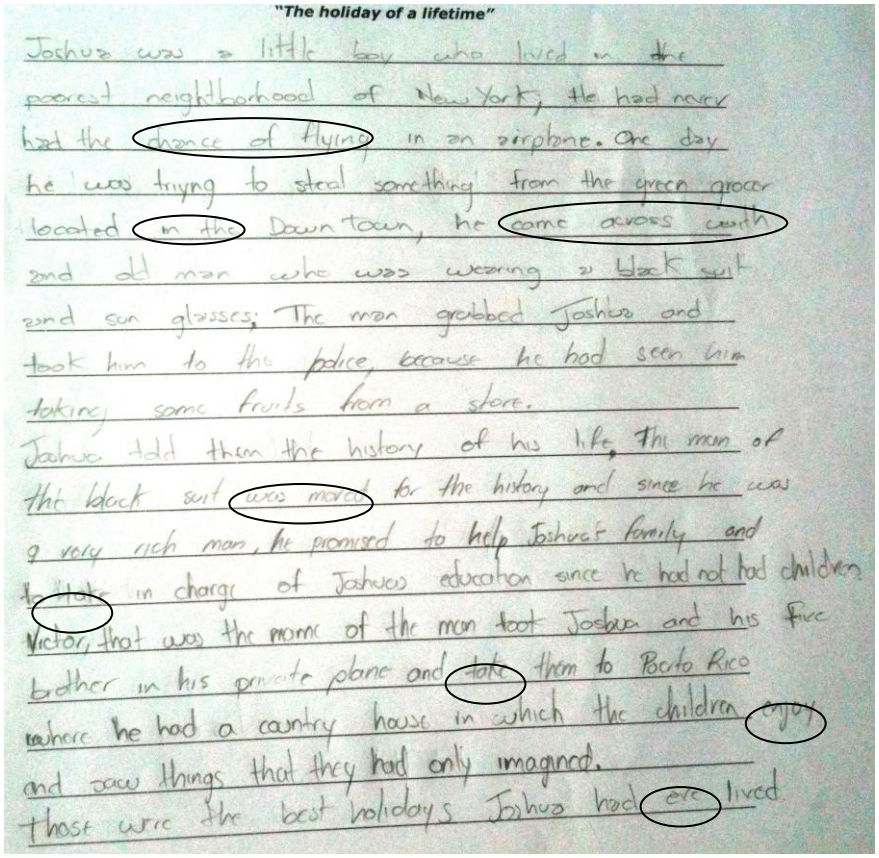


Figure 16. This picture shows an extract from Addy's post-test in the Second cycle of implementation.

3. The strongest group of learners demonstrated in their posttests that they achieved the desired effect on the target reader and all the content points were covered. The ideas were clearly organized and they used suitable linkers and a good range of structure and vocabulary (Appendix K). Generally, the language was accurate the errors that occurred were due to attempts to use more complex language. Register and format were, on the whole, appropriate to the purpose of the task.

Errors that do not impede communication and were attempts at more complex language


"The holiday of a lifetime"

Joshua was a little boy who lived in the poorest neighborhood of New York, he had never had the chance of flying in an airplane. One day he was trying to steal something from the green grocer located in the Down Town, he came across with and old man who was wearing a black suit and sun glasses; The man grabbed Joshua and took him to the police, because he had seen him taking some fruits from a store.

Joshua told them the history of his life, the man of the black suit was moved for the history and since he was a very rich man, he promised to help Joshua's family and to take in charge of Joshuas education since he had not had children Victor, that was the name of the man took Joshua and his five brother in his private plane and take them to Porto Rico where he had a country house in which the children enjoy and saw things that they had only imagined.

Those were the best holidays Joshua had ever lived

Figure 17. This picture shows an extract from Andrew's post-test in the Second cycle of implementation.

To sum up, the analysis done to the "pre" and "posttests" showed that the learners went further and made attempts to use new language forms and assorted vocabulary. Although most of the times those attempts ended up in errors, international institutions like the British Council encourage markers to value learners' attempts to use more complex structures and lexicon due because that constitutes a considerable difference in the candidates' grades. The results were corroborated with participants' insights from the focus groups, the surveys, and the reflective journal and they showed that learners felt they had improved their understanding of language forms and how to use them. Furthermore, they expressed that the experience with the collaborative writing and the use of Storybird had helped them to discover and learn new words and linking devices. This is one of the extracts from a focus group evidencing those facts:

Q: ¿Sienten que han aprendido algo Nuevo? (*Do you think you have learnt something new?)*

"Si pues en mi caso si he aprendido algo nuevo sobre todo vocabulario y gramática pues que creo que en estos niveles es lo que más nos hace falta por lo menos a mí que es vocabulario" (Participant Addy. Focus group: May 3rd 2011). *(Well yes, in my case I have learnt something new but overall vocabulary and grammar, I think that in these levels what is missing, or at least for me is vocabulary"*

In the surveys the learners expressed their points of view regarding grammar and vocabulary as follows:

Q: *Storybird* ha tenido algún efecto en su habilidad para escribir? *(Has Storybird had any effect on your writing skill?)*

- Sí, Vocabulario y gramática (*yes (first question, vocabulary and grammar).* (Participant Dave, end-of-term survey. Second cycle of implementation. Nov 18th 2010).

- Ayuda a mejorar y ampliar el vocabulario. *(It has helped me to improve and expand vocabulary).* (Participant Ocampo, end-of-term Survey. May 19th 2011).

Perceptions that the researcher outlined from the participants' behaviours on the Reflective Journal corroborate learners' insights:

- "*Their vocabulary is expanding enormously when they write they stories and when they have to negotiate meaning and/or correct their partners' stories and look for new words"*. (Researcher's Reflective Journal May 9th 2011).

Increased metacognitive awareness and motivation towards the writing process.

This category shows insights from the participants with regard to the second research question and the use of Storybird and CW for the creation of narrative texts. It is related to the web 2.0 tool Storybird and the CW strategy used to the creation of narrative texts and gathered, supported and explained by the following sub-categories:

a) Increased willingness to peer-correct and self-assess writing tasks.

The collaborative writing and the use of Storybird helped learners strengthen and develop metacognitive learning strategies. Learners approached peer correction and delivered feedback spontaneously and also learnt to check their own work (self-assess). With respect to that, Bonk (2009) states that having learners doing collaborative tasks, they learn how to learn. Glässman (2006) adds that the facilitation of peer support in the classroom settings leads learners to benefit more from a learning experience. Furthermore, Brown (2004) and Harmer (2004) highlight the value of collaboration in learning because learners are likely to teach something to each other using the "peer correction" strategy. By doing so, they strengthen their knowledge and overcome

difficulties (p. 270). The following extracts present learners' insights regarding the CW tasks they did:

Q: Les ha gustado trabajar con un compañero? *(Have you enjoyed working with a partner?)*

- *"Cuando uno trabaja con otra persona es multiplicadora porque uno está como dando lo mejor de uno y los errores del compañero se los corrige o los aclara y al contrario también cuando uno está acostumbrado a escribir determinadas estructuras y el compañero de golpe tiene más claridad en la misma estructura que uno trabaja siempre y le dice no le falta un "to" o le falta un "in" o le falta una proposición aclara vocabulario."*(Participant Leo. Focus group. May 3rd – 2011). (*When one works with another person is a multiplier because one gives the best and corrects or clarifies partners' mistakes. Furthermore, when one is used to writing determined structures and the partners has clearer concepts or there are missing prepositions like "in" or "to," he or she clarifies the vocabulary)*

Q: Ha seguido un proceso en el trabajo colaborativo con sus compañeros? Si _x Cual? *(Have you followed a process in the collaborative work with your peer? Yes_X Which ?*

- *"Básicamente trabajar en Storybird por turnos y de esa manera se hace la retroalimentación correspondiente con el compañero a medida que se trabaja la historia."* (Participant Cata. Survey, November 18th 2010). *(Basically, working with Storybird taking turns and in that way we deliver the corresponding feedback to the partner along the Story creation.)*

A noticeable outcome was the high encouragement learners felt to peer-correct and self-assess their writing tasks working through Skype, Storybird or Hotmail Messenger. Regarding Elbow's (2000) arguments and the way learners did their writing tasks, the fact that learners did

synchronous and asynchronous collaborative tasks, represents an interesting point of analysis. When learners did their tasks working alone with Storybird, they self-assessed their tasks doing research about new language forms and vocabulary bearing in mind the fact that their partners would read what they had written. Elbow (2000) strongly believes that the CW might bring more benefits to the learners if they work in isolation along some stages of the writing process because they feel like they "control" their writing task and avoid the disagreements and low standards in the writing production that CW might incite. Furthermore, Vallance M., Vallance K. & Masahiro (2009) affirm that the "knowledge-environment" provided by the web 2.0 tools focused on the cooperative construction of knowledge, analysis, application and the active participation, follows a constructivist approach that benefit learners. The following extracts present learners' insights regarding the synchronous and asynchronous CW tasks they did:

- *I noticed one more time how learners feel encouraged to participate and do peer correction online. Working in pairs online has been a fruitful experience as they feel more confident to speak and make appreciations.* (Researcher's Reflective journal, Virtual session Nov 8th 2010).

Q: Ha seguido un proceso en el trabajo colaborativo con sus compañeros dentro y fuera del aula de clase? *(Have you followed a collaborative work process with your partners in and out of the classroom settings?)*

- *"que cada uno le corrige a la otra persona si le corrige, en el caso pues que comentarios digamos que él considera necesario seria como tal la tarea colaborativa."*(Participant Ocampo. Focus Group. May 3rd 2011). *(that we correct each other, in case there are comments, I mean that he considers necessary for the collaborative task.)*

b) Encouragement and autonomous behaviours towards written tasks.

Among the advantages of promoting CW activities with Storybird, a perceptible outcome was the eagerness learners had to do their writing tasks and the perceptible autonomous behaviours to improve writing skills. One possible reason that shows why learners felt more motivated to do their writing tasks accurately was the fact that learners knew that somebody else was going to read what they had written and they wanted to do better to share the good job they had done. With regard to that, Richards & Rodgers (2001), Brown (1994) and Harmer (2007) argue that the collaborative learning experiences enhance students' motivation and reduce stress creating a positive affective climate.

