The effects of self-monitoring and self-reflection in A1 adult learners in an English blended

learning environment

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this work to my former Professor from the University of Pamplona, Myriam Luna Cortés, who helped me increase my self-confidence, got me interested in the fields of autonomy and research, and whose enthusiasm for these issues had a lasting effect.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study was carried out with a group of distance online tutors taking a blended English course at the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia in Bucaramanga. The overall aim of this action research study was to analyse whether self-reflection and self-monitoring strategies could affect the learning experiences of a group of A1 adult learners in an English blended environment. This study was aimed at exploring the impact of the above-mentioned strategies as a component of a course that did not have any academic credits or completion requirements for the participants. The research design was guided by core definitions and specific types of self-assessment which were aligned with the foundations of blended learning within the pedagogical implementation. Data collected throughout the implementation included checklists, surveys, and students' journals. Results indicate that the self-assessment strategies affected participants in positive ways. Participants developed awareness of the language learning process and increased involvement in their individual learning process and progress by identifying specific areas for improvement, monitoring their learning and progress, and setting learning goals. Additionally, findings also reported students responded positively to scaffolded instruction and reflected on the value of self- assessment practices and a blended learning course modality.

Keywords: self-assessment, self-monitoring, self-reflection, learning process, blended learning

RESUMEN

Este estudio se llevó a cabo con un grupo de tutores que realizaron un curso de Inglés básico en la Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia, en Bucaramanga. El propósito de este estudio de investigación-acción era analizar si las estrategias de la auto reflexión y el auto monitoreo tenían un efecto en la experiencia de aprendizaje de un grupo de aprendices adultos en un ambiente de aprendizaje en modalidad combinada. El diseño de la investigación se basó en las definiciones básicas de la auto-evaluación, y dentro de la intervención pedagógica, éstas fueron ajustadas a los principios del aprendizaje en modalidad combinada. La información que se recogió incluyó encuestas, cuestionarios, y los diarios de los estudiantes.

Los resultados indican que las estrategias de auto-evaluación mencionadas afectaron a los estudiantes en la medida en que desarrollaron conciencia sobre el proceso de aprendizaje del Inglés y aumentaron su grado de participación en éste, al identificar áreas específicas de mejoramiento, monitorear su progreso y planear metas de aprendizaje. Adicionalmente, los resultados reportaron sus percepciones sobre la auto-evaluación y el ambiente de aprendizaje combinado, y su respuesta al andamiaje realizado durante la intervención.

Palabras Clave: auto-valoración, auto-monitoreo, auto-reflexión, proceso de aprendizaje, aprendizaje en modalidad combinada

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Chapter 1: Introduction

During the last decade shifts in language teaching and learning have been

addressing the need to implement learner-centred environments, moving from a teacher-

centred style to a learner-centred one (Geeslin, 2003; Tudor, 1996).   Within this approach,

students are expected to increase their opportunities to become actively involved in their

learning process. As a result, they assume a high level of responsibility in their learning;

they no longer rely on the teacher to tell them what, how, where, and when to think in the

learning situation (Sparrow, Sparrow, & Swan, 2000).

With this in mind, it is evident that teachers should find ways to "include students in

the process of setting goals and taking responsibility for learning outcomes while at the

same time maintaining a consistent curriculum" (Geeslin, 2003, p. 857). Central to this

new paradigm, the concept of self-assessment has emerged as a relevant component in self-

directed learning; self regulated learning and autonomous language learning (Dickinson,

1987; Harris, 1997; O'Malley & Valdez, 1996). Consequently, self-assessment comes

under the umbrella of learner-centred classrooms (Huba & Freed, 2000).

Self-assessment has been described as "useful information about students'

expectations and needs, their problems and worries, how they feel about their own learning

process, their reactions to the materials and methods being used, what they think about the

course in general" (Harris & McCann, 1994, p. 36). In addition, self-assessment allows a

bi-directional flow of information in which both teacher and student are involved in the

progress of students' learning (Donato, 2000). When it comes to benefits derived from

self-assessment, several scholars have shown that self-assessment practices in the language

classroom lead to student involvement in the learning process, learner autonomy, increased

motivation, development of study skills, and a fostering of life-long learning (Geeslin,

2003; Wenden, 2001). Self-assessment also helps learners monitor their individual progress

by allowing them to know how they are doing in their learning (Harris, 1997).

This new paradigm shift for language teaching has become increasingly popular.

Issues such as a learner-centred environment and learner autonomy are current topics of

discussion in the English language teaching community in Colombia. These issues have

been addressed in different lectures and with teacher training programmes; however, there

is not a wide range of studies on the field of self-assessment in the local context. This is

still an area that requires further research and dissemination as well as specific training for

both teachers and students. Nevertheless, the few studies that have been done in the area of

self-assessment report classroom experiences from both non-formal education and

university levels. These experiences, in the researcher's view, contribute to the justification

of this project (Alvarez & Muñoz, 2007; Arciniegas, 2008; Sierra, 2003).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This research project was carried out during the first term of 2011 with a group of

adult learners working as distance tutors (teachers or instructors) at Universidad Nacional

Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD hereafter) in Bucaramanga, Colombia. They registered for

an Elementary English course using a blended learning modality that was offered to the

teaching and administrative staff. The researcher decided to use blended learning as the

mode of instruction due to a number of reasons inherent to the context and population,

which will be described below.

To begin with, most of these learners had previously taken Basic English courses

delivered fully online or face-to-face, and by the time the current project started, some of

them had already completed an English virtual course offered by the School of Education,

as part of a training programme in UNAD. In this latter experience, participants reported

that they lacked opportunities for further face-to-face interaction, as these courses were

fully online and did not provide synchronous online encounters. At the same time,

considering that the institution is moving towards reinforcing online education and stepping

forward to e-learning, offering a face-to-face course would not fit the institution's aims and

standards. Therefore, the researcher considered that a blended learning course would be the

most convenient methodology for these learners, especially given that they could not make

it to class every day due to their busy schedules. Hence, this modality would provide

participants with significant opportunities to work in different tasks and increase their

exposure and practice in the target language in both online and face-to-face encounters. In

this way, participants would think of their own progress in different aspects such as face-to-

face class participation, online class participation, and competencies in language skills, as

well as their strengths, weaknesses, and reactions towards the language learning process in

general.

On a closer look at blended learning, Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal (2004) claim

that the pedagogical approach of blended learning combines the effectiveness and

socialization opportunities of the classroom with the technologically enhanced active

learning possibilities of the online learning environment. They claim that blended learning

is within the same umbrella framework of learner-centred focus: it provides learner-centred

instruction, increases learners' interaction and engagement, and integrates formative and

summative assessments for students and teachers.   As for the benefits of blended language

learning, Schmidt (2007) highlights that this approach promotes active and engaged

learning while facilitating self-directed and regulated learning in online phases. At the same

time, it offers space for face-to-face interaction with tutors and peers.

This course was actually conceived as a pilot project in the university, and within

this context, participants who decided to enrol would be given a certificate of attendance

and completion; the course itself did not have any academic credits or completion

requirements as established by the university.   An initial survey aimed at building a

learners' profile from participants showed some of their perceptions that were relevant

when defining the topic of this project.   To begin with, most participants considered

themselves autonomous learners and also valued self-evaluation as an important component

of any learning process (see Appendix 1). This is by all means expected, since they have

been working as tutors in a distance education university, hence, they are familiar with the

roots of autonomous learning, a key factor in this educational context. However, they had

been assessed through traditional assessment procedures, in which assessment, an external

activity usually carried out only by the teacher, was usually focused on receiving scores and

grades with little feedback during the process and no evidence of individual formative

assessment. Thus, preliminary information allowed the researcher to focus the teaching

practice on providing students with a learner-centred classroom environment and helping

them have a higher degree of involvement in their learning process by allowing them to

monitor their individualised progress in the language (Gardner, 1999). To do this, students

should be given the opportunity to explore the concept of self-assessment as part of the

required learning skills needed to develop in the language learning process. Indeed, they

needed to get involved in a proactive assessment process, given that they would not study

towards a final grade or required certificate of approval. Therefore, these participants

needed to consider their skills and needs on their own and think about the strengths and

weaknesses of their class work without worrying about a passing score or about what their

tutor or other students in the class think about their progress.

1.2 Research Question

When designing the course, the researcher decided to implement specific student

self-assessment strategies: self-reflection and self-monitoring. Self-assessment strategies

were analysed to see if they had an effect on the learning experience of participants in a

blended English course. Consequently, the following research question addresses the

relationship among the different constructs that support this study:

To what extent do self-monitoring and self-reflection strategies affect the learning

experience of a group of A1 adult learners in an English blended learning environment?

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives, which aimed to determine and analyse how self-monitoring

and self-reflection strategies affect the learning experience of adult learners in a blended

learning environment, are as follows:

General Objective:

To determine whether self-monitoring and self-reflection strategies affect the learning experience of a group of adult learners in a blended language learning environment.

Specific Objectives:

To analyse the impact of self-monitoring and self-reflection strategies on learners' ability to self-assess their own language learning process in a blended learning environment.

To identify students' reactions towards the implementation of self-assessment as a component of an adult English blended course.

1.4 Rationale

Learners who are encouraged to reflect on and monitor their progress can develop the capacity to identify their strengths and weaknesses and direct their study to areas that require improvement (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). Consequently, by including self-assessment as a key component of a language course, learners are given frequent opportunities to monitor their progress and improvement in their learning process, rather than focusing on passing grades or placement tests. As Blanche (1998) points out, students need to know "what their abilities are, how much progress they are making and what they can (or cannot yet) do with the skills they have acquired" (p. 75).

Since both learners and teachers can benefit from a formative assessment experience, teachers should incorporate self-assessment as a regular component in any academic course. Moreover, according to Boud (2000), self -assessment supports lifelong learning. Skills of self-assessment are developed progressively over the course of an undergraduate degree; students are prepared for lifelong learning by the support of a model of higher education. In this case, self-assessment could have a positive effect on students taking an English course in a new learning environment. Learners would reflect on their progress and process through both learning scenarios: the face-to-face encounters and the online sessions.   In this way, combining a blended environment and self-assessment strategies is an innovative approach in this specific local context.

This research report is divided into six main chapters. The first chapter presents an overview of this study and the reasons for the selected topic. Chapter Two describes the main constructs that this study encloses and the corresponding literature that supports the theoretical framework.   The third chapter explains the type of study, the context in which it was developed, the participants, and the data collection instruments and procedures. Chapter Four presents the pedagogical intervention and implementation. Chapter Five describes data analysis and findings. Chapter Six includes the conclusions and limitations from this project and Chapter Seven presents the pedagogical interventions and further research for study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This framework will provide a review of the literature on self-assessment and its link to self-regulation, the main constructs involved in this study. It will address two specific strategies: self-monitoring and self-reflection. It will also examine the concept and nature of blended learning environments, the modality in which this study took place. Finally, some similar studies carried out in the areas of self-assessment and blended learning will be reviewed.

2.1   Self-assessment

Self-assessment belongs to the broad area of educational assessment. Assessment in English Language Teaching (ELT) focuses mainly on data gathering and placing a value on something (Burhan, 2009). Through assessment, teachers aim to discover what learners know and can do at a certain stage of the learning process. Within this broad area, there are two types of assessment, formative and summative. Formative assessment refers to an ongoing process of collecting information about students' performance through various techniques. Its purpose is "to further the education process rather than to decide on a grade" (Spafford, Pesce, & Grosser, 1998, p. 108). Summative assessment, on the other hand, aims to assess learning at the end of a unit, term, year, or course, and does not necessarily provide feedback into the next round of teaching; it is used primarily to make decisions for grading (Hillier, 2002; Gipps, 1994). According to Hargreaves (2005), formative assessment allows learners to take charge of their own learning and to adapt their own

habits and approaches. They are also provided with opportunities to practice skills

individually and collectively as part of the learning process, and particularly to exercise,

discuss, and reflect on qualitative judgments about the success of their practice. In this

regard, Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) conceive self-assessment as a formative type of

assessment in that it should not be a matter of determining one's own grade. Instead, it

intends to "identify areas of strength and weakness in one's work in order to make

improvements and promote learning" (p. 1).

        Traditionally, teachers have been responsible for students' assessment in acquiring

language skills; however, there has been a growing interest in the use of self-assessment to

allow learners to assess their own learning. Therefore, the concept of self-assessment is

part of new trends in language teaching and learning, that have focused on new approaches

to moving from teacher-centred to learner-centred classrooms by increasing learners'

involvement in the learning process (Bachman, 2000; Harris, 1997; Huba & Freed, 2002;

Strong-Krause, 2000). Indeed, among the alternative means of assessment, self- and peer-

assessment have attracted much attention in recent years because of the growing emphasis

on learner independence and autonomy (Sambell, McDowell, & Sambell, 2006).   Under

the traditional paradigm that usually considers evaluation as a unidirectional process, self-

assessment allows for a bi-directional flow of information in which both teacher and

student are involved in the progress of students' learning (Donato, 2000).