It was noticeable how the use of computers was motivating as it was a different experience; computers guided learners to develop autonomous behaviours and they felt encouraged to enhance their own learning (Prensky, 2010; Chapelle, 2003). Along the pedagogical intervention and implementation process, learners developed autonomous behaviours on the one hand because they were encouraged by the use of computers and on the other, because it is probably the major effect that the collaborative learning experiences have on any learning process (Totten, Sills, Digby & Russ (1991), Benson (1996) and Little (2000)). Glässman (2006), Brown (1994) and Kessler (1992) believe that when having learners working in a collaborative learning environment they develop autonomous behaviors and responsibilities relating their partners and themselves. Moreover, Jimenez (2009) and Rogers (2008) show how the use of a web 2.0 tool and technology helped a group of university learners to increase their autonomous behaviours when they used WebQuests to improve their critical reading skills and word processors to improve their writing skill. The following excerpts from the data collection instruments show participants' perceptions:

Q: Cómo se han sentido al ver sus historia publicadas y tal vez comentadas por otras personas de diferentes partes del mundo? *(How did you feel when you saw the stories you published commented by different people around the world?)*

- *"Siento que me ha retado a sacar todo lo que tengo y además a consultar porque uno también sabe que lo va a publicar."*(Participant Addy. Focus Group. May 5th 2011). *(I feel that it has helped me to give the best from me, and also to consult because one knows that its is going to be published)*

Q: Qué piensan de las actividades desarrolladas en el aula de clase en las que se incluyen narraciones? *(What do you think about the activities developed in class in which there are narratives?)*

- "*Pienso que el uso de Storybird motiva mucho para que con mi compañero creemos las historias, y lo bueno de las actividades y estrategias es que son buenas es que ya sabemos cómo hacerlas solos en cualquier momento."* (Participant Jhost. Focus Group: May 5th 2011) *(I think that use of Storybird encourages us to create stories, and the good thing about the activities and the strategies is that they are great and we know how to do them on our own at any moment).*

Q: Se sienten más motivados para escribir con Storybird, cuando utilizan Storybird? *(Do you feel more encouraged to write with Storybird, when you use Storybird?)*

- *"si además porque sobre todo la parte de la corrección cuando uno se siente leído y corregido por otro ya sea por el profesor o por el compañero entonces eso motiva a uno a hacer las cosas mejor."* (Participant Dave. Focus Group. Oct 16th 2010). *(Yeah, especially in the*

correction section because when you feel read and corrected by another partner or the teacher, that motivates you to do the things better.)

- "*When learners were correcting their peers I enjoyed myself seeing how confident and autonomous they had become as they started to assess their peers and their own tasks with their own criteria. One learner told me that at the beginning he was shy but he demonstrated he had become more confident because he was correcting his partners' writings with certainty in his appreciations."* (Researcher's Reflective Journal. April 4th 2011).

Learners felt encouraged to write their stories also because of Storybird and the opportunities it gives in terms of creativity. Chapelle (2003) cites that the internet promotes creativity and encourages users to a huge variety of information, learners added that they felt highly encouraged to write their stories not just because Storybird is an Internet tool but because they truly think that the idea of using images contributes to the fluency in the production of ideas in a creative way (Dabbs, 2011; Storybird, n.d; Nordin 2010). Regarding creativity and the use of images to create stories online, Beltrán (2010) shows how the effective use of Digital Storyboards promotes learners' self expression and help them improve their writing skill:

Q: Storybird ha tenido algún efecto en su habilidad de escribir? *(Has storybird had an effect in your writing skill?*

- *"Mejorado mi lenguaje además de expandir los límites de m imaginación en cuanto a la creación de historias."* (Participant Lily. Survey, November 18th 2010). *(it has improved my language apart from expanding my imagination limits regarding the stories creation).*

Q: Qué es lo que más le ha gustado de Storybird? *(What have you liked the most about*

Storybird?)

- *"me gusta que me ayuda a ser más fluida cuando escribo una historia. Es más fácil cuando uno tiene las imágenes ya organizadas."* (Participant Dave. Survey, November 18th 2010). *(I like it helps me to be more fluent when I write a story. It is easier when you have the sentences organized).*

Q: ¿Sienten que han aprendido algo nuevo? *(do you feel like you have learnt something new?)*

- *"La herramienta nos anima a ser creativos en el momento de tratar de enlazar una idea con una imagen que estamos observando entonces Nos anima a crear y a mantener la coherencia en un una composición."*(Participant Addy. Focus group. May 5th 2011) *(It is a tool that encourages us to be more creative when we need to intertwine ideas with images, then it helps us to write a coherent composition)*

- *When learners were doing the storybird I realized they wanted to do them and were absolutely encouraged because of their comment and the huge amount of ideas that came to their minds to write their stories* (Researcher's Reflective journal, Nov. 1st 2010)

c) Increased affective awareness towards peers and awareness of the writing process, tied to the willingness to adopt a process approach to writing.

The use of collaborative writing encouraged learners to negotiate meaning, peer-correct, self-assess and do their best when they created their written texts. They demonstrated metacognitive awareness when they were likely to identify the process they followed with their partners to create their stories and reflected on their production identifying their strengths, weaknesses and those things they needed to reinforce. Kohonen (1992) cites that the "conscious

reflection on learning experiences and the sharing of such reflections with other learners in cooperative groups makes it possible to increase one's awareness of learning" (p. 24). The following excerpts retrieved from the data collection instruments show that:

Q: Ha seguido un proceso en el trabajo colaborativo con sus compañeros dentro y fuera del aula de clase? Si ___ No___ Cual? ____. *(Did you follow a process when you did the collaborative work in and out of the classroom settings? Yes___ No____ which____)*

- *"En mi caso lo primero que se hace es como una charla personalizada ya pues on line o en clase como para definir los parámetros de la historia general y los dibujos y el tema también …también se trabajan los turnos que son posibles en Storybird he… para la corrección del trabajo que realiza el otro compañero… finalmente en clase hacemos la revisión para luego publicarlo en internet"* (Participant Lily. Focus Group. Oct 16th). *(in my case, the first thing we do is a personalized speech online or in class to define the general parameters of the story, and the drawings and the topic too… there is a work in turns in Stroybird™ mmm… to the correction that the other partner does… finally, we revise in class to have the story ready to be published in the net."*

Q: Como considera ese proceso en caso de que la respuesta sea afirmativa? *(how do you consider thw process in case you give an affirmative answer to the previous question?)*

- *"Es enriquecedor y uno entiende como un camino para escribir las historias más fácilmente. Sería interesante como seguir trabajando así."* (Participant Pauly. Survey May 15th 2011). *(It is enriching and one understands like an easier way to write stories easily. It would be interesting to keep on working in that way."*

- *El proceso es como una guía que fácilmente nos puede dar buenos resultados en el caso de utilizarlo, antes pensaba que era más difícil y largo hacerlo así, pero la idea es aprender*

a hacerlo como lo veíamos." (Participant Leo. Survey Nov 18th 2010). *(The process is a kind of guide which can give good results easily if we use it, before I thought that it was more difficult and longer but the idea is to learn to do it like we did it).*

- *"When learners check their partners' stories during the revision, they are more aware of the importance of following a process because they find it useful to refine their stories."* (Reflective Journal. May 13th 2011)

Nunan (1992) argues that when learners do collaborative tasks they increase their awareness about learning, the language and themselves (p. 3). Students showed that they started to recognize themselves and their partners as human beings with individual views, dreams, knowledge and perceptions. This recognition is what takes learners to be aware of their knowledge, identify their weakness strengths and define parameters that take them to schedule study plans. Glässman (2006) outlines this feature as "peer cognizance," a conscious knowledge that lets learners recognize their partners as human beings full of experiences and knowledge that can use collaboratively to build meaningful experiences when they work collaboratively. The following excerpts show the participants perceptions regarding this matter:

Q: como se sintieron en el momento en que revisaron algunos textos de sus compañeros, como se sienten al revisar? *(How did you feel when you checked some partners' texts?*

- *"Pues a nivel personal pienso que la utilización de la herramienta nos permite como hacer un autoanálisis de nuestro progreso en la medida en que hacemos sesiones."* (Participant Addy. Focus group. May 5th 2011) *(From my view point; I consider that the use of this tool lets us make a self-analysis about our progress along the sessions).*

- "*Pues veo que muchas de las falencias que yo tengo también otros las tienen. Eso me motiva porque siento que estamos casi en el mismo nivel… unos mejor y otros no, pero la idea es aprender de los demás.* " (Participant Dave. Focus Group. Oct 16th 2010) *(I see that there are many weaknesses that I have and at the same time other people have. That encourages me because I feel that we almost have the same language level… Some better than others but the idea is to learn from others.)*

- "*First the learners knew how to do the corrections and of course I noticed how they supported the peers, they seem to be quite interested in improving their language level and helping others. Moreover, they do their best when they write their stories and every time they have to do peer correction. Learners know that their partners are to correct their stories and they try to use a higher range of words, more complex structures and use conjunctions, connectors and the diverse grammar aspects worked in class. They feel great to share with the peers what they do."* (Researcher's Reflective Journal. May 9th 2011).

In the previous analysis, it was noticeable in the majority of excerpts that learners showed greater understanding of the process of writing and how some of them were interested in adopting a process approach to writing when they need to create texts. Furthermore, they found in the peer and self-correction an opportunity to reflect on the language and how it works to collaboratively create meaning and improve their writing skill:

- *"Moreover, I was amazed when they started to support peers from different groups and I did not have to foster them to do that. I noticed how they were immersed in each other stories. It was fantastic because they negotiated meaning and I just supported them when they strongly disagreed with their peers. From my point of view when learners check their*

partners' stories they are improving their English Language level. Finally, They delivered oral feedback about the notes they had made."(Reflective Journal. April 29th 2011).

To sum up, the data analysis contributed to highlight the benefits that collaborative experiences might have in the students' second language learning process. Besides the verity that learners improved specific features of their language skills related to vocabulary and grammar, it is a fact that the collaborative experience supported by the use of Storybird learners, guided learners to raise metacognitive and affective awareness and in that sense to be more autonomous with their learning process.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, Pedagogical Implications and Further Research

This chapter outlines the conclusions, pedagogical implications for the classroom and views towards research on CW and the use of Storybird in the future.

Conclusions

After reflecting on the outcomes presented on the data analysis chapter and comparing them to the theoretical framework and the state of the art, the presentation of conclusions is divided into: The effects of CW, Storybird in the classroom, and metacognitive awareness and autonomy.

With regard to the CW as a strategy which was used in the classroom in various stages of the writing process and out of the classroom supported with the use of Storybird to work asynchronously and tools like Skype and Messenger to work synchronously, the following conclusions were drawn: The synchronous Face-to-face CW and the asynchronous and synchronous CW mediated by web tools might help learners improve specific aspects of the written language when they become more aware of the use of structures, improve their vocabulary and write longer and more developed sentences. In the face-to-face sessions the CW lead learners to negotiate meaning, vocabulary and content. Although they use their native language at times, the negotiation process takes them to reflect on their written language and produce more ideas to write their stories.

Regarding the use of web tools like Storybird, Skype and Messenger, and the synchronous and asynchronous communication learners had and the process they followed to create their stories, the main purpose of those tools is to promote communication out of the classroom, encourage learners because of the use new technologies to learn and set up diverse possibilities to

develop Collaborative learning tasks with autonomy. Moreover, what enriches and benefits the learning process and propels the improvement of learners' skills is the strategy that the researcher uses rather than the use of the web 2.0 tools. Educators must design action plans and wisely combine strategies with web tools to really guide learners to learn, there is not a web 2.0 that fits all the teachers and/or learners needs but combining different web tools is by far the best solution to match learning needs in specific contexts.

In this study, the interaction that the group of learners had with their peers when writing their stories, combined with the use of Storybird, Skype and Messenger, was what helped learners to improve their vocabulary and took them to use correct and more complex structures when creating their narrative texts. The use of web tools support learning processes and at any research study researchers might feel encouraged to identify and use, from a huge variety of Internet tools, the one(s) that can appropriately help their learners to learn in their unique contexts.

With regard to the use of Storybird, what Pegrum (2009) and Vallance M., Vallance K. & Masahiro (2009) argue when they say that web 2.0 tools were created to foster the construction of meaning in social groups was evident. Storybird is a web 2.0 tool which can be used with two purposes: literacy and Second language learning; and due to the fact that it is on the Internet it might be appealing to young adults and teenagers. In this study, when the participants highlighted their convenience to write stories, that was because Storybird helped them to follow a process approach to writing and the use of images was motivating and fostered positive attitudes towards second language learning.

Storybird is a tool designed to promote CW following a process approach, it is easy to use and available for free. What makes of Storybird a different and encouraging source to create

stories, is the possibility that it offers to create storyboards before and while the writing process. When having learners creating storyboards using the target or the native language, they negotiate and create meaning by defining the context, the content, the situation and characters of the story. It is clear that Storybird is a tool that encourages learners to write collaboratively but people who might like working individually could do it as well. Storybird promotes the synchronous and asynchronous CW in and out of the classroom and the use of images triggers creativity in a unique way. Learners at any age might feel more encouraged to write stories and enjoy the writing production process (Dabbs, 2011; Storybird, n.d; Nordin).

Regarding metacognitive awareness and autonomy, the results show how learners increased their cognizance towards the way they write, the writing process itself, the teachers role as facilitator and their peers. When talking about awareness, motivation represents a defining factor due to the fact that when learners are motivated to learn, their awareness rises because they make conscious reflections on what they do. During the process the participants decided the paths to follow and that is an essential factor that takes learners to focus on what they do and how they do it, they are more likely to achieve their goals more easily. Therefore, when tutors and learners establish goals together and define what to expect learners' motivation increases and they succeed in their production. The CW strategy and the use of Storybird, Skype and Messenger had two different functions towards what was expected from the learners in terms of performance. Storybird, Skype and Messenger encouraged them to work online with images and the CW to negotiate meaning and build meaning together. When learners negotiate and build meaning, they become aware of their learning process.

Learners' metacognitive awareness emerged when they peer-corrected, self assessed and followed a process approach to writing. In that sense, there was metacognition and when

metacognition rises, learners start to be more autonomous. Furthermore, when learners start to recognize their peers' previous knowledge, experiences, weaknesses, strengths and expectations towards life, they learn to share and value others. That leads to a more enriching practice when they do writing tasks.

Some specific insights that emerged reveal that when doing CW following a process approach, undergraduates gain more confidence and their metacognitive awareness increases when they follow the whole process proofreading and revising their partners' texts. Therefore, it fosters peer correction and learners gain the necessary confidence and awareness to review their own work. In addition, due to the fact that the promotion of CW helps learners to be more aware of their strategic skills when they follow the process approach, their positive attitudes towards writing increase during the process. Elbow (2000) asserts that after having understood the process writing dynamics with its essential features, anyone can take charge of oneself to learn, anyone becomes an autonomous learner.

Pedagogical implications

In case somebody is interested in using Storybird as a tool to promote CW, the following aspects and points might result useful for having a more enriching and fruitful experience:

- If teachers want to use Storybird as a tool to improve writing skills, it is necessary to recognize that learners can be limited with the range of pictures this tool has to offer in every category.
- Storybird does not work if there is not time or motivation for learners to work asynchronously at any other place because this tool was created with that purpose. However, it is an excellent tool for people who enjoy writing alone.

- Storybird can be used to create storyboards before learners start doing the drafting process. It is recommended to use the storyboards as a pre-writing activity in the classroom before learners go home and continue with the asynchronous drafting task.
- Storybird suggested use in the classroom :

  - *Synchronously* in class: to create the storyboards: from 30 to 40 min.

  - *Asynchronously* through the Internet: from 45 min to 2:30 hours.
- During the revision process where learners can get together to share their view points on their partners stories, they can comment, give their opinions or make comments directly onto Storybird. If there are not computers in the classroom, tutors can use printable versions of the stories and that brings more confidence to the group of learners because they can handle the written texts. Learners might cope with the stories more easily and make comments working in groups or individually. Therefore, on line it is almost impossible to correct and tutors might need another tool as Skype or Messenger to work synchronously with learners.
- It might result more challenging to use Storybird in high school.

Further Research

Some preliminary suggestions which could expand the ideas that teachers and researchers have with regard to the use of web 2.0 tools in the classroom can be listed as follows:

On the one hand, since Storybird and the use of CW go together, researchers might be interested in studying the differences of the promotion of CW through web 2.0 tools and without using them. In that sense, the most suitable study would be an experimental research with a controlled group. Nevertheless, the research project would need to be longer.

On the other hand, researchers might plan an experimental research study where learners have the chance to use Storybird and a different web 2.0 tool to promote CW for the creation of stories. Moreover, researchers might include the use of other web 2.0 tools in the pedagogical intervention.

To sum up, the outcomes depicted along this research project represent an opportunity to reflect about education in the 21st century and consider the promotion of experiences where learners have the chance to interact using diverse web tools in the Internet. The use of technology to promote learning is motivating but frustrating at times if learners are not trained appropriately to deal with it. The use of the internet to develop learning tasks is encouraging for learners but demotivating when there is not support from the tutors.

Educators need to be aware of the use of the Internet and web tools to promote autonomous behaviours and at the same foster opportunities for learners to interact and learn collaboratively. In that sense, learners can learn to recognize their peers and tutors as human beings in a virtual environment where there are scarce possibilities to have physical contact and the problem of dehumanization in the learning process might grow. The wise use of the internet and web tools in and out of the classroom settings must propel the self and mutual cognizance of peers as human beings full of needs, dreams, expectations and personal experiences that might be enriching. Nowadays there are many possibilities to promote online learning and prepare students for the real life; the challenge is to make sure that the learners truly feel they learn what they need when they need it, they way they need it.

References

Aguirre, A. (2010). *Writing hyperstories Collaboratively for an Authentic Audience.* Universidad Distrital. Bogotá Colombia.

Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. New York: New York University Press.

Avery, S. (2011, September 5). Storybird a Collaborative Storytelling Tool. Retrieved from: http://techtutorials.edublogs.org/2011/09/05/storybird/

Beatty, K. (2003). *Computer Assisted language learning*. Pearson Education Limited. England.

Beltrán, A. (2010). *EFL University Learners Working Collaboratively with Digital Storyboards.* Universidad Distrital. Bogotá Colombia.

Beltrán, J. (2009). *Using the Online Software Hot Potatoes to Help First Graders Develop beginning Writting.* Universidad de la Sabana. Chía Colombia.

Benson, P. (1996) Concepts of autonomy in language learning. In R. Pemberton et al. (eds) *Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning* (pp. 27-34). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Benson, P. (2002). Rethinking the relationship of self-access and autonomy. Newsletter of the Hong Kong Association for Self-Access Learning and Development, 5, 4-10. Retrieved from: http://lc.ust.hk/HASALD/newsletter/newsletterSept02.pdf

Bonk, C. J. (2009). *The world is open: How Web technology is revolutionizing education*. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass.

Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall Regents.

Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. New York: Pearson/Longman.

Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners*. New York: Routledge

Castells, M., (2003). *La Galaxia Internet: Reflexiones sobre internet, empresa y sociedad.* Ed. Areté. Barcelona, 2001.

Chapelle, C. (2001). *Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition: Foundations for Teaching, Testing and research.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chapelle, C. (2003). *English language learning and technology: Lectures on applied linguistics in the age of information and communication technology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub.

Connors, R., (2002). Introduction to D. Gordon Rohman's "Pre-Writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process." In McDonald, C. R., & McDonald, R. L. (Eds.), *Teaching Writing: Landmarks and horizons* (pp. 3-6). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Corbin, J. M., Strauss, A. L., & Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Los Angeles, Calif: Sage Publications.

Dabbs, L. (2011, July 19). New teacher Boot Camp Week 3-Using Storybird. Retrieved from: http://www.edutopia.org/blog/storybird-new-teacher-boot-camp-lisa-dabbs

Davies G. Walker R., Rendall H. & Hewer S. (2010) Introduction to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Module 1.4 in Davies G. (ed.) *Information and Communications Technology for Language Teachers (ICT4LT)*, Slough, Thames Valley University [Online].

Retrieved from: http://www.ict4lt.org/en/en_mod1-4.htm [Accessed 29 11 2010].

Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative data analysis: A user-friendly guide for social scientists*. London: New York, NY.

Dick, B. (1993). *You want to do an action research thesis?* Retrieved from http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/art/arthesis.html.

Ding, A. (2003). Theoretical and Practical Issues in the Promotion of Collaborative Learner Autonomy in a Virtual Self-access Centre. In Holmberg, B., Shelley, M., & White, C. (Eds). *Distance education and languages: Evolution and change (2005)*. Clevedon, Hants, England: Multilingual Matters.

Donaldson, R. P., & Haggstrom, M. A. (2006). *Changing language education through CALL*. Abingdon [England: Routledge

Elbow, P. (2000). *Everyone can write: Essays toward a hopeful theory of writing and teaching writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Elola, I. & Oskoz, A. (2010). Collaborative Writing: Fostering Foreign Language and Writing Conventions Development. *Language Learning and Technology*, 14 (3), 51 – 71.