    Self-assessment has also been defined as "an appraisal by an individual of his or her

own work or learning processes" (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996, p. 240).   On closer

examination, Harris and McCann (1994) describe self-assessment as "useful information

about students' expectations and needs, their problems and worries, how they feel about

their own (learning) process, their reactions to the materials and methods being used, what they think about the course in general" (p. 36). According to M. Oscarson (1989), self-assessment is what students see from their own perspectives as they self-monitor their learning practice and their level of knowledge and performance. In this way, self-assessment does not consist of having students assess themselves in the form of grades; rather it is a process of continuous feedback by students on their own progress to help both the student and the teacher.

When it comes to potential pitfalls in regards to self-assessment, the most obvious concern is the issue of reliability. As Gardner (2000) points out, there has been discussion about whether self-assessment is reliable. In his view, when assessments are to be used for accreditation, reliability is evidently important. However, when used for individual monitoring or progress, as in the case of this study, absolute reliability may be of less importance. In any case, Gardner (2000) considers that this pitfall can be neutralized when teachers facilitate self-assessment by raising learners' awareness of the benefits of self-assessment, providing guidance on conducting self-assessment, and helping learners understand the significance of results.

As for the use of self-assessment, Brown (2001) identifies five types of self-assessment and peer assessment:

- Assessment of a specific performance, in which a student self-monitors in either oral or written production and takes an evaluation of his/her performance. It may consist of filling checklists that rate performance on a defined scale.

- Indirect assessment of general competence aims to evaluate a general ability; it may cover a lesson, a module, or even a whole term of course work. It includes scaled rating sheets, questionnaires, checklists, and journals.

- Metacognitive assessment is focused on setting goals and maintaining motivation to pursue and accomplish learning goals. It can take the form of journal entries, checklists, and cooperative pair or group planning.

- Socioaffective assessment examines affective factors in the learning process, such as motivation, anxiety, emotions, confidence, etc. This assessment uses specific checklists and questionnaires.

- Student-generated tests engage students in the process of constructing tests themselves; as a result, students increase motivation, autonomy, and interaction in the classroom.

Similarly, several researchers have identified two types of self-assessment according to their purpose: (1) performance-oriented self-assessment, and (2) development-oriented self-assessment (Bachman, 2000; Haughton & Dickinson, 1988; M. Oscarson, 1989). A basic distinction between performance-oriented self-assessment and development-oriented self-assessment is that the former typically samples the test takers' performance at one particular point in time, whereas the latter assesses the participants for a particular period to identify changes or tendencies of development over time.

Indeed, as self-assessment includes both reflection and evaluation of one's work, it helps to develop responsibility for learning, and this is essential in assisting students to become independent learners who develop control over their own learning. As Dodd

(1995) suggests, self-assessment is the best way to promote understanding and learning;

students who feel ownership for a task and believe they can make a difference become

more engaged in their own learning process and enhance self-efficacy, the belief that they

can successfully complete future learning tasks (Bandura, 1997).

A review of the concept of self-assessment is displayed in the following diagram,

designed by Sanchez (2011), based on the above definitions.
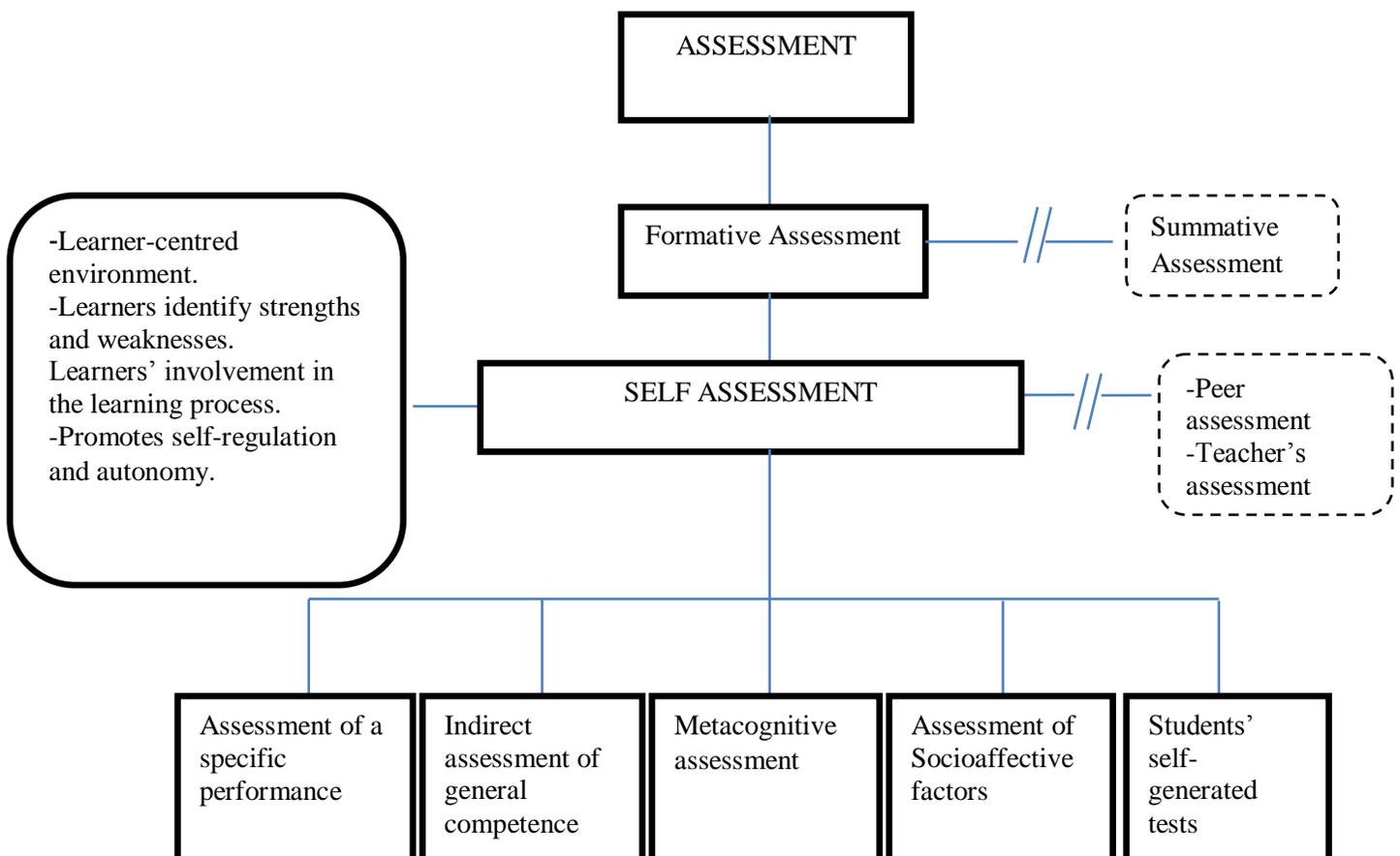
Figure 1. Self-assessment defined (Diagram designed by Sanchez, 2011)

2.2   Self-Regulation

Self-assessment is a core element of self-regulation because it involves awareness of the goals of a task and checking one's progress toward them. As a result of self-assessment, both self-regulation and achievement can increase (Schunk, 2003). Self-regulation, a central concept in social cognitive theory, refers to an individual's use of three cognitive processes toward goal attainment: self-monitoring, self-judgment, and self-reaction (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, self-assessment is also linked to self-regulation, as self-regulated learners "monitor their own performance and evaluate their progress and accomplishments" (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996, p. 5). When students self-regulate, they "have control over their learning, they can decide how to use the resources available to them within or outside the classroom" (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996, p. 5). Bandura (1986) specified three important sub processes of self-regulation:

- Self-observation: Attention and monitoring of specific aspects of one's own behaviour.

- Self-judgment: Self-evaluation of current performance toward a goal with a standard.

- Self-reaction: Evaluative responses to one's own performance outcomes.

Learners self-regulate their learning by following personal observations, making a judgment of their progress toward their goals or standards, and then modifying their behaviours accordingly so as to attain goals (Bandura, 1986). Likewise, a social cognitive perspective on self-regulation addresses the interrelationship between the

learner, the learners' behaviour, and the social environment (Bandura, 1997). Therefore,

self-regulation may lead to an understanding of how successful learners function in very

specific learning environments. Bandura's theory emphasizes that there are reciprocal

interactions among personal factors such as cognitions, emotions, behaviours, and

environmental conditions. These elements can change during learning and so should be

monitored. Thus, when self-monitoring, there can be additional changes in strategies,

cognitions, and behaviours. While Bandura proposes a social cognitive perspective,

Vygotsky's (1986) theory of development provides a social constructivist account of

self-regulation. Within this framework, people learn to self-regulate through control of

their own actions. Self-regulated learning reflects processes that are valued and taught

in the culture of the student's context, and is affected by the zone of proximal

development (ZPD), or the amount of learning that is given by the proper instructional

conditions. (Katz & Earl, 2006).

According to Paris and Paris (2001), self-assessment involves all three areas of self-

regulated learning: cognitive, motivational, and affective; therefore, students can evaluate

their levels of understanding, personal interests, and effort and strategies used in a task. In

addition, Schunk and Ertmer (2000) suggest that periodic, but not too frequent, self-

evaluation complements learning goals and helps students maintain high levels of self-

efficacy. It is important to balance the opportunities to self-assess while receiving feedback

on progress so that the assessment experience can be more effective for learners.

Student self-assessment also contributes to the development of meta-cognitive skills

that help learners develop the capacity to identify their strengths and weaknesses and direct

their study to areas that require improvement (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). Hence, students reflect on their own accomplishments, monitor their progress while learning, and evaluate their understanding against other standards of performance. In other words, learners are able to identify criteria or standards to be used and make judgments about the extent to which their work meets these criteria (Boud et al., 1985). To do so, they need to develop strategies, such as self-monitoring and self-reflection.

2.3   Self-monitoring and self-reflection

Self-monitoring has to do with the awareness of and the ability to reflect on one's own learning. This in turn promotes learners' responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to become autonomous learners instead of relying on teachers or peers for judgment (Blanche, 1988). Additionally, as Coleman and Webber (2000) claim, self-monitoring is a process in which "the students record data regarding their own behaviour for the purpose of changing its rate" (p. 103).

The literature concerned with self-regulation and self-regulated learning uses the term self-reflection to define the process that is part of the cyclic self-regulatory process. Within this framework, self-regulation is composed of forethought, performance, and self-reflection. In regards to reflection, it is a strategy that helps students think of their experiences, reflect on their practice and understand that learning is a process and not just an event that happens and finishes (Baldwin, 2000).

According to Oscarson (2009), a more reflective approach to learning helps people respond and cope better in different situations in life. In her view, reflection is an "analytical tool the students can use to better be capable of understanding their own

learning through self-assessment practices" (p. 35). However, despite the fact that

reflection is and has been a key concept for decades, a fast changing world forces people to

make decisions without the habit of thinking critically (Dyke, 2006, p. 105). This is

evident in our local context, where students are not always encouraged to reflect on their

learning process; therefore, they do not develop reflective skills that foster lifelong

learning. As Velzen (2002) points out, most students do not reflect spontaneously on their

learning processes; thus, since they need to be prompted to reflect, teachers need to foster

learners' reflection within and beyond class activities. In this regard, there are classroom

practices aimed at fostering reflection, and these usually consist of diaries, learning

journals, learning logs, and portfolios where reflections on teaching and learning are

recorded. These activities and materials need to guide students toward monitoring to what

extent they have developed the language skills they are acquiring. This could be done by

reviewing unit goals and checking off what they have learned. In this way, students reflect

on their own progress and articulate what they have learned or need more work on.

Furthermore, when students practice monitoring their own learning and analyzing it in

relation to what is expected, they eventually develop the skills to make consistent and

reliable interpretations of their learning (Katz & Earl 2006).

There have been various ways to encourage reflection in language learning. Nunan

(1996) conducted an action research study involving *guided reflection*. His students kept a

journal in which they completed sentences related to what they had studied and their

difficulties and learning plans. Matsumoto (1996) used student diaries, questionnaires, and

interviews to carry out her research and help students reflect on their learning strategies and

language learning. By the same token, Pickard (1996) used questionnaires and follow-up

interviews to allow students to reflect on their use of learning strategies outside of the class,

and Santos (1997) used portfolios to encourage learner reflection in a writing class.

Being able to monitor learning and reflect on the learning process may become

more helpful when individuals start learning in a new environment. A review on a

particular learning modality in which this study took place is further described in the

section below.

2.4   Blended Learning

Various definitions are given for blended or hybrid learning. Some scholars have

referred to blended learning as one of the top ten emergent trends in the knowledge delivery

industry (Finn, 2002, as cited in Cuesta, 2011) and also as "the single greatest unrecognized

trend in higher education" (Young, 2002, p. 33). In essence, blended learning refers to the

combination of conventional-classroom instruction and online learning, combining the best

of onsite and online learning environments (Graham, 2005). According to Driscoll (2002),

blended learning involves the combination of any form of instructional technology with

face-to-face instructor-led training and Web-based technologies.

By the same token, Dziuban et al., (2004) claim that blended learning has a

pedagogical approach combining the effectiveness and socialization opportunities of the

classroom with the technologically enhanced active learning possibilities of the online

learning environment. According to their research, the emergence of new pedagogies that

place greater emphasis on moving from teacher-centred to learner-centred schemes, as well

as the use of new technologies, are enabling new models of teaching and learning. They

state that the online learning environment makes a link between the development of these

new models. Evidently, blended learning is coherent within the umbrella framework of

learner-centred focus in that it provides learner-centred instruction, increases learners'

interaction and engagement, and integrates formative and summative assessment for

students and teachers (Dziuban et al. 2004; Garrison and Kanuka, 2004).