First Certificate in English: FCE Specifications and sample papers for examinations from December 2008. Cambridge: University of Cambridge *ESOL* Examinations. Retrieved from http://www.britishcouncil.org/macedonia-exams-fce-dec-08.pdf

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (2006). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New Brunswick, N.J: Aldine Transaction (a division of Transaction Publishers.

Glässman, S. (2006). Buddy Up! – Facilitating Online Collaboration in University Language Learning. In Lamb, T., & Reinders, H. (Eds.), *Supporting independent language learning: Issues and interventions* (pp. 201- 218). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 8*(4), 597–607. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf

Graetz, K. (2006). The Psychology of Learning Environments. In Oblinger (eds.), *Learning Spaces* (Chapter 6). Retrieved From http://www.educause.edu/learningspaces

Halliday, M. A. K. & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.

Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing*. Harlow: Longman.

Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching: DVD*. Harlow: Pearson/Longman.

Herbert, M. (1990). *Planning a research project: A guide for practitioners and trainees in the helping professions*. London: Cassell.

Hrastinsky, S. (2008) *Asynchronous and Synchronous E-Learning*. Educause. Retrieved from http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/EQM0848.pdf

Hubbard, P., & Levy, M. (2006). *Teacher education in CALL*. Language learning and language teaching, v. 14. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co.

Hubbard, P. (Ed.) (2009). *A General Introduction to Computer Language Asisted Language Learning. Computer Asisted Language Learning: Critical Concepts in inguistics.* Volume I. Advance online publication. Retrieved from http://www.stanford.edu/~efs/callcc/callcc-intro.pdf

Hyland, K. (2002). *Teaching and researching writing*. Harlow: Longman.

Jimenez, C. (2009). *Webquests and the Improvement of Critical Reading Skills in a group of*

University Students. Universidad de La Sabana. Chia Colombia.

Jones, B. (2008). *Web 2.0 heroes: Interviews with 20 Web 2.0 influencers*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley Pub

Kessler, C. (1992). *Cooperative language learning: A teacher's resource book*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall Regents.

Kohonen, V. (1992). Experiential Language Learning: Second Language Learning as Cooperative Learner Education. In Nunan (Ed.), *Collaborative language learning and teaching* (pp. 14-39). Cambridge language teaching library. Cambridge [England: Cambridge University Press.

Lamb, T., & Reinders, H. (2006). *Supporting independent language learning: Issues and interventions*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Laningham, S. (2004). *DeveloperWorks Interviews: Tim Berners-Lee*. Retrieved from http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/podcast/dwi/cm-int082206txt.html

Levy, M., (2006). Effective Use of CALL Technologies: Finding the Right Balance. In Donaldson & Haggstrom (Ed). *Changing language education through CALL* (pp. 1-18). Abingdon [England: Routledge.

Linares, A. (2010). *Using Visual Literacy in a Sequence of Picture Stories to Write Narratives.* Universidad Distrital. Bogotá Colombia.

Little, D. (2000) Learner autonomy and human interdependence: Some theoretical and practical consequences of a social-interactive view of cognition, learning and language. In B. Sinclair et al. (eds). *Learner Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy: Future Directions* (pp. 15-23). London: Longman.

Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.

Müller-Hartmann, A. & Schocker-v, M (2010). Research on the Use of Technology in Task-Based Language Teaching. In Thomas and Reinders (Eds.). *Task-Based Language Lerning and Teaching with Technology* (pp. 17-40). London: Continuum.

Murray, D. (1992). Collaborative Writing as a Literacy Event: implications for ESL Instruction. In Nunan (Eds.), *Collaborative language learning and teaching* (pp. 100-117). Cambridge language teaching library. Cambridge [England: Cambridge University Press.

Nordin, Y. (2010). Web 2.0 and Graduate Research Storybird. Retrieved from: http://edpsychbsustudentwork.pbworks.com/f/3-StoryBird-Web+2.0+and+Graduate+Research.pdf

Norton, L. (2009). *Action research in teaching and learning: A practical guide to conducting pedagogical research in universities*. London: Routledge.

Nunan, D. (1992). *Collaborative language learning and teaching*. Cambridge language teaching library. Cambridge [England: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge language teaching library. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1999). Writing. Newbury House Teacher Development (Ed.), *Second language and teaching* (pp. 271-299). Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Obringer, A. (2001). How E-learning Works. *How stuff works*. Retrieved from: http://people.howstuffworks.com/elearning.htm

Olsen, W. (2004). *Triangulation in social research: Qualitative and quantitative methods can really be mixed*. Retrieved from http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/staff/Triangulation.pdf

O'Reilly, T. (2005). *What is web 2.0: Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software*. Retrieved from http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html

Our Storybird Collaboration with Canada. (2011, June 21). Retrieved from: http://openthedoortob4.blogspot.com/2011/06/our-storybird-collaboration-with-canada.html

Oxford, R. (1997). Cooperative learning, Collaborative learning, interaction: Three communicative Strands in the Language Classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81(4), 443-456.

Peachey, N. (2009). *Web 2.0 Tools for Teachers.* Retrieved from http://www.scribd.com/doc/19576895/Web-20-Tools-for-Teachers. 28 Nov. 2010.

Pegrum, M., (2009). Communicative Networking and Linguistic Mashups on web 2.0. In Thomas, M. (Ed.), *Handbook of research on Web 2.0 and second language learning* (pp. 20-41). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Phillips, P. P., & Stawarski, C. A. (2008). *Data collection: Planning for and collecting all types of data*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer

Prensky, M. (2010). *Teaching digital natives: Partnering for real learning*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roger E., Kagan O. & Kagan S. (1992). About Cooperative Learning. In Kessler (Ed.), *Cooperative Language Learning: A Teachers' Resource Book* (pp. 1-30). Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall Regents.

Rohman, D., (2002). Pre-writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process (1965). In McDonald, C. R., & McDonald, R. L. (Eds.), *Teaching Writing: Landmarks and horizons* (pp. 7-16). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Sagor, R. (2005). *The action research guidebook.* Thousand Oaks, California. Corwin Press.

Schwartz, D. (1998). The Productive Agency that Drives Collaborative Learning. In Dillenbourg (Eds.), *Collaborative Learning: Cognitive and Computational Approaches* (pp. 197-218). Amsterdam: Pergamon.

Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning and Teaching*. *A Guidebook for English Language Teachers.* Macmillan books for teachers.

Sharma, P., & Barrett, B. (2007). *Blended learning: Using technology in and beyond the language classroom*. Macmillan books for teachers. Oxford: Macmillan.

Shurville, S., & Fernstrom, K. (2007). *Readings in technology in education: Selected papers from the international conference on information and communications technology in education 2006*. Bradford: Emerald Group Press.

Sommers, N., (2002). Responding to Student Writing (1982). In McDonald, C. R., & McDonald, R. L. (Eds.), *Teaching Writing: Landmarks and horizons* (pp. 3-6). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Speck, B. W. (1999). *Collaborative writing: An annotated bibliography*. Bibliographies and indexes in education, no. 19. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.

Strauss, A & Corbin, J. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative research. Grounded theory applications and*

techniques. London. Seige Publications.

Storybird, (n.d.). Retrieved April 4, 2012 from http://educ5553.wikispaces.com/file/view/Storybird.pdf

Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Teeler, D., & Gray, P. (2000). *How to use the Internet in ELT*. Harlow: Longman. Tribble, C. (1996). *Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thomas, M., & Reinders, H. (2010). *Task-based language learning and teaching with technology*. London: Continuum.

Totten, S., Sills, T., Digby, A., & Russ, P. (1991). *Cooperative learning: A guide to research*. New York: Garland.

Urquhart, V., & McIver, M. (2005). *Teaching writing in the content areas*. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Ury, M. (n.d.). Storybird. Retrieved April 4, 2012 from: http://storybird.com/

Usma, J,. (2009). Education and Language Policy in Colombia: Exploring Processes of Inclusion, Exclusion and Stratification in Times if Global Reform. *Profile 11*. ISSN 1657-0790. 123-141.

Vallance M., Vallance K. & Masahiro M., (2009). Criteria for the Implementation of Learning Technologies. In Thomas, M. (Ed.), *Handbook of research on Web 2.0 and second language learning* (pp. 1-19). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Wallace, M. J. (1998). *Action research for language teachers*. Cambridge teacher training and development. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whithaus, C. (2005). *Teaching and evaluating writing in the age of computers and high-stakes*

testing. Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

APPENDIX A

PREGUNTAS

Para nosotros es un gran honor tenerlos haciendo parte de este proyecto. Muchas gracias por dedicar su tiempo para venir estas dos horas extra clase y estar interesados en intentar mejorar su habilidad para escribir. Además, porque los resultados que se obtengan de esta investigación serán utilizador para desarrollar estrategias que guiarán a futuros estudiantes que tendrán que tomar el examen FCE:

1. ¿Siente que has aprendido algo nuevo?

   Si ____ No _____ Qué?_____

2. ¿alguna vez había utilizado *Storybird*? Si ____ No___

   Si la respuesta es "Si" indique el propósito: Personal___ Académico ___
   otro_____

3. ¿Le ha gustado trabajar con *Storybird?* Si____ No____

   Porque? _____

   _____

4. ¿Qué es lo que más le ha gustado acerca de esta herramienta? _____

   _____

5. ¿Qué es lo que menos le ha gustado? _____

   _____

6. ¿Le ha gustado trabajar con un compañero? Si___ No____

   ¿Por qué? _____

   _____

7. ¿Cree que trabajar con un compañero tiene alguna ventaja? Si___ No___

   Cual? _____

8. Cree que trabajar con un compañero tiene alguna desventaja? Si___ No___

   Cual?_____

9. Ha seguido un proceso en el trabajo colaborativo con sus compañeros? Si ___ No____
   Cual? _____

   _____

10. Como considera ese proceso en caso de que la respuesta sea afirmativa? _____

    _____

11. ¿*Storybird* ha tenido algún efecto en su habilidad para escribir? _____

    _____

12. ¿Se siente más motivado para escribir con el uso de *Storybird*? Si___ No___

    Porque? _____

13. ¿Cómo considera la herramienta para escribir textos narrativos? _____
    _____

14. ¿Le gustaría seguir trabajando con esta herramienta en el futuro? Si___ No___

    Porque y para qué? _____

15. Algo más que te gustaría comentar sobre el uso de *Storybird* para la producción de textos o el trabajo colaborativo que realizó con sus compañeros? _____

    _____

APPENDIX B

PREGUNTAS

Para nosotros es un gran honor tenerlos haciendo parte de este proyecto. Muchas gracias por estar interesados en intentar mejorar su habilidad para escribir. Además, porque los resultados que se obtengan de esta investigación serán utilizador para desarrollar estrategias que guiarán a futuros estudiantes que tendrán que tomar el examen FCE:

1. ¿Siente que ha aprendido algo nuevo?