It can be said that the blended learning model may have emerged from some

limitations observed in fully online learning (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003; Garrison &

Kanuka, 2004; Bonk et al., 2005).   Before conducting their study on the pedagogical

design of a blended course, Alberton, Eshet-Alkalai, and Precel (2009) found that some

studies reported limited success of online learning. The aspects that affected students'

online learning include the disadvantages of reading from a digital format, feelings of

loneliness and social detachment, and lack of cognitive and digital skills. Stark and Mandl

(2003) contend that students are often not prepared for the demands of online learning

environments, and lack sufficient metacognitive abilities to successfully reflect, control, or

manage their own learning activities. In the researcher's experience working in the field of

online education, many of these reasons prove to be observable. Not all learners who start

distance online education programmes manage to succeed in this type of education. Some

simply cannot adapt to online interaction and do not efficiently organize and plan their time

to arrange conditions that favour online learning.

However, there cannot be comparisons between onsite instruction and online

learning to determine which type of learning environment is better or worse, since it is

more a question of pedagogy than of technology (Twigg, 2001). When considering the

effectiveness of instruction, it is much more revealing to examine how a particular

environment facilitates the learning process instead of depending exclusively on technology

(Milliron & Miles, 2000).

As for blended learning particularly, Dziuban et al. (2004) claim that it differs from

traditional distance learning because the learning process does not occur entirely through

online environments. Furthermore, it has become an alternative format for offering

instruction that attempts to bridge the gap between face-to-face (F2F) and online

instruction. Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) sustain that the main point in using blended

approaches is to create a harmonious balance between face-to-face interaction and online

access to knowledge. This balance depends on the needs of the course and different

strengths and weaknesses of both traditional instruction and online teaching methods.

With regard to the design of blended courses, Garrison and Kanuka (2004) claim

that blended learning environments are complex in nature and demand a rethinking and

redesigning of the teaching and learning relationship based on the specific needs of the

contextual situation and the profile of the participants. Because of this, "no two blended

learning designs are identical" (ibid p. 97). Likewise, it can be said that there is no ultimate

formula for blending the online and F2F learning components. Course designers may face

challenges when trying to achieve the best proportion in any learning situation (Dentl &

Motsching-Pitrik, 2005; Rossett, Douglis, & Frazee, 2003).

According to Graham (2005), there are four types of blending: activity-level,

programme-level, institutional-level, and course-level. Blending at the activity level occurs

when a learning activity contains both face-to face and computer-mediated elements.

Blending at a programme level often entails one of two models: a model in which the

participants choose a mix between face-to-face courses and online courses or one in which

the combination between the two is prescribed by the programme. Institutional-level

blending refers to the arrangements made by the institution, for example by allowing

students to have face-to-face classes at the beginning while ending the course with online

activities. Finally, a course-level blending refers to a combination of distinct face-to-face

and computer-mediated activities used as part of a course. Within this approach, activities

are sequenced chronologically, providing learners with equal opportunities for learning

experience. As Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) state, blending online and face-to-face

learning activities means the same learners participate in face-to-face instruction first and

then follow up with online activities.

Regarding the benefits of blended language learning, Schmidt (2007) highlights that

it promotes active and engaged learning by facilitating self-directed and regulated learning

in online phases. At the same time, it offers space for face-to-face interaction with tutors

and peers. Schmidt also highlights that another advantage of blended learning is that it

provides learners with adequate support and flexibility that is sometimes not found in

traditional classroom instruction or fully online learning. However, despite the advantages

blended learning offers, some disadvantages are to be acknowledged. According to Bonk

(2005), learners may have trouble managing time, course requirements, and technological

issues, especially at the beginning. Also, the blended learning experience can be

overwhelming or too novel for some learners. Others, including teachers and learners, may

be resistant to change. Similarly, blended learning requires appropriate organization and

planning. The absence of organization and planning could lead to an unfair integration of the delivery modes. The researcher agrees with these considerations based on her novice experience in using a blended learning approach. The researcher found that blended learning is a more demanding methodology in terms of preparation of different delivery modes. It was also observed that the necessary scaffolding interventions must take place so all learners move appropriately between online and face-to-face sessions, avoiding confusion or disorientation.

All things considered, the constructs linked in this framework correspond to the current shifts in language learning addressing a learner-centred environment. This section provided the theory that allowed the interpretation of data collected during the implementation. The research question was formulated in response to how the above mentioned self-assessment strategies affect the learning experience of a group of adult learners in a blended learning environment. Finally, the following diagram shows the links existing among the main constructs of this research study.
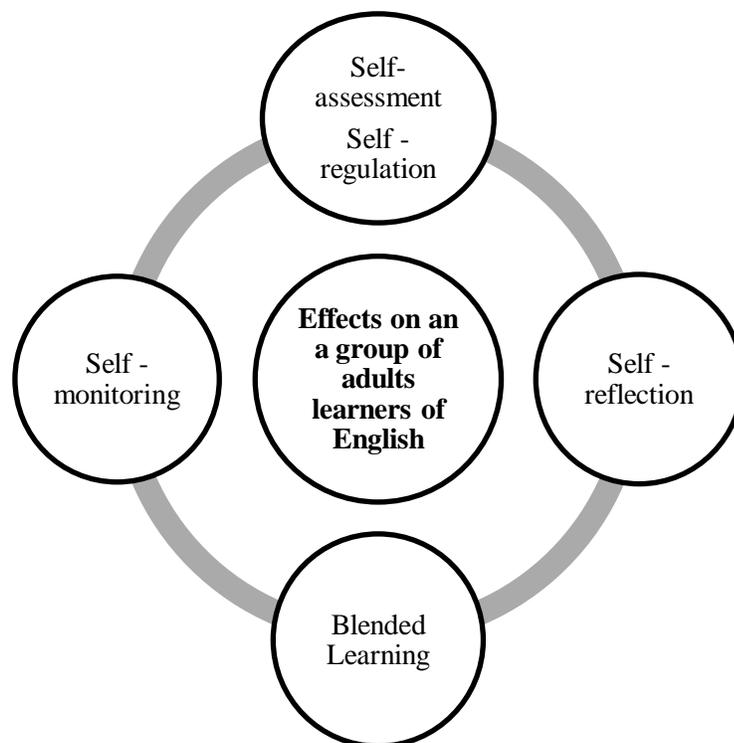
Figure 2. Constructs connected in this research study.

2.5   State of the Art

Having explored the main constructs related to the topic of this study, research

studies done in the field of self-assessment and blended learning at international and local

levels are presented below.

2.5.1   Self assessment

An emphasis on self-assessment coincides with the Council of Europe's concern to

promote autonomous lifelong learning (Little & Perclová, 2001). In this regard, the

European Language Portfolio (ELP) was developed by the Language Policy Division of the

Council of Europe to support the development of learner autonomy, plurilingualism, and

intercultural awareness and competence, among other aims (Council of Europe, 2006). The

ELP consists of a document that allows users to record their language learning

achievements and their experience of learning and using a foreign language. One relevant

component of this document is named the Language Passport, which presents six levels of

communicative proficiency defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for

Languages. These levels are summarized for the five skills of listening, reading, spoken

interaction, spoken production, and writing in a self-assessment grid. The descriptors in the

different cells of the self-assessment grid are expanded into checklists of tasks that can be

used to plan, monitor, and evaluate learning. Self-assessment is central to the ELP. Not

only does the *Language Passport* deal with self assessment, another component named *The*

Biography promotes self-assessment by helping users set learning goals. To do so learners

need to regularly assess their own progress and select material for inclusion in the dossier.

A larger research project in the field of self-assessment was titled *Self-assessment of*

Learning: the Case of Languages (SALL) (A. Oscarson, 2009), supported by the Swedish

Research Council, 2001-2003. Its general aim was to investigate the role of self-assessment

procedures in English as a Foreign Language upper secondary classrooms centred on

productive (oral and written) language skills. One objective of the project was to investigate

whether students' self-assessment ability could be better taken into account as a

complementary assessment resource in reaching broader educational goals of autonomy and

independence in learning. It sought to increase knowledge of the results with which

language students make independent assessments of their attained ability levels and their

ongoing learning (p. 14-15).

There is evidence of a growing interest in implementing self-assessment practices

and especially in the design of self-assessment tools, such as checklists and rubrics, and

educational web sites have been created with this purpose. For example, the Online English

Language Center Project at the University of Oregon aims at introducing educators and

learners to different learning resources. It focuses mainly on providing teachers with

resources related to English language teaching with various assessment guides and rubrics.

Previous research done on self-assessment of learning and on foreign language

learning will be now presented. First, significant studies done with different populations at

a global level will be reviewed and then local projects will be reported.

Many studies focus on learners' performance rather than on teachers as learners and

their learning skills. However, Van Eekehen et al., (2005) conducted a study that aimed at

discovering if teachers self-regulate their learning experiences. A group of 15 experienced

teachers from three different colleges were studied. Data was collected through interviews,

diaries, and teacher learning episodes that were analysed using a phenomenographic

method. Results indicate that teachers do not always self-regulate their learning, but they do

self -regulate their teaching practice. They also found that time management appeared to be

the most inhibiting factor for most of the teachers. In addition, with respect to the effects of

this study, all teachers reported that they became more conscious of their learning. This

study is significant for this research project due to the context in which it was done and its

focus. Teachers are used to requiring learners to be responsible for their learning process,

however, the nature and implications of self-regulated learning arise when they assume the

role of learners, showing that even teachers find it challenging to engage in reflective

learning.

On a postgraduate level, Srimavin and Darasawang (2004) conducted a small-scale research with the MA programme in Resource Based English Language Learning at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. It intended to investigate if journal writing enabled MA participants to develop self-assessment. Findings reported that participants tried to follow guidelines in writing their journals but there was little evidence of either deep reflection or self-assessment in the journals.   The researchers considered this might have been because there was no reaction from the tutor about what was written in the journals. Participants submitted journals as an exercise where they answered guiding questions rather than as an opportunity to assess their own learning.   This study coincides with the above project in that it shows that some learners, no matter their academic profile, fail to engage in reflective learning, which may be due to cultural and contextual reasons that do not enable opportunities for reflection. Likewise, it also shows that self-assessment and reflection need to be fostered and accompanied by further guidance and feedback from the course instructor.

In Saltourides' (n.d.) action research study, the effect learner-centred assessment had on young adults learning Modern Greek as a foreign language in a post-secondary setting was investigated. It aimed at exploring how self-assessment affected participants' perception of their language abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. As a result of implementing self-assessment in the curriculum, activities in the class became more communicative and learner-centred, in concordance with the social constructivist paradigm of learning.

By the same token, Smith (1997) investigated the attitudes toward self-assessment as an alternative measurement approach in an EFL classroom in Israel. It was focused on the

attitudes of learners toward self-assessment compared to teacher and examination grades.

Smith established that "pupils in 12th grade perceived self-assessment as having greater

validity than teacher assessment" (ibid, p. 2). In this way, students trusted their own

assessments best, claiming they knew more about their language competence even when

accepting summative examination results. Findings showed that the students also addressed

the risk of overrating their language competence in high-stakes situations. One of the

conclusions of this study is that self-assessment is just as valid as some traditional

assessment approaches, and is recommended as a complementary assessment method.

These studies clearly demonstrate that incorporating self-assessment allows learners to

have a higher level of involvement and that students' response to this implementation is

positive. Also, in both cases, self-assessment had a significant effect on the teaching

approach and students' autonomy by giving them the opportunity to speak up and

participate, to some extent, by redirecting a course and letting the teacher know their beliefs

and perceptions.

As for self-assessment in online learning environments, Castle and Mcguire (2010)

conducted a study on overall students' self-assessment of learning at a major online

university. They conducted a statistical analysis of students' self-evaluations, aiming to

discern the link between student self-assessment of learning and the teaching modality used

(online, hybrid, face-to-face). They found that students appeared to prefer a mixed

approach combining synchronous and asynchronous sessions. They also observed that the

instructor-student relationship was an important factor in student learning and could impact

student self-assessment of learning regardless of quality of the online course design. From

this study, it can be observed that students' preferences are in agreement with the multiple

benefits that a hybrid modality can offer. In addition, it shows to what extent teacher's rapport affects the learning process, so that teachers consider this when planning their lessons either in online or onsite instruction.

On a national level, the Ministry of Education of Colombia supports fostering autonomy in the educational context. It states that it is concerned with the development of the capacity that people and collectives have to self-direct, establish rules to live together, set goals and support each other to achieve these shared goals, and make decisions and self-regulate (Ministerio de Educación, 1998, p. 25). Consequently, there are some studies in the area of self-assessment that are worth mentioning due to their focus on autonomy and self-regulation.

To begin with, Arciniegas (2008) carried out a study with a high-beginner adult EFL class during a three-month cycle at Centro Colombo Americano, a language institute located in Bogotá, Colombia. It aimed at analyzing if the implementation of learning journals enabled students to achieve specific learning goals. Findings gave evidence that learners' reflections were fundamental for them to identify strengths and weaknesses in their class performance. Moreover, their reflections allowed them to decide what they needed to do to cope with difficult aspects of the language. The researcher concluded that students' learning process can be enhanced and made more meaningful by implementing the use of learning journals for reflection and self-assessment. Findings from this study indicate that self-assessment works better in specific learning contexts, for example, those in which students are intrinsically motivated toward learning.

Another local study in the field of self assessment was done by Sierra (2003), who

conducted an action research project aimed at developing student autonomy through the

implementation of self-assessment and learning strategies in an English course for

undergraduate students from different academic programmes in a public university. In her

implementation the researcher used student and teacher reflections, self-assessment

checklists, interviews, and two speaking tests to collect data. The data was related to

students' perspective and reflections of their linguistic and attitudinal problems concerning

their learning at the beginning of the course and their self-assessments on linguistic and

attitudinal aspects. Findings report that students' awareness of their role as learners was

raised and they were motivated to take more responsibility for their learning. They also

began to incorporate metacognitive strategies, such as planning and evaluation, into their

learning process.

Similarly, Alvarez and Muñoz (2007) conducted a study at a language centre in a

private university in Colombia. The study aimed at identifying similarities between

teachers' and students' ratings and to examine students' attitudes toward self-assessment as

a way to bring together the instructor's and the student's perceptions of evaluation.   Data

was collected from ninety-four students who were given training in self-assessment and

completed a self-assessment form in order to score themselves on different language

aspects. Students' scores were then correlated with teachers' scores using the Pearson

correlation coefficient. Results showed moderate to high correlations between teachers' and

students' self-evaluations. Additionally, students were also given a questionnaire that

examined their feelings about self-assessment. The majority of the students showed a

positive attitude towards self-assessment and found it especially valuable for raising their

awareness of the learning process.

The above studies make a meaningful contribution to teachers' understanding of

self-assessment and ways to introduce it in local classrooms. It is especially relevant to

highlight that the implementation of the latter two studies were done in conventional

classrooms with young and adult learners who studied English and had not completed

levels or courses required for graduation purposes. As Sierra (2003) observes: "In our

educational context most students are passive and are used to working only to get good

grades" because they devote more time to studying for their majors (p. 3). Therefore, the

intrinsic motivation toward learning English could have been low compared to the

participants of this research study. Nevertheless, in both studies learners' awareness was

raised. Thus, it is evident that when students are properly guided towards self-assessment,

they can modify their behaviour and become more involved in their own learning process.

In regards to the research carried out in the area of blended learning courses, some

relevant projects related to learning skills, course design, and learning achievement are

reviewed below.

2.5.2 Blended Learning

Ausburn (2004) conducted a research study to describe course design elements in a

course consisting of face-to-face instruction with the support of a web-based learning

environment. A sample of 67 adult learners was enrolled in five courses in a large state

university in the United States.   The data of the study were obtained through two sources:

research questionnaire and the Assessing the Learning Strategies of Adults (ATLAS) self-

test. The result of the study indicated that learners valued course designs containing

options, personalization, self-direction, variety, and a community. Also, they emphasized

the effectiveness of two-way communication with their classmates and instructor and they

benefited from frequent announcements and reminders available online from the instructor.

Another case study of blended learning was conducted by Akkoyunlu and Yılmaz

(2006) in order to investigate students' views on blended learning environments with

respect to their achievement level and frequency of participation in the forum. The results

of the study indicated that when students' achievement level and participation rate of the

forum increased, students expressed more positive views about a blended learning

environment. Also, students emphasized the significance of interaction and communication

in the effectiveness of online learning.

On a local level, the Colombian government has made a remarkable effort to include

ICTs in its plans and policies.   A law on Information and Communication Technology

(ICT) was issued in July of 2009, and aims to guarantee rights and responsibilities to any

Colombian with a fixed-line, mobile, or Internet service (Ley No. 3491-30, 2009). In

regards to the spread of ICT in the area of education, the Ministry of Education set up an

educational portal - Colombia Aprende - to provide information and knowledge to teachers,

families, researchers, and other users from primary, secondary and higher education (Paz,

2009). Thus, Colombian policies have been shaped to respond to citizens' needs in terms of

ICT use and appropriation, and so Colombian universities are trying to increase the use of

ICTs as part of their higher educational contexts.

Consequently, online learning and education have gradually emerged as important fields since the last decade. There has been a growing interest in providing students with access to new technologies, electronic magazines, virtual databases, and virtual learning platforms such as Blackboard and Moodle. As a result, some institutions are moving towards online education by offering online courses and programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as well as vocational training programmes. For example, the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia - UNAD – where this study took place. However, blended learning is being explored in different higher education institutions; several are incorporating the use of virtual learning environments along with face-to-face encounters in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (Lozano & Burgos, 2007). Examples of this include Universidad de La Sabana and Universidad Católica de Colombia, among others.

Though very little research on blended learning experiences has been done or disseminated in Colombia, there are two relevant projects related to implementing blended learning approaches in English courses at a university level in the country. First, Universidad Nacional de Colombia implemented the Virtual Alex Programme in order to respond to the increase in the demand of English courses by undergraduate students. This programme, which started in 2007 and is grounded on the notions of autonomy and collaborative work, is a blended programme consisting of online and face-to-face sessions. In addition, a substantial proportion of the content is delivered online; it typically uses online discussions and has some face-to-face meetings. Both online and face-to-face encounters require the development of specific activities that count towards final grades (Gonzalez, 2011).

Another significant project is Plan Umbrella, an independent learning programme carried out within the foreign languages department at La Sabana University. This programme was conceived as a flexible study option that provides a hybrid or blended environment to learn the language. Participants are undergraduate students of all levels in the foreign languages and cultures department who are required to attend face-to-face induction sessions, take a diagnostic test and develop an action plan, attend scheduled face-to-face counseling sessions, complete a specific number of hours of independent learning, and submit assigned activities. The programme aims to provide students with several learning options to develop language competencies as well as scaffold students towards autonomy by training them in strategies in language learning (Acero, 2009).

In summary, this chapter has taken a closer look at the main constructs that are associated with this research project. By the same token, relevant research that has been carried out locally and internationally in the areas of self-assessment and blended learning has been reviewed. The next chapter will describe the research design that is aligned with the preceding theoretical principles and studies from the literature review.

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1   Type of study

Qualitative research refers to the methods that enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena through observation and participant observation, interviews and questionnaires, documents and texts, and the researcher's impressions and reactions (Myers, 2009). One of these research methods is called action research, a procedure that has been proved valid and used in different fields such as education and humanities.

Action research introduces innovations in teaching and learning and has a clear approach that supports problem identification, action planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection. It has been defined as a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by teachers who want to improve their classroom situation (Sagor, 2005). In essence, action research empowers language teachers to enhance the quality of the educational experience for both themselves and their students; it is a perfect tool for isolated teachers to improve their classroom situation (Nunan, 1992; Schmuck, 1997).

By the same token, Cohen and Manion (1994) point out that action research is "a small scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention" (p. 186). Consequently, action research seemed to be suitable to this study because this study aimed at analyzing the effects of using self-assessment strategies in the learning experience of a group of adult learners in a blended learning environment. Data collected in the course of this action research project consisted of various non-observation data collection techniques (Burns, 2003).

3.2   Researcher's role

The researcher's role in this study is participant observer since the teacher was the

researcher and the observer. The researcher also entered the class context as the teacher

who was in charge of all stages in this study. According to Burns (2003), participant

observation involves entering the research context and observing oneself as well as others

in that context; in this case, the researcher became a member of the context and participated

in its culture and activities. Additionally, the research design included the researcher's own

observations and reflections when trying to articulate theories, monitor data collection

procedures, and share findings.

3.3   Context

This research study took place at   Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia -

UNAD in Bucaramanga. This public distance university was founded in 1981 and currently

delivers different academic programmes at different levels, as well as undergraduate and

postgraduate degrees. It has addressed various learning needs of a growing number of

people from different socio-economic backgrounds in the country who cannot attend face-

to-face instruction. It provides distance education programmes through the use of

pedagogical tools and virtual learning environments. Within the context of distance and

online education, it also aims to promote autonomous learning and collaborative work and

its philosophy of learning is grounded on social-constructivist principles of learning

(Proyecto Académico Pedagógico Solidario PAPS, 2008). Based on its socio-cultural and

national context, the university has fifty-nine branches throughout the country that are organized in eight regions or zones. It also has one branch in Florida, U.S., which offers distance undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Distance students and tutors at UNAD are based in different regions of the country; hence, geographical locations do not represent limitations when it comes to attending courses or tutoring, as most courses are currently delivered online. The university initially used traditional distance education instruction; however, since 2006 it has offered most courses online. At present, the institution is reinforcing the use of online learning environments and is moving toward e-learning schemes.

Regarding the teaching of English, the university currently delivers foreign language instruction through virtual learning environments. At the same time, it provides face-to-face support to undergraduate learners who are taking online English courses. For the most part, the institution applies the same model for teacher training programmes in different educational areas. When it comes to language learning, improving foreign language competence of academic staff has become one of the aims of the institution, as stated in its Development Plan (2010). For this reason, last year the institution supplied tutors and administrative staff with online English courses offered by the school of education. Two hundred seventy tutors based in different regions and university branches in Colombia registered for these online courses. In Bucaramanga, fifteen tutors registered for basic and intermediate online English courses, which provided participants access to specific software with content, online assignments, questionnaires, readings, forums for collaborative work, and individual pronunciation assignments.

3.4   Participants

There were eight students registered for this course but due to their time constraints in attending and completing all course assignments, the sample for this project consisted of four participants between 32 and 45 years old. Three of them were engineers and the other was a professional in business administration. By the time this study was carried out, two of them had already finished a master's degree and the other two were about to complete a similar degree. Their master's programmes were related to the areas of online education, educational evaluation, and business administration. Three participants were tutors working with different online courses offered by the schools of engineering and administration. The other participant, who had also been a tutor, was currently one of the campus administrators of the university's online platform. They had altogether more than five years working as distance tutors at UNAD; therefore, they had experience in both distance and online tutoring, and had already been trained in virtual learning environments as part of requirements issued by the institution for the teaching staff.

Overall, their English level corresponds to A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), though two of them demonstrated a higher competence in reading and writing skills. They all needed to reinforce listening and speaking skills by having further exposure to language input and increasing their oral use of English. In addition, learners needed to be guided on the use of learning strategies as part of instruction in class and required further practice on listening, repetition, note-taking, elaboration, and

inference strategies. Likewise, they also needed to devote more time to reviewing and practicing the target language outside the classroom.

The predominant learning styles of the participants were visual and auditory, and they liked working with videos and online resources, as well as working in groups. They had different intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels towards learning English. Most wanted to learn English due to the need of understanding and using the language for professional purposes. In regards to their prior learning experiences, apart from studying the foreign language at school, one of them had recently taken basic English courses at a language centre in town and another participant had also taken a couple of basic English courses after school. The other two had studied English as a subject within their master's programme. In addition, two of them had recently completed a basic online course offered by the institution.

As for their affective needs, the majority of learners needed to increase their confidence to use oral English, as well as their self-efficacy. In addition, they dealt with time management constraints due to work and personal schedules, which to some extent become a challenging issue for some of them.

Participants had two face-to-face sessions on weekdays. Each lesson lasted 90 minutes. The course also included one asynchronous online session on the weekends that lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. The schedule for onsite instruction was approved by the university's director, which means full-time tutors were allowed to miss one hour from work in order to attend these sessions, which were held in the university. This course did not have any academic credit; it was not compulsory or part of the institution's training

programme. Instead, it was a pilot project carried out by the researcher. A proposal was made to offer an extension course to the academic and administrative staff and was approved by the director of the university.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This research project conformed to ethical procedures to meet professional integrity and interests of subjects (Burns, 2003). Therefore, participants were informed about the topic and objectives of this project. Additionally, they were given a consent letter clarifying participation in this study was voluntary and anonymity would be maintained (Appendix 2). In addition, a consent letter was also signed by the director of the university to give permission for classroom observation, given that the researcher also did two assessed lessons as part of her teaching practice for the In Service Certificate of English Language Teaching (ICELT) training course.

3.6   Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments aimed to collect information on students' self-monitoring and self-reflection and analyse to what extent they could affect the learning experience of this group of students in a blended learning environment.

Instruments were designed based on the focus of this research study, in that learners would not necessarily assess specific performance on particular tasks, instead they would

self-assess their learning process in general. As a starting point, the researcher guided her

study on two core definitions of self-assessment. First, M. Oscarson (1989) considers that

self-assessment refers to what students see from their own perspectives when they self-

monitor their learning practice and their level of knowledge and performance to obtain

information about their learning process. Similarly, Harris and McCann conceive self-

assessment as "useful information about students' expectations and needs, their problems

and worries, how they feel about their own (learning) process, their reactions to the

materials and methods being used, what they think about the course in general" (1994, p.

36).