   Si ____ No _____ Qué?_____

2. ¿alguna vez había utilizado *Storybird*? Si ____ No___

   Si la respuesta es "Si" indique el propósito: Personal___ Académico ___
   otro_____

3. ¿Le ha gustado trabajar con *Storybird?* Si____ No____

   Porque? _____

   _____

4. ¿Qué es lo que más le ha gustado acerca de esta herramienta? _____

   _____

5. ¿Qué es lo que menos le ha gustado? _____

   _____

6. Cuanto tiempo le toma hacer una historia con un compañero? _____

7. Porque considera que el tiempo es tan largo/corto? _____

8. Como se ha sentido al ver sus historias publicadas y comentadas por otras personas de diferentes partes del mundo? _____

   _____

9. ¿*Storybird* ha tenido algún efecto en su habilidad para escribir? _____

   _____

10. ¿Se siente más motivado para escribir con el uso de *Storybird*? Si___ No___

    Porque? _____

11. ¿Cómo considera la herramienta para escribir textos narrativos? _____
    _____
12. ¿Le gustaría seguir trabajando con esta herramienta en el futuro? Si___ No___

    Porque y para qué? _____
13. ¿Le ha gustado trabajar con un compañero? Si___ No____

    ¿Por qué? _____

    _____
14. ¿Cree que trabajar con un compañero tiene alguna ventaja? Si___ No___

    Cual? _____
15. Cree que trabajar con un compañero tiene alguna desventaja? Si___ No___

    Cual?_____
16. Ha seguido un proceso en el trabajo colaborativo con sus compañeros dentro y fuera del aula de clase? Si ___ No____ Cual?
    _____

    _____
17. Como considera ese proceso en caso de que la respuesta sea afirmativa? _____

    _____
18. Qué piensa de las actividades desarrolladas en las que se incluyen narraciones?

    _____
19. Como se sintió en el momento en que revisó algunos de los textos de sus compañeros?
    _____

    _____
20. Algo más que quiera comentar sobre el uso de *Storybird* para la producción de textos o el trabajo colaborativo que realizó con sus compañeros? _____

    _____

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Improving Writing Skills through the Use of "Storybird", a Web 2.0 Tool

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask us if there is anything that is not clear or that you would like to deepen more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

ILUD has been preparing its students to do the FCE examination for about eight years. Recent results provided by the British Council tell us that it is necessary to reinforce writing skills since previous candidates got the lowest marks in comparison with other skills. We are now interested in finding out strategies to help you strengthen that skill and to help you succeed. Based on these considerations, we have been trying to find a web 2.0 tool that makes it easier to deal with writing and we found "Storybird". This web 2.0 tool offers us the possibilities to do online collaborative writing and helps us in our development of writing skills. We are going to analyze the impact of using this tool in your writing skills.

Why have I been chosen?

We are asking all B1 level students, who expect to do the FCE exam in March or July 2011 sessions, if they want to take part in this research to give us a better understanding about students' strengths and weaknesses, and to spot the aspects we need to reinforce.

METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Since the research is being carried out using a web 2.0 tool and analyzed by one researcher, your English teachers will never know whether you decided to take part or not, so it will not affect your study or academic progression in any way.

If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and may be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Before the sixth week of this term you will be invited by the researcher to take part in this project and then you will be instructed with the basic aspects of Storybird and some web 2.0 tools to begin this process that will take eight weeks.

You will have to work four hours every week; they will be divided into two weekly sessions of two hours each. The sessions will include a 2 F2F hour session and a 2 virtual hour session where varied activities and the possibility to explore different virtual environments that could foster the development of writing skills.

You will be interviewed by the researcher once. For that purpose you will have to meet him at any time you are able. The interview will be on the fourth week of the study and it won't be longer than 20 minutes. At the end of the study you will be asked to answer a survey.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We hope that your taking part in the study will help you to enhance your writing skills. However, this cannot be guaranteed.

The information we get from this study may help us to support future students in making a successful syllabus that will lead them to succeed in their writing component of the second part of the FCE exam.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

We cannot foresee any risks in this research, but it will take some of your time.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

The results of this research will be presented in seminars at Distrital and la Sabana universities, and may be in a journal publication.

You will never be identified in any of the findings but we will use your production to analyze and establish possible patterns to follow and instruct learners.

Contact for further information

If you would like any more information, please contact:

Yeison Herrera, researcher.

Carrera 7 no. 40 – 53 piso 3. ILUD

Telephone number: 312 565 43 71

Email: hawkdufolk@hotmail.com

Adapted from:

Norton, L. (2009). Action Research in Teaching and Learning. A practical guide to conducting pedagogical research in universities. London and New York NY. Routledge Tylor and Francis group.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

Title of research project

Improving Writing Skills through the Use of "Storybird", a Web 2.0 Tool at ILUD (Instituto de Lenguas de la Universidad Distrital "Francisco José de Caldas") of Bogotá

Name of researcher

Yeison E. Herrera Ramirez

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. Yes____ No____

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. Yes____ No____

3. I agree to take part in the above study. Yes____ No____

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of researcher: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E

Prewriting strategy

JOURNALISTS' QUESTIONS.

Who: Who are the participants? Who is affected? Who are the primary actors? Who are the secondary actors?

What: What is the topic? What is the significance of the topic? What is the problem? What are the issues? What happened?

Where: Where does the activity take place? Where does the problem or issue have its source?

When: When did the issue or problem develop?

Why: Why did the issue or problem arise? Why is it (your topic) an issue or problem at all?

How: how was the issue addressed? How did it affect the participants? How was it solved?

Adapted from: KU Writing centre (n.d.). Prewriting strategies. Available http://www.writing.ku.edu

APPENDIX F

2

Assessment

Candidates' answers are assessed with reference to two mark schemes: one based on the examiner's overall impression (the General Impression Mark Scheme), the other on the requirements of the particular task (the Task Specific Mark Scheme). The General Impression Mark Scheme summarises the content, organisation and cohesion, range of structures and vocabulary, register and format, and target reader indicated in the task. The Task Specific Mark Scheme focuses on criteria specific to each particular task. Examples of candidate responses, together with the Task Specific Mark Schemes, can be found on pages 21–26.

Candidates are penalised for dealing inadequately with the requirements of the Task Specific Mark Scheme. The accuracy of language, including spelling and punctuation, is assessed on the general impression scale for all tasks.

For answers that are below length, the examiner adjusts the maximum mark and the mark given proportionately. For answers that are over-length, the examiner draws a line at the approximate place where the correct length is reached and directs close assessment to what comes before this. However, credit is given for relevant material appearing later.

The examiner's first priority is to give credit for the candidate's efforts at communication, but candidates are penalised for inclusion of content irrelevant to the task set.

Marking

The panel of examiners is divided into small teams, each with a very experienced examiner as Team Leader. A Principal Examiner guides and monitors the marking process, beginning with a meeting of the Principal Examiner for the paper and the Team Leaders. This is held immediately after the examination and begins the process of establishing a common standard of assessment by the selection and marking of sample scripts for all the questions in Paper 2. These are chosen to demonstrate the range of responses and different levels of competence, and a Task Specific Mark Scheme is finalised for each individual task on the paper. Examiners discuss these Task Specific and General Impression Mark Schemes and refer to them regularly while they are working.

During marking, each examiner is apportioned scripts chosen on a random basis from the whole entry in order to ensure there is no concentration of good or weak scripts or of one large centre from one country in the allocation of any one examiner. A rigorous process of co-ordination and checking is carried out before, during and after the marking process.

The FCE General Impression Mark Scheme is interpreted at Council of Europe Level B2.

A summary of the General Impression Mark Scheme is given below. Trained examiners, who are co-ordinated prior to each examination session, work with a more detailed version, which is subject to updating.

■ **General Impression Mark Scheme (Draft)**

BAND 5 For a Band 5 to be awarded, the candidate's writing fully achieves the desired effect on the target reader. All the content points required in the task are included* and expanded appropriately. Ideas are organised effectively, with the use of a variety of linking devices and a wide range of structure and vocabulary. The language is well developed, and any errors that do occur are minimal and perhaps due to ambitious attempts at more complex language. Register and format which is consistently appropriate to the purpose of the task and the audience is used.

BAND 4 For a Band 4 to be awarded, the candidate's writing achieves the desired effect on the target reader. All the content points required in the task are included*. Ideas are clearly organised, with the use of suitable linking devices and a good range of structure and vocabulary. Generally, the language is accurate, and any errors that do occur are mainly due to attempts at more complex language. Register and format which is, on the whole, appropriate to the purpose of the task and the audience is used.

BAND 3 For a Band 3 to be awarded, the candidate's writing, on the whole, achieves the desired effect on the target reader. All the content points required in the task are included*. Ideas are organised adequately, with the use of simple linking devices and an adequate range of structure and vocabulary. A number of errors may be present, but they do not impede communication. A reasonable, if not always successful, attempt is made at register and format which is appropriate to the purpose of the task and the audience.

BAND 2 For a Band 2 to be awarded, the candidate's writing does not clearly communicate the message to the target reader. Some content points required in the task are inadequately covered or omitted, and/or there is some irrelevant material. Ideas are inadequately organised, linking devices are rarely used, and the range of structure and vocabulary is limited. Errors distract the reader and may obscure communication at times. Attempts at appropriate register and format are unsuccessful or inconsistent.

BAND 1 For a Band 1 to be awarded, the candidate's writing has a very negative effect on the target reader. There is notable omission of content points and/or considerable irrelevance, possibly due to misinterpretation of the task. There is a lack of organisation or linking devices, and there is little evidence of language control. The range of structure and vocabulary is narrow, and frequent errors obscure communication. There is little or no awareness of appropriate register and format.