    In addition, of relevance to this study are the specific types of self-assessment

proposed by some scholars. The researcher attempted to take into account these types when

designing the data collection tools. These tools should be coherent with a learner-centred

approach, in that a learner-centred environment encourages learners to be not only test

takers, but also active participants in the assessment process (Bachman, 2000; Dickinson,

1987). Moreover, by incorporating self-assessment into classroom learning, students as

well as teachers would acknowledge assessment as a mutual responsibility and not as the

sole responsibility of the teacher (Oscarson, 1989). Consequently, the instruments are in

line with specific types of self-assessment as presented in the theoretical framework from

the previous chapter:

- Two of the five categories of self-assessment suggested by Brown (2009, p. 271,
  272). First, indirect assessment of general competence, which does not focus on a
  specific short performance, but involves assessing a general ability or competence
  on a module or term of coursework. Secondly, metacognitive assessment, which

helps learners revise past performance or competence and set goals to continue

learning.

- Development-oriented assessment, which measures the process of learning in a

    classroom environment where self-managed activities are incorporated. It is used as

    an observation of "the participants for an extended period in order to detect changes

    and patterns of development over time" (Dornyei, 2001, p. 194).

The classification of instruments according to the types and categories of self-

assessment mentioned above is illustrated in the following chart:
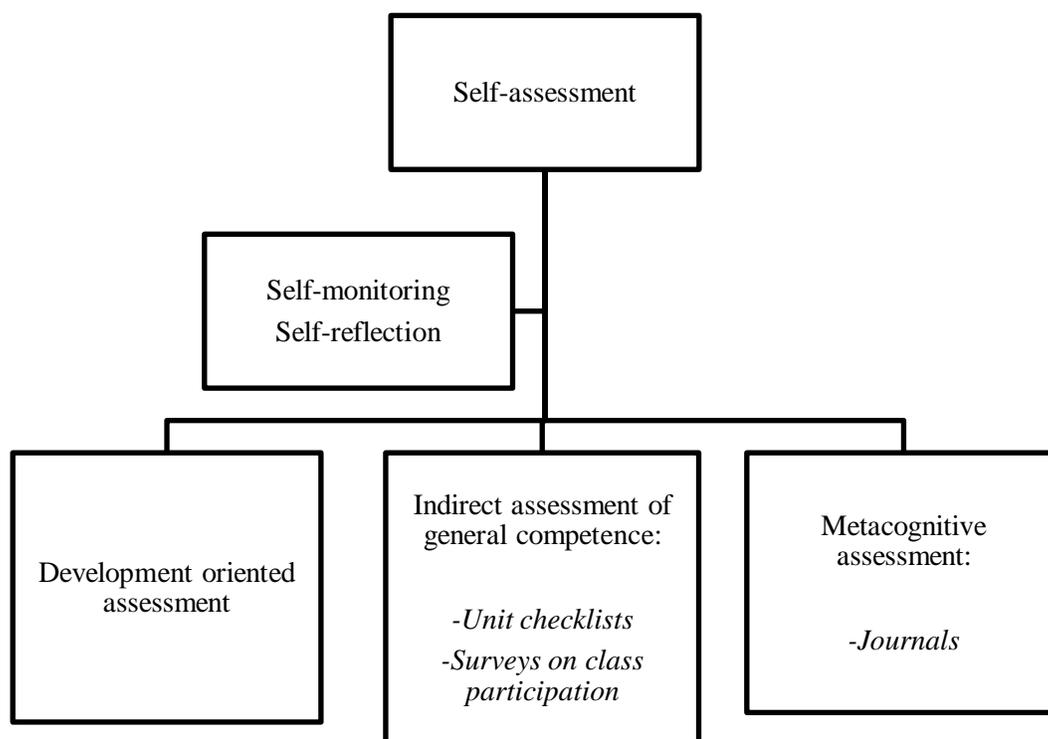
Figure 3. Instruments classified according to types of assessment

The rationale and purpose of each instrument will be described as follows:

3.6.1   Unit Checklists

Checklists allow for self-assessment of both process and product, and focus on assessment for learning. For this purpose, learners have to revise their own work, monitor their progress, and engage in reflection (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 27). Rating scales and checklists are self-assessment techniques that rate the perceived general language proficiency or ability level.

To design a unit checklist, the researcher took some models into account. First, Brown's (2001) examples of "checkpoint" features, in which students are given end of chapter self-evaluation checklists and therefore are given the opportunity to think about the extent to which they have reached a desirable competency level in the specific objectives of the unit. The second and third models taken into account were the self-assessment of the Language Biography of the European Language Portfolio (2001) and the self-assessment checklists for the Swiss version of the European Language Portfolio (2000). These self-assessments aim to review one's overall proficiency in the foreign language at the beginning or end of an extended period of learning and to monitor one's learning progress in relation to a particular skill. However, since self-assessment can also be focused on collecting "useful information about how students feel about their own (learning) process, their reactions to the materials and methods being used, what they think about the course in general" (Harris & McCann, 1994, p. 36), the researcher considered that it would be convenient to include a space for collecting learners' personal reactions to the materials and activities that accompanied each unit. For this

purpose, a web site devoted to rubrics and checklists was used to find some helpful examples

when designing the checklist (Gibbons, n.d.)

In line with the preceding models and considerations, the researcher designed a unit self-

assessment checklist to have learners complete after they worked on each unit. They would self-

monitor the extent to which they had reached a competence level in each of the language skills.

(Appendix 3). For each *I can do* statement there were three levels of competence: Easily, Need

more practice, and Not at all. Additionally, the researcher decided to include a section to find out

students' perceptions about the materials and activities used and what they liked about each unit.

3.6.2   Surveys

According to Burns (2003), surveys are used to gain responses related to specific

issues and may invite either factual or attitudinal responses. Despite the great amount of

preparation time they demand, they prove to be a helpful tool since they are based on

simple and precise questions that easily become available for analysis and reflection

(Wallace, 2008).

In this study, surveys were used for students to assess their class participation in the

blended learning environment. The researcher considered that a number of investigators

had recently emphasized the importance of social and environmental factors on student

success in online education (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Richardson & Swan, 2003).

However, as the learning context for this study was blended learning, the researcher

thought a social cognitive perspective on self-regulation, which addresses the

interrelationship between the learner, the learners' behaviour, and the social environment

(Bandura, 1997), would lend itself to this study because of its key features of successful

learning in this type of environment.

Furthermore, as Klenowski (1995) claims, the introduction of the skills of self-

assessment offers another dimension to the current learning environment, providing

students with opportunities to take increased responsibility for a more active role in their

own learning. Students would also need to monitor their performance in regards to

expected behaviour in class activities. In addition, this self-assessment practice would not

only provide useful criteria that helps students improve their learning, but it would also

give helpful information to the tutor as means of feedback, so that her teaching could be

shaped to the student (Yorke, 2003).

The researcher reviewed a successful experiment to introduce self-assessment in an

advanced intermediate ESL class (Philips, 2000). It consisted of a questionnaire that had

three options to check for each category. The main purpose was to allow students to

evaluate themselves on their class participation by completing this form at midterm,

followed up with teacher-student dialog about their weaknesses and goal setting. This was a

helpful model when designing the two self-assessment surveys for online and onsite class

participation. Students would have the opportunity to self-assess their class participation in

face-to-face lessons and online sessions. Each form included items with frequency scale

options (always often, sometimes, seldom, never). In addition, items were organized

according to specific categories and the final section included comment boxes for

additional observation regarding any of the items.

The survey on face-to-face class participation addressed the participant's individual performance, his/her interaction, and teacher's actions. The survey on online class participation addressed attendance and participation, interaction and activities, and teacher support (Appendixes 4, 5).

3.6.3 Students' Journal

Journals can be used to help learners systematically collect data on their learning. They can write about their learning goals, reflections on their learning, or their learning development (M. Oscarson, 1989). Thus, learning journals empower students to take charge of their own learning process by reflecting upon it on a regular basis. The researcher revised an action research study by Nunan (1996), mentioned in the theoretical framework. Two journals were assigned, and these aimed to give students the opportunity to write reflections on their learning process (Appendixes 6, 7).

3.6.4 Teacher's journal

Keeping a journal is used by teachers and trainee teachers to develop reflective teaching and enables them to raise consciousness of their teaching, which is regarded as the first stage of reflective teaching (Bartlett, 1990). With attention to the research process, Peachey (2008) points out that keeping a journal helps the teacher analyse and draw conclusions from data that will be collected.   The researcher designed a format to write reflective entries during the implementation of this project. The journal was designed to provide the researcher with an instrument to reflect on the whole process during the study,

but was not conceived as a data collection tool when doing data analysis. The reasons for

this decision have to do with the emphasis of this study: the effects of the self-assessment

strategies in the learning experience of these participants. With this in mind, the data

analysis was done based on data derived only from the participants' reflections,

perceptions, and assessments.

A summary of the data collection instruments is presented in the chart below:
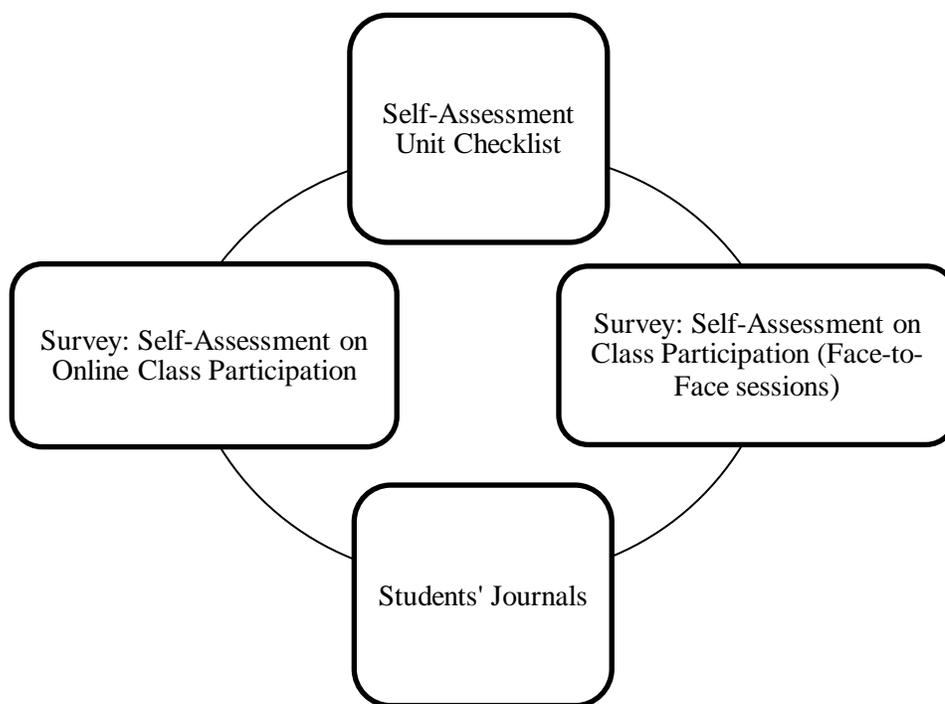
Figure 4. Data Collection Instruments

3.7 Validity and Triangulation

As Burns suggests, "triangulation is valuable in enhancing validity" because it enables

researchers "to gather multiple perspectives on the same situation studied" (2003, p. 163).

The researcher first needed to revise the appropriateness of each instrument for the purpose

of the study. It was necessary to decide whether they allowed the data to answer the

research question and address the research objectives in order to gather relevant

information, analyse, and draw conclusions. In terms of validation, each instrument used

was designed by the researcher and shared with colleagues and the research project

director, and then some adjustments were made. As for triangulation, the researcher used

the triangulation technique to contrast and compare different data about the same issue and

to find emerging patterns that enabled the researcher to interpret and analyse data.

3.8   Data collection procedures

The pre-planning stage

One preliminary survey aimed at building the learners' profile, their views on

autonomous learning, and their likeliness to use self-monitoring and self-assessing during

their learning process (Appendix 1). This survey was applied the week before the start of

the course. Next, the participants were introduced to the self-assessment approach during

the first four weeks of the course. The teacher embedded self-assessment in the

development of different in-class and online activities prior to the implementation so that

students were progressively introduced to this approach. There were guided questions

related to their feelings and reactions and reflections on their individual performance. By

the end of the fourth week of the course, learners were informed about the project purpose

and methodology; they were given instructions on the type of formats they would complete

and were told that most of the questions in the instruments would be given in English and

Spanish and they could write their answers in Spanish. Likewise, consent letters were given

to the participants and signed.

The while stage

Data collection tools for this implementation were used in both face-to-face and online

sessions as illustrated in the following table:

Implementation	Type of assessment	Mode
Self-Assessment Unit Checklist	Indirect assessment of general competence	Online and Face-to Face
Self-Assessment of Online Class Participation	Indirect assessment of general competence	Online
Self-Assessment of Class Participation (Face-to-Face)	Indirect assessment of general competence	Face-to-Face
Students' Journal 1 Students Journal 2	Metacognitive assessment	Online (following up a face-to-face tutorial)

Table 1. Mode of implementation of instruments

The implementation started at the end of the fifth week of the course, with students

completing self-assessment activities both in and outside of class, according to the

implementation dates planned (Appendix 9). The initial timeline had to be modified due to

some limitations in schedules and participants' time management issues.   During the

implementation, the researcher started to read, organize data, and use open coding to

analyse the data.

The post stage

This stage allowed the researcher to improve the understanding of grounded theory
in order to analyse data as well as explore the effects of self-monitoring and self-reflection
on the learning experience and their perceptions towards self-assessment and blended
learning.

This chapter has described the type of research design, the researcher's role, the
characteristics of the context and participants, and the data collection instruments and
procedures. The next chapter will present the pedagogical implementation and intervention
designed to carry out this study.

Chapter 4: Pedagogical Intervention

The pedagogical intervention will provide a description of two specific procedures carried out in this implementation: first, the instructional design and scaffolding strategies used for the English blended course. Secondly, the steps followed to implement self-monitoring and self-reflection strategies within the course structure, the use of specific data collection instruments designed, as well as the adjustments made within the implementation.

4.1 Instructional design

This was a course-level blending model, combining two face-to-face sessions during the week, and one asynchronic online session on the weekend at a convenient time for the participants. In this regard, the course followed what Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) state: that the participants first had face-to-face instruction, and then followed up with online activities. In this way, several topics were studied and practiced both in face-to-face encounters and online sessions (Appendix 9). Usually topics and contents were first introduced in the face-to-face session, along with controlled and free practice. Then further individual practice, interaction, and assessment took place in the online session.

As for teaching methods in the classroom, the teacher did not strictly follow a particular methodology, but it can be said that features from the communicative approach and Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) were considered in the development of the sessions. Fostering reflection, independent work, communication, and interaction among participants were also part of the learning outcomes in each session. Similarly,

given that participants needed to lower their anxiety and increase their confidence in using

the foreign language, it was also necessary to create rapport with the group and provide

them with a comfortable learning atmosphere.

The course lasted thirteen weeks and was composed of five units. Course materials

and activities for both online and onsite instructions were adapted from different web sites.

There were two core textbooks from which some activities were also adapted or used:

Longman English Interactive 1 (Watcyn, 2003) and *New Interchange English for*

International Communication Student's Book 1 Cambridge University Press. (Richards,

2002). In terms of assessment and evaluation, besides the self-assessment component,

learners also took a diagnostic test that was delivered online. At the end of the course they

took a final test that was uploaded to the virtual platform but submitted in a face-to-face

encounter.

A review of the design of face-to-face encounters and online sessions will be

presented below:

Face-to-face sessions

These sessions were held on Tuesday and Thursday mornings for 90 minutes. The

language of instruction was English. Lessons plans were usually designed based on the

ICELT lesson plan (Appendix 8). Every face-to-face lesson had the following stages:

- o Warm up

- o Presentation of the topic

- o Controlled practice

- o Free practice

      o   Evaluation (usually accompanied by a self-assessment form)

Online sessions

The researcher designed the virtual course in FreeWeb Class (http://freewebclass.com/),
a Learning Management System that hosts free online courses by using a basic version of
Moodle. This was convenient to the participants as they were used to this platform from
their current online tutoring work. The course had a weekly outline with the materials and
resources used in face-to-face lessons and the activities designed for each online session.
Online sessions aimed at providing learners with independent and group activities to
practice their language skills related to topics studied in the face-to-face sessions. Each
activity had clear guidelines and students received an e-mail with further guidance to
develop these tasks. The online activities were varied, including participation in forums,
reading and writing assignments, listening tasks, quizzes, tests, and self-assessment
activities (Appendix 11).

Regarding the blended course design, the researcher considered the blended
redesign checklist suggested by Blended Learning @ Simmons College (2008) with the
purpose of having students keep in mind the main aspects of the course (Appendix 12).

On the other hand, given that self-assessment and self regulation are processes that require
teacher's scaffolding to help students engage in the learning process, especially online, the
researcher linked formative assessment to scaffolding.   This view is supported by
Mckenzie (2000), who stated there are several ways to help learners in an online learning

environment. These include incorporating tools for assessment, feedback, self-assessment,

and reflection. Therefore, this instructional technique and the way it was implemented in

this study will be expanded on below.

4.2 Scaffolding in a Blended learning environment

Scaffolded instruction as a teaching strategy originates from Vygotsky's (1986)

sociocultural theory and his concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which

refers to the distance between what individuals can do by themselves and the next learning

outcome that they can achieve through competent assistance. In this regard, Mckenzie

(2000) points out some characteristics of scaffolded instruction: for example, providing

clear direction and guidelines to reduce student confusion, explaining to them what to do to

meet expectations, clarifying lessons or tasks, keeping students on task, and providing

students with helpful resources.

Scaffolded instruction guides the learner to independent and self-regulated

competence of skills and can be used in a variety of areas and across age and grade levels,

including distance learning. As Clark and Kazinou (2001) point out, scaffolding in online

learning environments, just like in conventional classrooms, should ultimately focus on

self-regulated learning. Therefore, the design of online language learning environments and

language activities must start from the premise that pedagogy leads technology and students

need support to use resources and engage in online tasks.

With this in mind, the researcher used specific scaffolding strategies for both online

and face-to-face sessions, as described below:

Scaffolding Strategies	
Face-to-Face sessions	Online Sessions
- Visual aids (worksheets, videos, videos with subtitles, flashcards). - Use of simplified language in the classroom to meet learners' language level. - Use of video beam to display class reviews and materials on power point presentations. - Cooperative (jigsaw) and collaborative tasks to foster learner involvement, interaction and peer feedback. - Structured, sequenced use of guidelines. - Instruction on the use of specific learning strategies when doing class activities and those for independent practice. - Activities aimed at having students self-evaluate, self-correct and reflect on task development. Self-assessment embedded in course materials and activities. - Feedback given by the tutor. - Scheduled Individual tutorials.	- Class reviews and all materials uploaded to virtual platform to facilitate revision and independent practice. - Resources to provide learners with additional independent learning and tutorials to help learners use specific web tools (Step Voice recorder, Voki). - Cooperative (jigsaw) and collaborative tasks to foster learner involvement, interaction and peer feedback. - Structured, sequenced use of guidelines or checklists, and use of rubrics. - Activities that encourage learners to plan learning and set goals Self-assessment embedded in course materials and activities. - Communication tools, such as forums and internal messaging, which enable the interaction of the learner with their peers and with the tutor. - Activities on the internet that provide for quantitative types of assessment, in the form of multiple-choice or quiz tests, which inform the participants whether their answers are correct.

Table 2. Scaffolding strategies

4.3 Description of implementation

The researcher planned a timeline for data collection and implementation which

included the stages mentioned in the research design (Appendix 10). With attention to

specific data collection instruments, these tools were designed in line with the theoretical

foundations indicated in the literature review and highlighted in the research design of this

study. Thus, the implementation of self-assessment activities was linked to the core

definitions of self-assessment (Oscarson, 1989; Harris & McCann 1994), as well as the type

of self-assessment proposed (Dornyei, 2001; Bachman, 2000; Haughton & Dickinson,

1988) and the specific self-assessment categories used (Brown, 2009, p. 271, 272).

The connection between the research objectives and the data collection tools is

illustrated in the following chart:
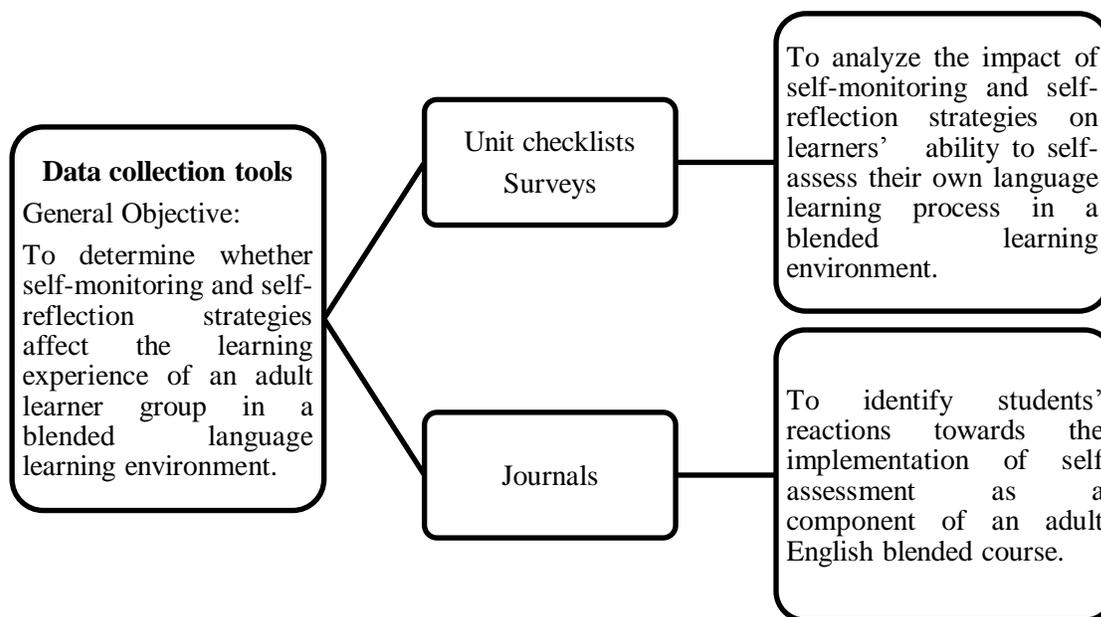
Figure 5: Data collection tools and research objectives

Implementation started at the end of the fifth week of the course, when students started

to complete self-assessment activities both in and outside of class. A review of the

pedagogical implementation of each data collection tool is provided in the following tables.

The first table will show the procedure used to complete self-assessment unit checklists:

Self-assessment Unit checklists	
Date and mode of implementation:	Unit 1: 1-7 April –Online Unit 2: 8-15 April - Online Unit 3: 10 May - Face-to-face Unit 4: 19 May -Face-to-face
Procedure	
Self-assessment was not an isolated area, it was embedded in course materials from the beginning of the course. In this case, the teacher had previously guided students in this type of self-assessment by including "I can do" statements in the evaluation stage of some lessons. Thus, learners had been introduced to a similar format. As part of the instructions to complete this form, students had to revise all contents, materials, and class activities from that unit, for both face-to-face and online sessions during the term indicated, following the weekly outline**.** They also needed to take into consideration the feedback provided on specific assignments, as well as their own notes corresponding to each unit. Students submitted a checklist after completing each unit. They could complete the form at the most convenient time during the time frame assigned. This was done progressively for four units within the course.	
Students' indirect assessment of competence	
Students monitored their language competence in relation to the contents and skills through "I can statements" and three levels of competence they marked for each criterion. In addition, the checklist provided students with sentences to complete to express their perceptions and reactions towards the content of each unit and the activities and materials used (Appendix 3).	
Adjustments	
At the beginning, this activity was done outside of the classroom as part of their online assignments, but for the two last units the form was completed at the end of a face-to-face lesson due to certain time limitations of the participants and the need of the researcher to make sure they completed this form in a timely manner, since some of them had submitted the first checklists after the deadline. Also, the researcher found that for units 1 and 2 students provided few comments, for which they were then encouraged to expand on their notes and use Spanish if necessary.	

Table 3. Implementation of self–assessment unit checklists

This unit checklist was the first instrument used and the main challenge encountered

was time management and limited comments from participants. The adjustments allowed

participants to focus on task development and have teacher's assistance in a more

convenient way so they could easily complete the assignment. A similar review on the

implementation of surveys will be illustrated below.

Survey: Self-assessment of F2F class participation	Survey: Self-assessment of Online Class Participation
Date and mode of implementation Survey 1: 28 April-Face-to-face Survey 2: 31 May-3 June- Face-to-face	**Date and mode of implementation** Survey 1: 16-25 April -Online Survey 2: 1-13 June - Online
Procedure This activity was done in class, at the end of a lesson and the Spanish version of this checklist was displayed in the video beam to facilitate learners' understanding. They were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that their honest answers would be helpful to themselves and the teacher. They could also write their comments in Spanish (Appendix 4).	**Procedure** This activity included items written in both English and Spanish to facilitate learners' understanding of the instructions. It was uploaded to the virtual platform of the course and was part of the virtual assignments students completed for some online sessions. They were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that their honest answers would be helpful to themselves and the teacher (Appendix 5).
Students' indirect assessment of competence Students self-monitored their class participation by using frequency scales for the three sections presented: their individual contribution and behaviour, their ability to interact with others, and teacher's support in class. In addition, they were also encouraged to write comments after each section to provide the teacher with additional feedback.	**Students' indirect assessment of competence** Students self-monitored their online class participation by using a similar frequency scale. The aspects addressed their online attendance, participation and interaction in specific online assignments and behaviour, and the teacher's support and feedback. Likewise, they were required to write comments for each of the sections.
Adjustments: The deadlines set for the survey on online class participation were extended considering that the first was assigned during Easter week, and the second to give all participants the time to complete it. Due to time constraints, the second survey on face-to-face class participation was completed before an individual scheduled tutorial with each student by the end of the course. In this tutorial the teacher and the student talked about general process and progress observed by the student.	