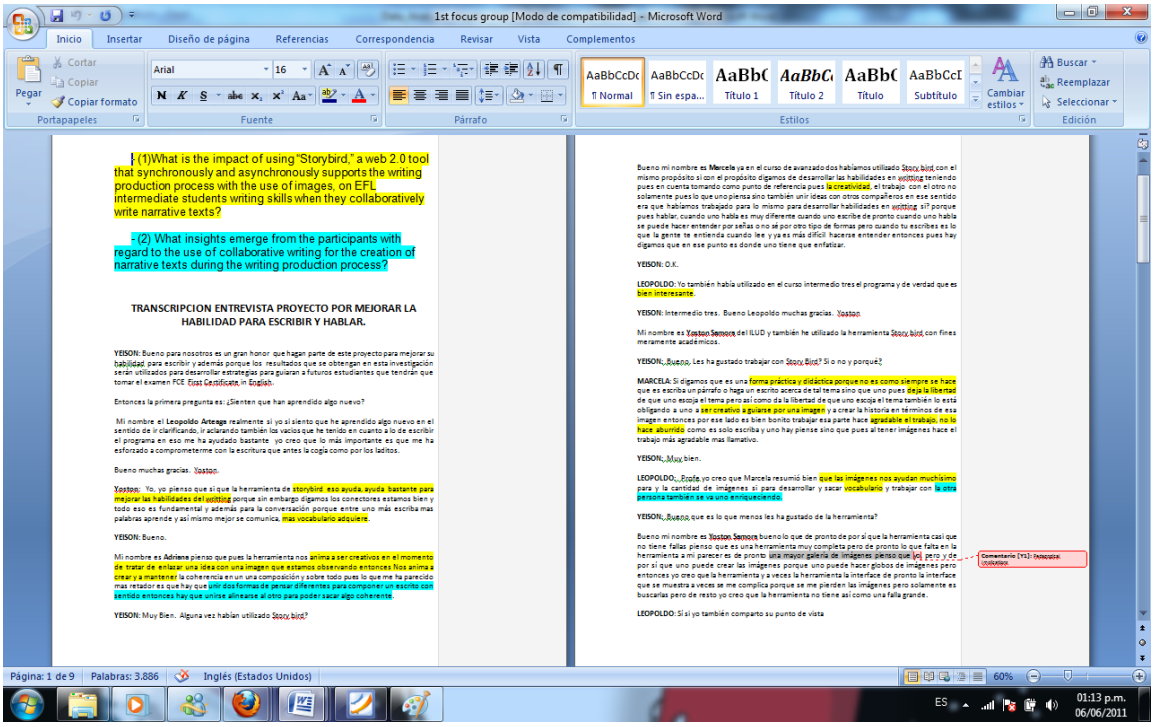
BAND 0 For a Band zero to be awarded, there is either too little language for assessment or the candidate's writing is totally irrelevant or totally illegible.

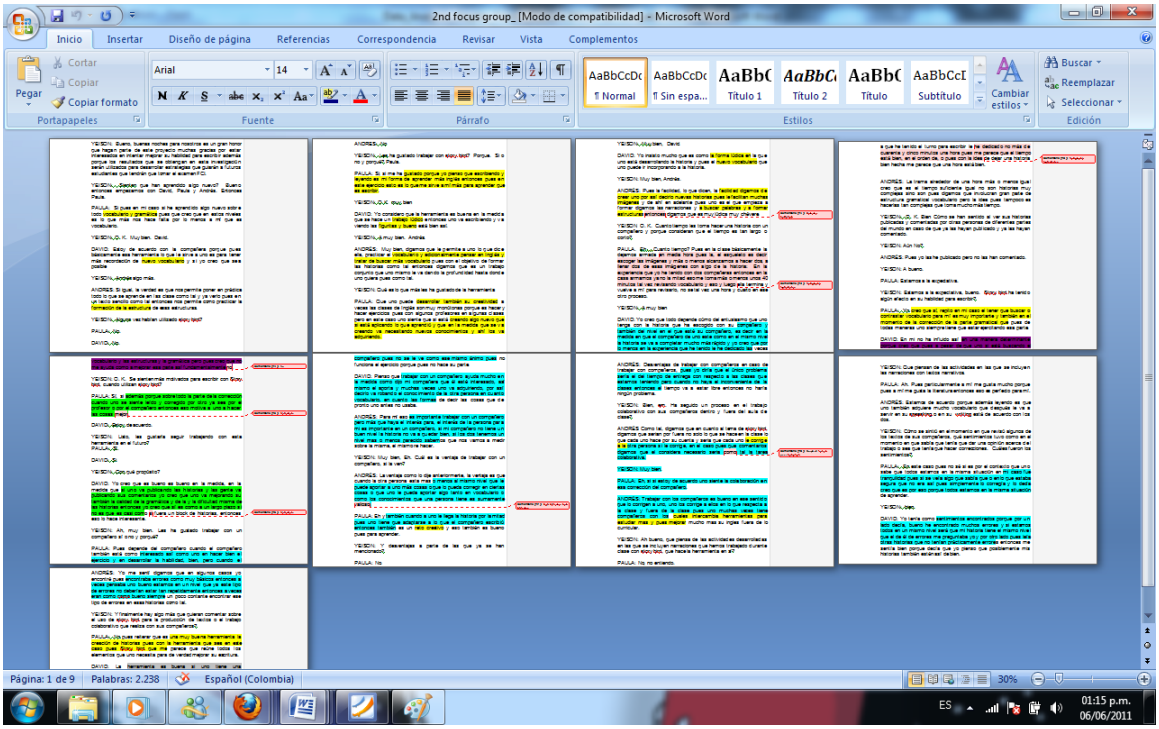
*Candidates who do not address all the content points will be penalised for dealing inadequately with the requirements of the task.
Candidates who fully satisfy the Band 3 descriptor will demonstrate an adequate performance in writing at FCE level.

APPENDIX G

Colour coding process carried out on each instrument:

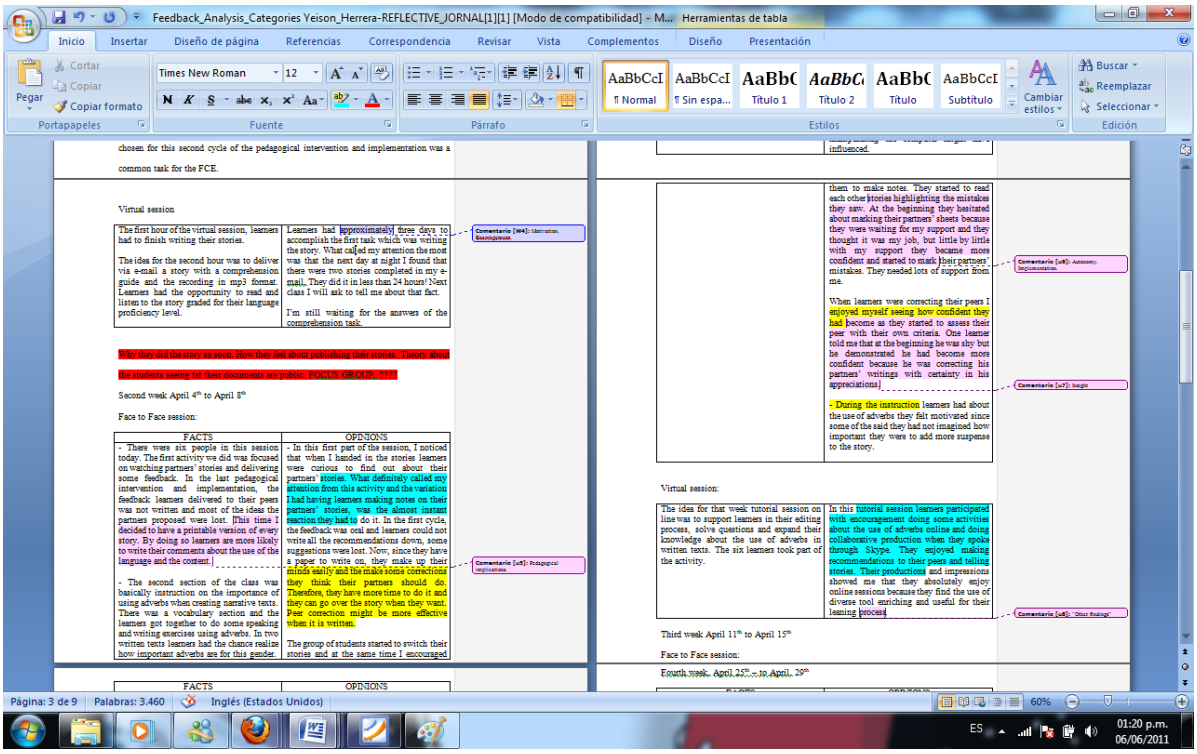
Focus groups:



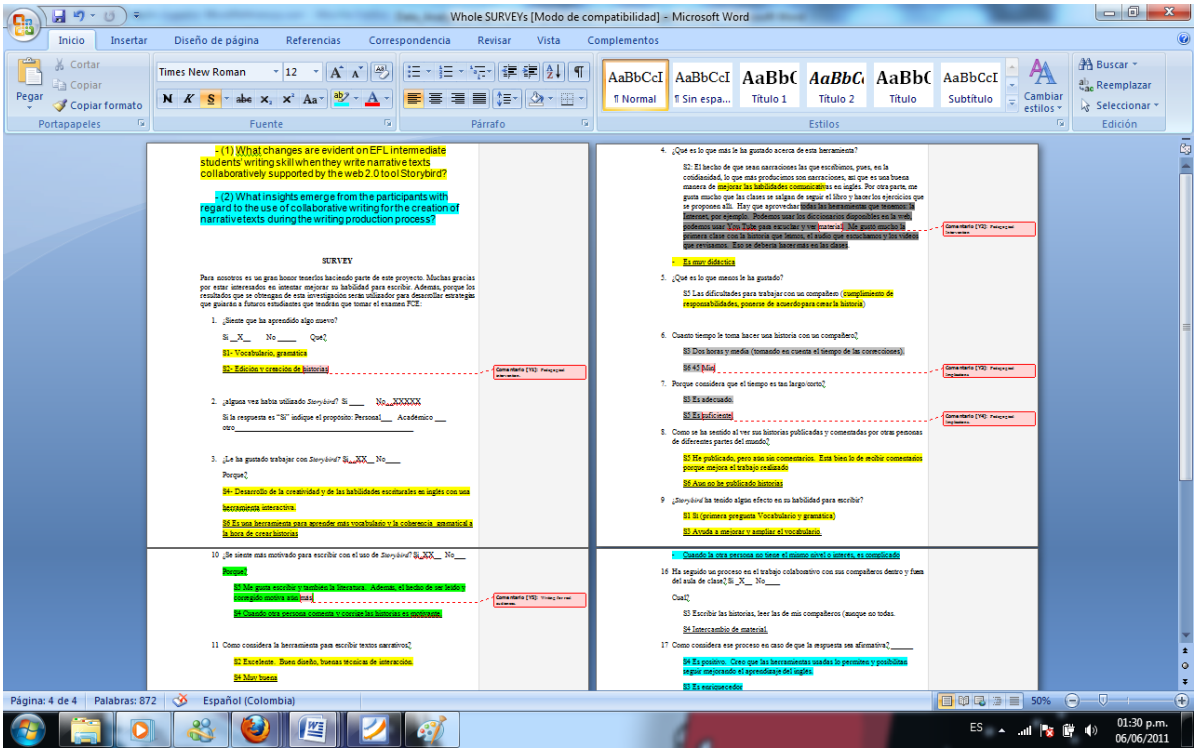


METACOGNITIVE AWARESS AND ENHANCED AUTONOMY THROUGH THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE WRITING AND "STORYBIRD."