Table 4. Implementation of surveys on face-to-face class and online class participation

Below, the procedures taken into account for the implementation of journals:

Journals
Date and mode of implementation: Journal 1: 29April -3 May-Online Journal 2: 7-13 June Online
Procedure The teacher had introduced journals to students before the implementation as part of their online assignments. This was done to prepare students for this type of reflection before implementing the final or validated journals. In addition, and as stated before, the design of data collection instruments was embedded in course materials and activities, in which participants had to answer reflective questions after an activity. Journals were applied once the students had already completed the checklists and surveys so they had first monitored their competences and achievements and were in a better condition to reflect on their learning. They submitted journals at two specific times during the implementation: in the middle and at the end of the course. They answered open-ended questions that were provided both in English and Spanish and due to the nature of this activity, they were encouraged to use Spanish to facilitate reflection and expression of thoughts (Appendixes 6, 7). Additionally, for the first reflections, including the first validated journal, the teacher followed self-assessment with feedback by responding to students' reflections so they felt their answers were important and to support their initial reflection and involvement in the course.
Students' metacognitive assessment Learners wrote their feelings and opinions regarding their individual learning process and progress during the term indicated, following the weekly outline. In the first journal, they expressed what they had learned, the weaknesses and strengths they had identified, and the learning plans they had. In the final journal students responded to a set of open-ended questions related to their feelings and insights about their learning process in general, the self-assessment practice, and their perceptions on a blended learning course.
Adjustments For the second journal, students were first guided to complete this form in an individual tutorial. They then had the time to write their answers and submit it to the platform.

Table 5. Implementation of students' journals

Overall, this chapter described the processes followed to implement this study,

including the instructional design for the activities and procedures carried out within the

course and the process of implementing self-monitoring and self-reflections strategies. The

next chapter will present the procedures for data analysis and findings that emerged from

this study.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

This chapter will describe the data analysis method and procedures followed in this

research study, including findings derived from data analysis and theory derived from data

to answer the research question.

5.1 Data analysis Method

For this qualitative study the researcher used the Grounded Theory approach, which

refers to a theory derived inductively from the data, systematically gathered and analysed

through a research process to discover categories, concepts, and properties and their

interrelationships (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The researcher used grounded theory because

it is considered an appropriate method to explain a process observed in the study of social

interactions or experiences. Therefore, the researcher considered that grounded theory

would be suitable to conduct an analysis of a qualitative action research study that focused

on the effect that self-assessment could have on the learning experience of a group of adult

learners in a particular learning context.

5.2 Procedures of Data Analysis

This analysis was based on data collected from the unit self-assessment checklists, the

surveys for self-assessment on class participation (face-to-face and online), and the

journals. The researcher gathered data and started to explore relevant features emerging in

participants' responses, which showed what effects self-monitoring and self-reflection had

on the students' learning experience. The patterns were labelled and then organized into

codes and categories that were consistent with open and axial coding procedures. Before

having a closer look at coding, some important procedures for data collection and analysis

will be presented in the next sections.

5.3 Data Management

During the process of collecting and storing data, a file containing the information

given by each student was saved in a separate folder for each instrument. The initials of the

students' (e.g. MIO-JA) were used to keep track of students' submission of these

assignments. Then, all the students' answers for each instrument were copied into a single

MSWord™ file to easily find information. Additionally, the researcher created a folder

containing each student's completion of all instruments. Finally, considering the anonymity

assured to participants in this study, their names were not used. Instead, subjects were

numbered by using the form S1 to S4 in order to identify the sample for this research

project (Appendix 13).

5.4 Data reduction

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe data reduction as part of the elements of

qualitative data analysis, which consists of selecting, simplifying, and transforming data

found to address the subject of study. In this regard, the researcher summarized parts of

data that went together but that came from different sources. Similarly, the researcher

considered the frequency of tendencies, priorities, and relationships among categories.

Coding procedures, which also facilitated data reduction, are described below.

5.5 Open coding

Open coding refers to the analytical process through which concepts are identified

and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In

this regard, the researcher used open coding to identify relevant patterns or themes in each

instrument. To do so, data was read and revised and comments were inserted on the right

margin with keywords or concepts summing up participants' responses. Then, colour-

coding was used to identify relevant patterns or categories. Next, the researcher also noted

the frequency observed in each source of data. Again, colour-coding was used to highlight

commonalities observed for further comparison, analysis, and the identification of any

patterns (Appendix 14).

Furthermore, the researcher used index cards to write the patterns belonging to each

source of data and observed how they could be linked to other existing patterns.

Additionally, and for the same purpose, the researcher made a matrix with all the initial

patterns observed and tried to integrate similar patterns or categories (Appendix 15).

5.6.   Axial coding

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), axial coding is a procedure through which

concepts or categories are related to each other to define a core category. The researcher

first reduced data by identifying similarities among the five instruments and then elaborated

categories for each source of data analysed. A diagram was done to examine, classify, and

compare the concurrence of similar patterns, which were again highlighted with different

colours (Appendix 16).

After, the researcher classified the information by interconnecting tendencies and

observing the frequency of categories. The goal was to analyse the properties that

characterize the effects that the use of self-assessment strategies used in the intervention

had on learners' experience in a blended language learning environment. A chart was

helpful during this process (Appendix 17). After exploring the links between categories

and codes the researcher identified three categories with corresponding subcategories as

follows:

Research Question
To what extent do self-monitoring and self-reflection affect the learning experience of a group of A1 adult learners in an English blended learning environment?

Categories Emerged:	
Developing awareness of the learning process	*Increasing involvement in their individual learning process*
-Being aware of areas for improvement	-Monitoring learning and progress
-Reflecting on the value of self assessment practice	-Planning and setting goals
-Reflecting on the blended learning experience	-Responding to scaffolded instruction

Table 6. Categories emerged in Axial Coding

5.7   Selective coding

In this last stage of grounded theory, the researcher's goal was to form a theory that

explains the phenomenon being studied. Through the use of constant comparison, the

researcher identified a core variable around which the most data was focused. This

category has a relationship between the codes and the above described categories, and

becomes a core category named **"**Increasing learners' awareness and involvement in the

language learning process", as illustrated in the figure below:
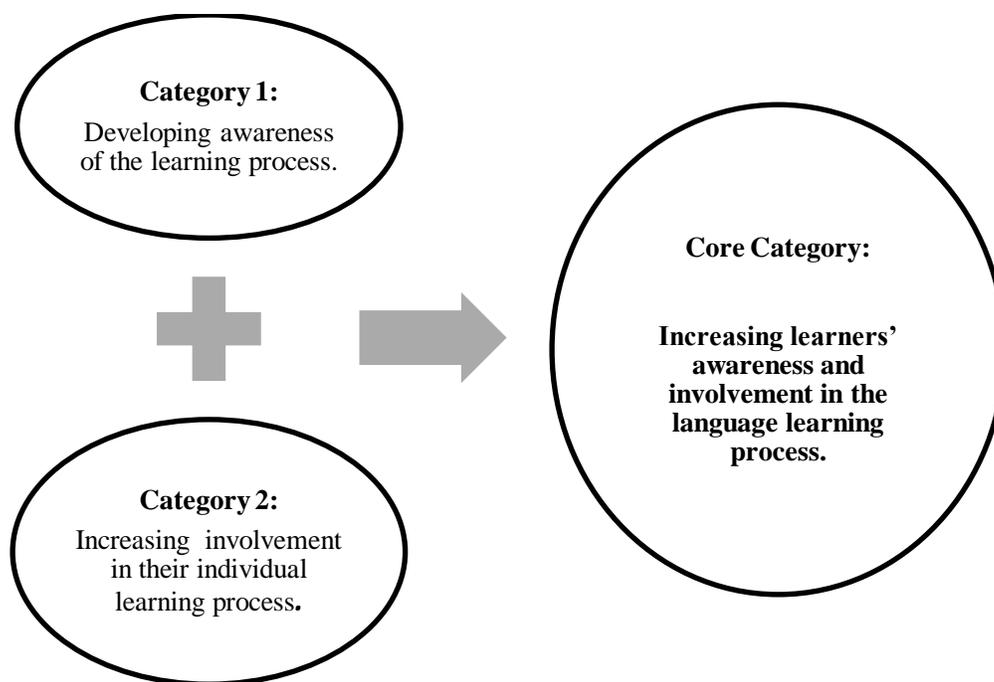
Figure 6. Final Categories

5. 7.1. Core Category

The two central categories have described how self-monitoring and self-reflection had an effect on the learners' experience in a blended learning environment.

Learners' perceptions and reflections and their reactions to the materials and methods being used in this blended course, including the self-assessment component, informed the researcher how they felt about their own learning process (Harris & McCann, 1994). As a result, they self-monitored their learning, their level of knowledge, and their performance and therefore, acquired information about their learning process (M. Oscarson, 1989).

To come to this core category, the process started from a central phenomenon that the researcher wanted to explore. Given that the participants in this specific context were about to start a learning experience of English, and they were not going to be strictly graded to pass the course or gain a certificate, the researcher decided to investigate to what extent self-monitoring, and self-reflection strategies could affect the learning experience of a group of A1 English adult learners in a blended learning environment.

The researcher proposed that self-monitoring and self-reflection were appropriate strategies as they are closely linked to self-regulation in language learning. To do so, the literature of the main constructs for this study as well as similar projects in the field of self-assessment and blended learning were reviewed. The research design and pedagogical intervention were aligned with the relevant theory and were adapted to the particular teaching and learning context. For the data analysis, the researcher used open and axial coding to identify categories and make connections among them. These categories dealt

with the context and the causal conditions attempted to analyse the effects of self-

monitoring and self-reflection strategies. Within the axial categories there were some

intervening conditions that presented a broader structural context by referring to the

participants' reactions, feelings, and perceptions towards self-assessment practices and a

blended learning environment. At the same time, these axial categories along with their

subcategories also referred to consequences of the implementation of self-monitoring and

self-reflection on participants' learning experience. Finally, for selective coding, the

researcher aimed at validating theory in relation to the findings in order to select one central

category that explained the other categories. In the long run, students have developed their

awareness of the language learning process and have increased involvement in their

individual learning, discussed in the previous findings.

The process mentioned above is illustrated in the chart below:
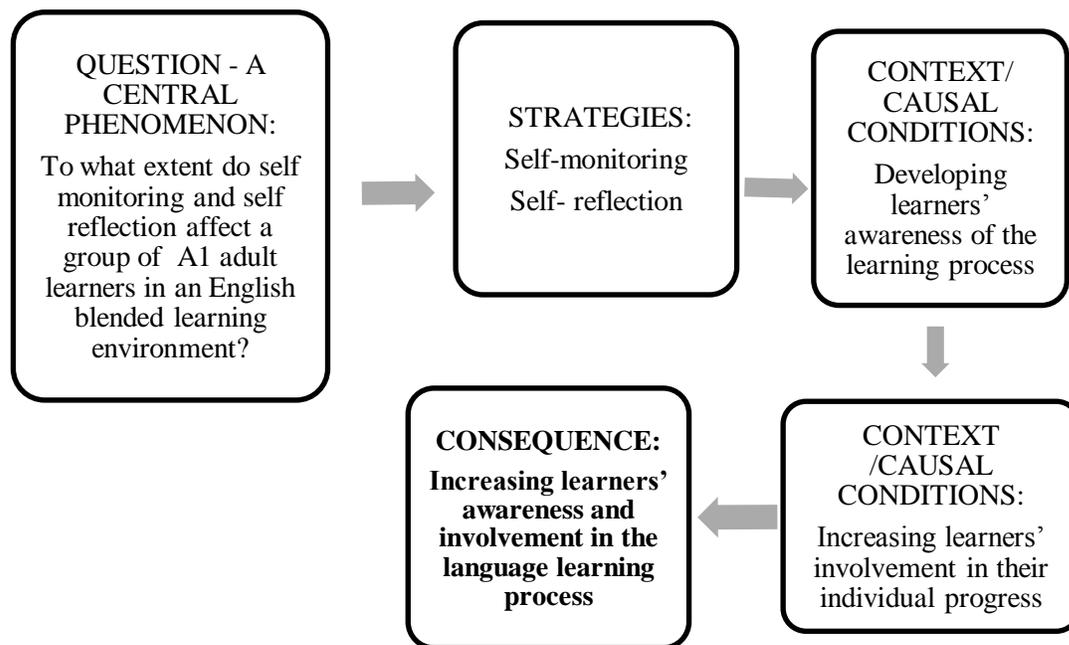
Figure 8. Core category

5.8 Data Display and verification

Miles and Huberman's (1994) model of qualitative data analysis consider data display a step beyond data reduction that provides an organized association of information to draw conclusions effectively. Similarly, they conceived data verification as the process of considering what the analysed data mean and their implications for the subject being studied. Accordingly, the researcher used diagrams, charts, and a matrix to arrange data and discern patterns and interrelationships. As for verification, the researcher revisited the data several times to verify interpretations and conclusions.

By the same token, the procedures used to ensure the validity of the findings emerged in this study were *triangulation* (Burns, 2003) and *constant comparative method* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this regard, data were collected from three different sources: checklists, surveys, and journals, and the analysis of these instruments revealed common patterns that were compared through the use of charts and a matrix (See appendixes referred to above). Finally, two categories of analysis emerged and were grouped into a core category named "Increasing learners' awareness and involvement in the language learning process".

The guiding theory to analyse data and elaborate axial and core categories is based mainly on specific definitions, the types of self-assessment and its categories, as indicated in the design and pedagogical intervention of this study.   At the same time, the researcher followed the process of data analysis in grounded theory proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2008), in which the theory should have specific components: a central phenomenon, causal

conditions, strategies, conditions and context, and consequences. Therefore, the researcher

identified two categories dealing with learners' self-assessment. The *central phenomenon*

was identified as the effects of self-monitoring and self-reflection on the participant's

learning experience, and the categories and subcategories emerged represented the

strategies and consequences. Learners' perceptions and reactions towards self-assessment

and a blended learning environment were identified as the *context and conditions.*

5.9 Categories

Given the procedures described above, the categories and subcategories that emerged

will be explained and developed further in the section below.