Reflective Journal:

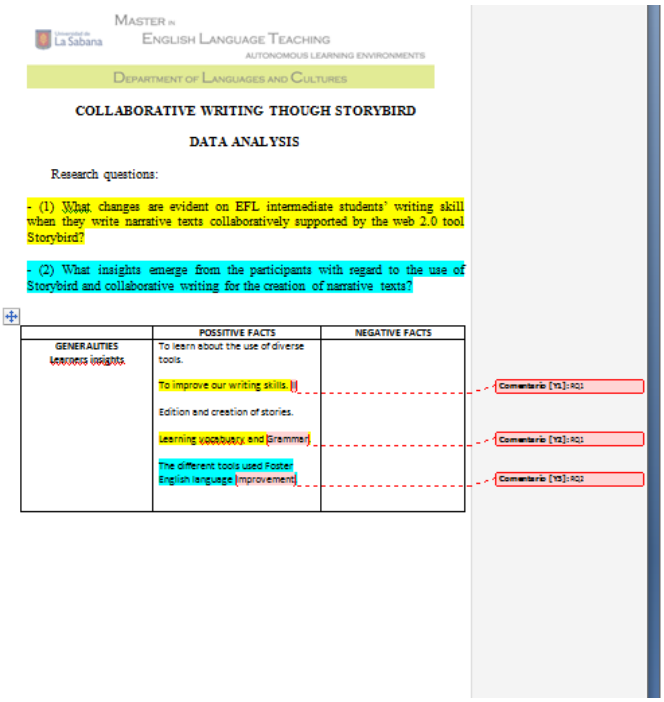


Surveys:



APPENDIX H

Triangulation of information



MASTER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
AUTONOMOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

COLLABORATIVE WRITING THOUGH STORYBIRD

DATA ANALYSIS

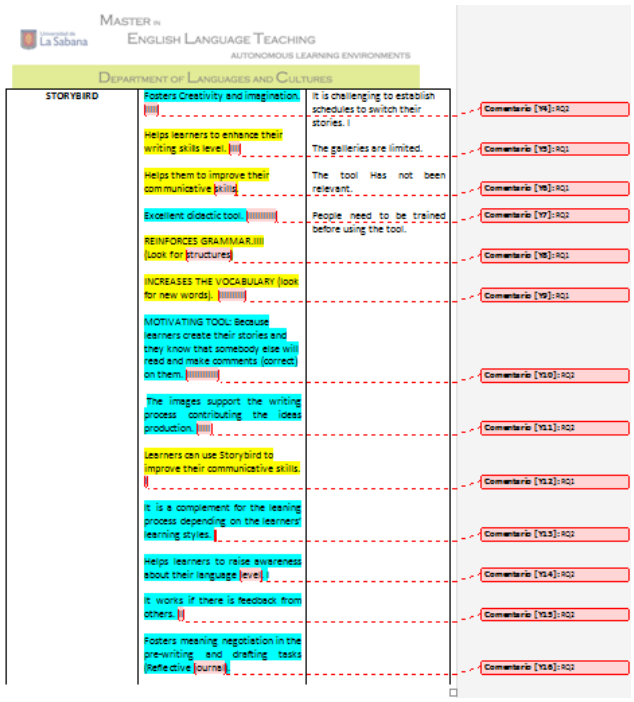
Research questions:

- (1) What changes are evident on EFL intermediate students' writing skill when they write narrative texts collaboratively supported by the web 2.0 tool Storybird?

- (2) What insights emerge from the participants with regard to the use of Storybird and collaborative writing for the creation of narrative texts?

	POSSITIVE FACTS	NEGATIVE FACTS
GENERALITIES Learners insights.	To learn about the use of diverse tools. To improve our writing skills. [Y1] Edition and creation of stories. Learning vocabulary and Grammar. The different tools used Foster English language improvement.	

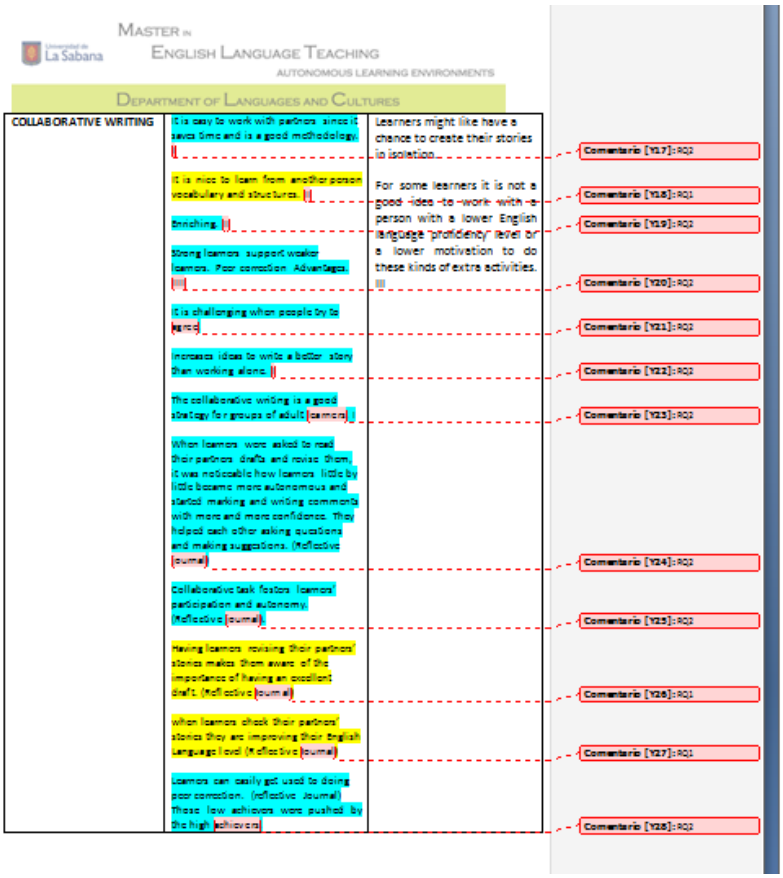
Comentario [Y1]: RQ1
Comentario [Y2]: RQ1
Comentario [Y3]: RQ1



MASTER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
AUTONOMOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

STORYBIRD	Fosters Creativity and imagination.	It is challenging to establish schedules to switch their stories.
	Helps learners to enhance their writing skills level.	The galleries are limited.
	Helps them to improve their communicative skills.	The tool Has not been relevant.
	Excellent didactic tool.	People need to be trained before using the tool.
	REINFORCES GRAMMAR. (Look for structures)	
	INCREASES THE VOCABULARY (look for new words).	
	MOTIVATING TOOL: Because learners create their stories and they know that somebody else will read and make comments (correct) on them.	
	The images support the writing process contributing the ideas production.	
	Learners can use Storybird to improve their communicative skills.	
	It is a complement for the leaning process depending on the learners' learning styles.	
	Helps learners to raise awareness about their language level.	
	It works if there is feedback from others.	
	Fosters meaning negotiation in the pre-writing and drafting tasks (Reflective journal).	

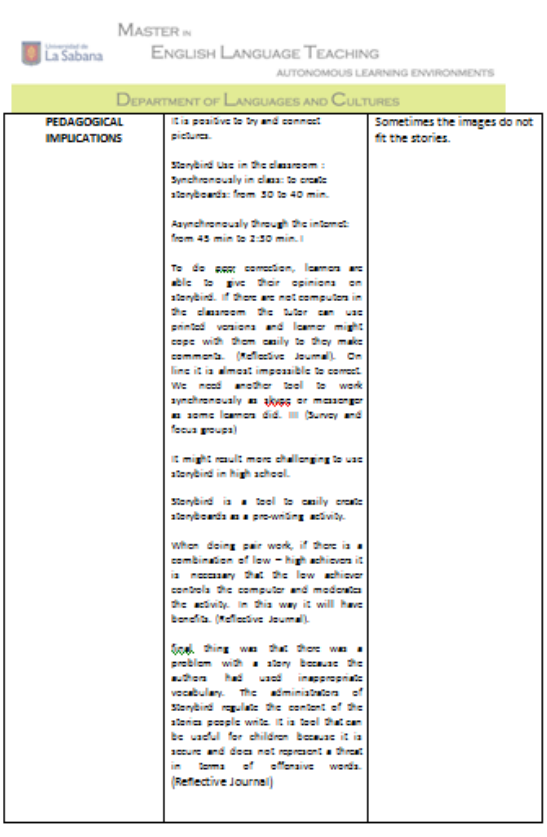
Comentario [Y4]: RQ2
Comentario [Y5]: RQ1
Comentario [Y6]: RQ1
Comentario [Y7]: RQ2
Comentario [Y8]: RQ1
Comentario [Y9]: RQ1
Comentario [Y10]: RQ2
Comentario [Y11]: RQ2
Comentario [Y12]: RQ1
Comentario [Y13]: RQ2
Comentario [Y14]: RQ2
Comentario [Y15]: RQ2
Comentario [Y16]: RQ2



MASTER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
AUTONOMOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

COLLABORATIVE WRITING	It is easy to work with partners since it saves time and is a good methodology.	Learners might like have a chance to create their stories in isolation.
	It is nice to learn from another person vocabulary and structures.	For some learners it is not a good idea -to -work with -a- person with a lower English language "proficiency" level or a lower motivation to do these kinds of extra activities.
	Enriching.	
	Strong learners support weaker learners. Poor correction. Advantages.	
	It is challenging when people try to agree.	
	Increases ideas to write a better story than working alone.	
	The collaborative writing is a good strategy for groups of adults learners.	
	When learners were asked to read their partners drafts and revise them, it was noticeable how learners little by little became more autonomous and started marking and writing comments with more and more confidence. They helped each other asking questions and making suggestions. (Reflective journal)	
	Collaborative task fosters learners' participation and autonomy. (Reflective journal).	
	Having learners revising their partners' stories makes them aware of the importance of having an excellent draft. (Reflective journal)	
	When learners check their partners' stories they are improving their English Language level (Reflective journal)	
	Learners can easily get used to doing poor correction. (reflective Journal) Those low achievers were pushed by the high achievers.	

Comentario [Y17]: RQ2
Comentario [Y18]: RQ1
Comentario [Y19]: RQ2
Comentario [Y20]: RQ2
Comentario [Y21]: RQ2
Comentario [Y22]: RQ2
Comentario [Y23]: RQ2
Comentario [Y24]: RQ2
Comentario [Y25]: RQ2
Comentario [Y26]: RQ1
Comentario [Y27]: RQ1
Comentario [Y28]: RQ2



MASTER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
AUTONOMOUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS	It is positive to try and connect pictures. Storybird Use in the classroom : Synchronously in class: to create storyboards: from 30 to 40 min. Asynchronously through the internet: from 45 min to 2:30 min. To do peer correction, learners are able to give their opinions on storybird. If there are not computers in the classroom the tutor can use printed versions and learner might cope with them easily to they make comments. (Reflective Journal). On line it is almost impossible to correct. We need another tool to work synchronously as skype or messenger as some learners did. (Survey and focus groups) It might result more challenging to use storybird in high school. Storybird is a tool to easily create storyboards as a pre-writing activity. When doing pair work, if there is a combination of low – high achievers it is necessary that the low achievor controls the computer and moderates the activity. In this way it will have benefits. (Reflective Journal). One thing was that there was a problem with a story because the authors had used inappropriate vocabulary. The administrators of Storybird regulate the content of the stories people write. It is tool that can be useful for children because it is secure and does not represent a threat in terms of offensive words. (Reflective Journal)	Sometimes the images do not fit the stories.

APPENDIX I

1. What changes are evident on EFL intermediate students' writing skill when they write narrative texts collaboratively supported by the web 2.0 tool Storybird?

To improve our writing skills. II - Helps learners to enhance their writing skills level. IIII

Helps them to improve their communicative skills. - Learners can use Storybird to improve their communicative skills. I

when learners check their partners' stories they are improving their English Language level (Reflective Journal)

REINFORCES GRAMMAR.IIII
(Look for structures)

Learning vocabuary and Grammar

INCREASES THE VOCABULARY (look for new words). IIIIIIIII

It is nice to learn from another person vocabulary and structures. II

Having learners revising their partners' stories makes them aware of the importance of having an excellent draft, they are more aware of the use of structures and learn new vocabulary. (Reflective Journal)

- (2) What insights emerge from the participants with regard to the use of Storybird and collaborative writing for the creation of narrative texts?

STORYBIRD:

Excellent didactic tool. IIIIIIIIII

MOTIVATING TOOL: Because learners create their stories and they know that somebody else will read and make comments (correct) on them. IIIIIIIIIII

The images support the writing process contributing the ideas production. IIIII

It is a complement for the leaning process depending on the learners' learning styles. I

Fosters Creativity and imagination. IIIII

Fosters meaning negotiation in the pre-writing and drafting tasks (Reflective journal).

COLLABORATIVE WRITING:

It is easy to work with partners since it saves time and is a good methodology. I

Enriching. II

The collaborative writing is a good strategy for groups of adult learners. I

Strong learners support weaker learners. Peer correction Advantages. IIII

Collaborative task fosters learners' participation and autonomy. (Reflective journal).

Learners can easily get used to doing peer correction. (reflective Journal)
Those low achievers were pushed by the high achievers.

It is challenging when people try to agree.

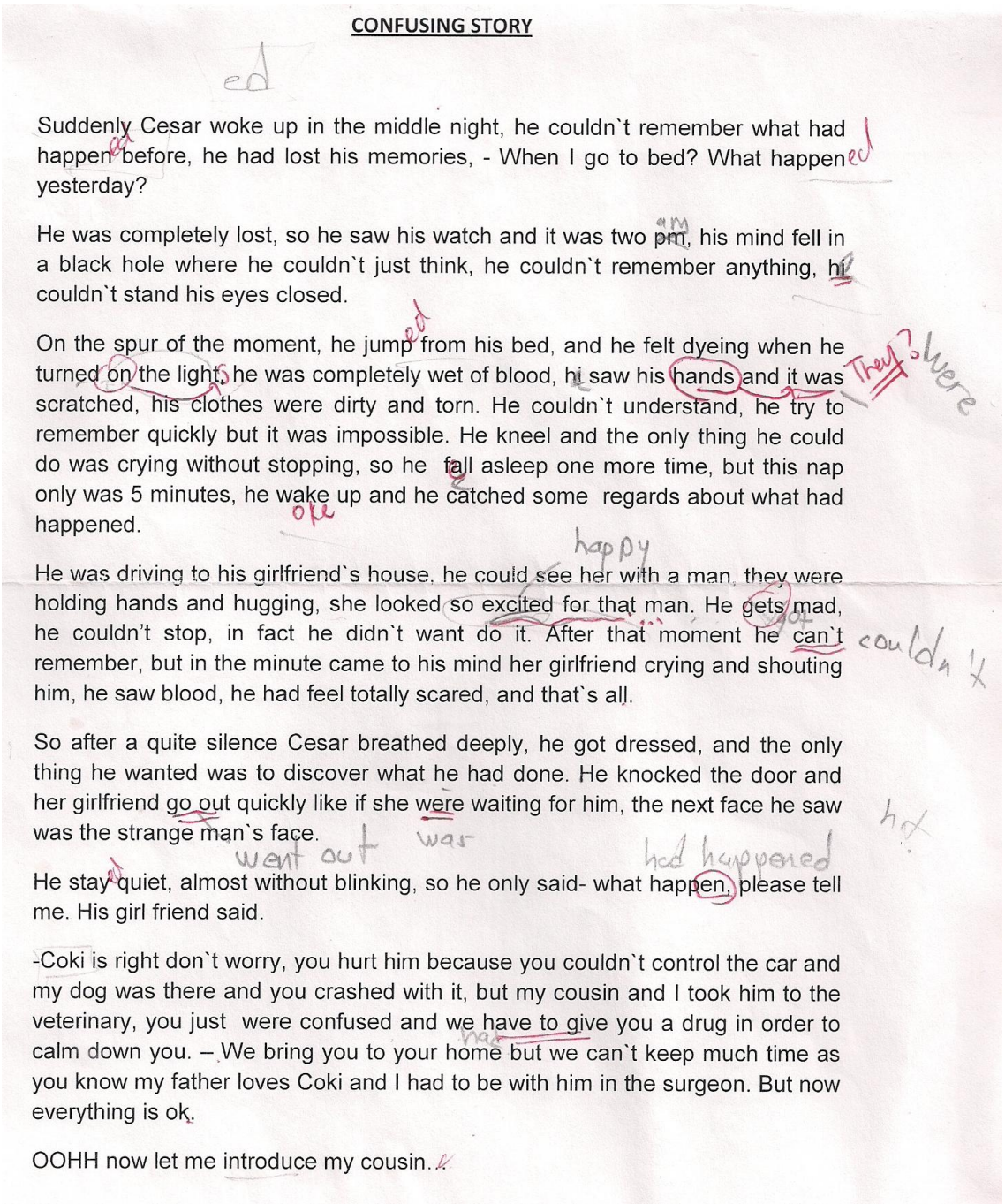
Increases ideas to write a better story than working alone. I

When learners were asked to read their partners drafts and revise them, it was noticeable how learners little by little became more autonomous and started marking and writing comments with more and more confidence. They helped each other asking questions and making suggestions. (Reflective journal)

Helps learners to raise awareness about their language level. I

It works if there is feedback from others. II

APPENDIX J



CONFUSING STORY

Suddenly Cesar woke up in the middle night, he couldn`t remember what had happen before, he had lost his memories, - When I go to bed? What happen yesterday?

He was completely lost, so he saw his watch and it was two pm, his mind fell in a black hole where he couldn`t just think, he couldn`t remember anything, hi couldn`t stand his eyes closed.

On the spur of the moment, he jump from his bed, and he felt dyeing when he turned on the light, he was completely wet of blood, hi saw his hands and it was scratched, his clothes were dirty and torn. He couldn`t understand, he try to remember quickly but it was impossible. He kneel and the only thing he could do was crying without stopping, so he fall asleep one more time, but this nap only was 5 minutes, he wake up and he catched some regards about what had happened.

He was driving to his girlfriend`s house, he could see her with a man, they were holding hands and hugging, she looked so excited for that man. He gets mad, he couldn't stop, in fact he didn`t want do it. After that moment he can`t remember, but in the minute came to his mind her girlfriend crying and shouting him, he saw blood, he had feel totally scared, and that`s all.

So after a quite silence Cesar breathed deeply, he got dressed, and the only thing he wanted was to discover what he had done. He knocked the door and her girlfriend go out quickly like if she were waiting for him, the next face he saw was the strange man`s face.

He stay quiet, almost without blinking, so he only said- what happen, please tell me. His girl friend said.

-Coki is right don`t worry, you hurt him because you couldn`t control the car and my dog was there and you crashed with it, but my cousin and I took him to the veterinary, you just were confused and we have to give you a drug in order to calm down you. – We bring you to your home but we can`t keep much time as you know my father loves Coki and I had to be with him in the surgeon. But now everything is ok.

OOHH now let me introduce my cousin.

This extract belongs to Ale's pre-test from the First cycle of implementation.

APPENDIX K

The holyday of a lifetime

A really nice holiday appears in your life and then you discover many nice things that you had never believed that could exist.

That year I didn't want to go out because I am a person who never goes out but I changed my mind when my best friend invited me to have a meeting with her family and they finally convinced me to go.
We went to the coast and there was a perfect weather, the sun shined softly on our skin, the sea was amazing and the people were very sociable. Suddenly, I met a man who is the most wonderful person I have never met, and now he is my husband. That day, we spent our time watching the sea, taking a soda and singing love melodies.

It was the holiday of a lifetime because I wonder what would have happen if I haven't met him.

This extract belongs to Karim's post-test from the First cycle of implementation.