5.9.1. Category 1: Developing awareness of the learning process

Generally, learners are not expected to reflect upon their own learning processes or

analyse and evaluate their language learning experience. Therefore, it is necessary to raise

learners' awareness of the language learning process through the learners' own reflections

on how they learn. This type of retrospection consists of "having language learners think

about language learning – their own beliefs about learning and their preferred learning

strategies" (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 143). Activities intended to foster reflection, such as

journals and diaries, may help learners discover their learning difficulties or anxieties and

help them think critically about their weaknesses and strengths.

The following subcategories deal with learners' reflections on their weaknesses and

areas for improvement, as well as their beliefs and perceptions on the use of self-

assessment activities and their reactions towards a blended learning environment.

5.9.1.1. Subcategory: Being aware of specific areas for improvement

Self-monitoring lead to self-reflection, as learners identify areas for improvement

during the course. By participating in self-assessment practice, learners were able to

identify their weaknesses and therefore become aware and assume responsibility for

learning.

As demonstrated in the excerpts below, participants identified specific individual

skills that needed further practice, such as listening, speaking, and vocabulary. In most

cases, the observation was made in relation to the contents and topics studied in class, and

the participants identified their weaknesses on their own, without teacher's or peer's

assessment or intervention:

> Considero que debo mejorar el escuchar y la conversación. (S1. Student' Journal 1.
>
> Original)
>
> The online activities available for Unit 3 were interesting although I need more practice in
> listening and speaking. (S3. Unit Checklist. Original)
>
> I need to work vocabulary and listening about Physical descriptions and daily routines.
>
> Because, vocabulary is important for I can speak and understand English (No.8, S2.
>
> Student' Journal 1. Original)

These responses show that learners were able to identify areas for improvement on

their own as they were going through the content and activities.   In addition, some

participants expanded their level of reflection and monitoring in terms of their participation

in specific online activities, as can be observed in the following two excerpts:

> Considero que me faltó revisar con más detalle el material del curso y participar más
>
> activamente en las actividades. (S1. Survey 2. Self-assessment of Online class
>
> participation. Original)

> En los foros siempre leo los aportes de los compañeros pero el 80% respondo a sus aporte.
>
> (S4. Survey 2. Self-assessment of Online class participation. Original)

Furthermore, a relevant finding emerged when analyzing data that addressed group

interaction in specific instruments. These included assessment on behaviours related to

individual and interaction features. While most participants were willing to work in groups

and enjoyed interacting with peers in face-to-face sessions, when asked to participate in

online collaborative tasks, their performance did not meet expectations and this become a

clear weakness for some participants. The excerpts below show the contrast observed in

their interaction for face-to-face and online environments. The first responses show positive

attitudes towards group work in a face-to-face session and the reasons they like it.

> La interacción en el grupo es buena, se trabaja a gusto con ellos y recibo apoyo y
>
> retroalimentación del proceso de aprendizaje por parte de mis compañeros. (S4. Survey 2.
>
> Self-assessment of Face-to-face class participation. Original)

La actividad presencial es lo que más disfruto puesto que se comparten directamente las

impresiones y conocimientos, y de la unidad. (S1. Unit Checklist. Original)

However, some learners acknowledged that working online in collaborative tasks

was challenging and they express possible reasons for this situation. According to their

answers, collaboration may be limited due to time management and might depend on

others' personal commitment and motivation:

En algunos foros participé oportuna y concretamente, y en otros me falto participar a

tiempo, porque los aportes lo hice más tarde de lo programado. (S1. Survey 2. Self-

assessment of Online class participation. Original)

El desarrollo de trabajos grupales depende también del compromiso y cumplimiento por

parte de mis compañeros. Si no están motivados no sacarán tiempo para reunirse o ejecutar

sus roles o compromisos dentro del equipo. (S2 Survey 2. Self-assessment of Online class

participation. Original)

Time management issues may have limited participants' higher involvement in

specific online collaborative tasks, as will be described later in the second category.

However, lack of engagement in some online collaborative tasks might have occurred due

to the fact that online interaction is more challenging and requires a higher level of

commitment, not only at an individual level, but also when participating in decision making

processes in a group. Moreover, according to Palloff and Pratt (1999), it is easier to remain

silent in face-to-face group work than in an online environment, as silent members in online

communication are considered not present. Therefore, participation in an online group

requires a different kind of commitment than in a face-to-face group.

The current subcategory consisted of learners acknowledging their weaknesses and

areas for improvement in both individual and social behaviours and language skills. This in

turn helped raise their awareness of the language learning process by helping them pay

attention to different aspects that are relevant in the learning process. Learners' reflection

also addressed the effects of self-assessment practice on their language learning experience,

which will be described in the following subcategory.

5.9.1.2. Subcategory: Reflecting on the value of self-assessment practices

When it comes to benefits derived from self-assessment practices in the language

classroom, several scholars have referred to student involvement in the learning process,

learner autonomy, increased motivation, development of study skills, and a fostering of

life-long learning (Geeslin, 2003; Wenden, 2001). In this case, a group of learners who

were not used to self-assessment practice reflected on how this type of assessment helped

them during their language learning experience. In some samples, it can be observed that

prior learning schemes, cultural reasons, and personality and learning styles are initial

factors that may influence participants' perceptions towards self-assessment.

To begin, the first excerpts show overall positive perceptions of the different self-

assessment activities:

Me llevaban a reflexionar sobre mi nivel de aprendizaje y sobre mi compromiso, también

sobre las estrategias que debí aplicar para mejorar mis competencias en el idioma. La

evaluación formativa me permitió analizar mi proceso de aprendizaje durante cada fase y de

forma continua en este curso (S2. Student Journal 2. Original)

Me permitieron diagnosticar como era mi participación en la clase y proponer esforzarme

más en la participación activa y concreta en cada una de las actividades porque me permitía

confirmar y evaluar lo aprendido y las fortalezas y las debilidades que tenía respecto al

tema. Me llevaron a investigar en situaciones donde tenia desconocimiento o tenia un

conocimiento equivocado. (S1. Student Journal 2. Original)

 Las actividades de autoevaluación realizadas después de completar cada unidad me

ayudaron a identificar que había aprendido y en qué áreas necesitaba más refuerzo para

lograr el aprendizaje del tema. (S4. Student Journal 2. Original)

As for the general perceptions of using self-assessment, participants reported

different insights corresponding to their learning and personality styles, and cultural reasons

that might shape their perception of easiness or difficulty when developing these activities:

No estoy acostumbrado(a) al proceso de autoevaluación pero he notado que favorece la

asimilación subconsciente de lo que se ha aprendido, en lo que se ha fallado … Siempre

representa un esfuerzo el auto-evaluar, sobre todo para mí que no tengo la costumbre de

revisar el camino recorrido, pero ha sido un esfuerzo interesante, una introspección

adecuada…. (S3. Student Journal 2. Original)

Me gusta autocriticarme y trato de ser objetiva en relación a mi rol como estudiante y como

persona, de esta forma se puede identificar formas para mejorar continuamente. (S2.

Student Journal 2. Original)

In this subcategory, it is evident that participants valued their self-assessment by

completing different self-assessment instruments. Despite being a new approach for the

participants, the process was not traumatic for them; instead, it may have enriched their

learning experiences. Also, learners' perceptions show positive reflections towards their

self-efficacy and autonomy in the foreign language learning process, which in turn, support

the link existing between self-assessment and self-regulation. According to Paris and Paris

(2001), self-assessment involves all three areas of self-regulated learning: cognitive,

motivational, and affective. Therefore, students can evaluate their levels of understanding,

their personal interests, and their effort and strategies used on a task.

The next subcategory will describe the learners' perceptions of the context, the

conditions in which participants approach their language learning experience, and their

reactions toward a blended learning environment.

5.9.1.3. Subcategory: Reflecting on the value of a blended learning experience

According to Fisher and Phelps (2001) the main point in using blended approaches is to create a harmonious balance between face-to-face interaction and online access to knowledge. Likewise, for Schmidt (2007), what is lacking in many purely online environments is adequate support and infrastructure for the advantages of exploratory learning to be fully realized; traditional classroom environments often lack freedom and flexibility in terms of when, where, and what is learned. Thus, blended learning has the potential to address both sides of the coin, resolving the problems in each instructional format. Learners' reactions toward this course modality are valuable considering their academic background and prior experiences. They worked as distance online tutors in fully online learning environments; in addition, they had also been students in conventional classrooms. Furthermore, prior to this implementation, some of them had taken an English course delivered fully online, as part of a training programme offered by the university. Therefore, a blended learning course was indeed a new learning scenario that seemed to enrich their language learning experience, as shown in the following excerpts:

Es una muy buena combinación…el inglés puede ser aprendido totalmente en línea, pero hay algunos tópicos que como la pronunciación, el analizar el contexto, etc son apropiados para asimilar ya en sesiones presenciales, pues aún falta ese proceso de realimentación que se genera de forma sincrónica. (S3. Student Journal 2. Original)

Las actividades ON LINE que le exigen al estudiante investigar y tomar decisiones por sí mismo, y en la presencialidad se aprende y reafirma los conocimientos del idioma inglés. (S1. Student Journal 2. Original)

En mi concepto es más efectiva que la totalmente presencial o virtual porque permite

realizar una interacción cara a cara con el tutor y con los compañeros para afianzar el

aprendizaje y así como también a asumir un rol más dinámico e interactivo. (S4. Student

Journal 2. Original)

For the most part, learners tend to prefer blended learning methodology and

acknowledge many benefits to this modality. All of them addressed learners' needs and

roles. Some of these insights support Schmidt's view (2007) that this approach promotes

active and engaged learning, facilitates self-directed and regulated learning in online

phases, and offers space for face-to-face interaction with tutors and peers. These learners'

insights constitute a very valuable finding considering that the university where these

participants currently work has decided not to incorporate a blended learning methodology.

The institution has not considered a blended learning approach despite its great benefits and

impact.

On the other hand, given that this group of learners had not been exposed to self-

assessment practices in prior language learning experiences and neither has taken a blended

language course, their observations were helpful for both the tutor and the learners. As

York (2003) notes, this type of assessment not only helps students in their learning process,

but also provides helpful information to teachers, as it has "an effect on the assessor as well

as the student, assessors learn about the extent to which the students have developed

expertise and can tailor their teaching accordingly" (p. 482). In this regard, participants

offered their perceptions about online and face-to-face activities and the pertinence of these

within the course structure, as shown in the excerpts below:

Los contenidos eran explícitos y muy didácticos, las actividades académicas eran diversas

acorde con lo el objetivo propuesto, su distribución por semanas brinda una mejor

apropiación del conocimiento, los diversos recursos pedagógicos que ofreció el curso

permitía medir el avance del aprendizaje y a la vez realimentar el proceso de aprendizaje.

(S4. Student Journal 2. Original)

La realización de actividades virtuales fue muy importante ya que allí se aplicaron y

complementaron los temas tratados en las sesiones presenciales. (S2 Student Journal 2.

Original)

Participants' responses show they found helpful activities and resources that were

pertinent to the contents and personal topics. Even more, in their view, online activities

were supported in face-to-face instruction; therefore, there was not an isolated body of

contents and assignments, but a whole learning environment. This finding is coherent with

Osguthorpe and Graham's view (2003) that the main point in using blended approaches is

to create a harmonious balance between face-to-face interaction and online access to

knowledge.

As this subcategory has showed, the learning experience of a group of distance

tutors who played the role of language learners and were involved in a blended learning

environment, turned out to be significant in that their awareness and involvement increased

as they participated in this learning experience.

This category has reported findings on how participants developed their awareness of the language learning process by identifying areas for improvement and reflecting on the role of self-assessment and the blended learning environment in which this experience took place. The next category will discuss how this awareness helped them become more involved in their individual learning process.

5.9.2 Category 2: Increasing involvement in their individual learning process.

The previous category described how students reflected upon their weaknesses or areas for improvement. As a result, learners' involvement in their individual progress was increased, as will be demonstrated in the present category. The focus of this category is to analyse how learner involvement was achieved while using self-monitoring and self-reflection strategies aimed to affect the learning experience of a group of participants who had not been introduced to self-assessment and blended learning before. The subcategories will show that learners' involvement in their individual learning process was observable when monitoring learning and progress. Learner's involvement also increased motivation towards foreign language learning.

5.9.2.1 Subcategory: Monitoring learning and progress

This subcategory refers to the processes students use when observing and recording data according to their learning behaviours and outcomes and identifying the progress in their learning process.

Instead of relying on their teachers or peers for judgment, learners had to observe their own behaviour and record if a targeted behaviour occurred. In this way, learners developed awareness and the ability to reflect on their own learning which in turn may help them to be actively involved in their own learning process.

Some excerpts taken from the learners' response to different sources of data will be shown below. The first two excerpts are an example of the initial process of monitoring during the first weeks of implementation. Participants monitored their learning and progress in regards to listening skills and the use of the target language in class.

> Me pareció bien agradable al escuchar los audios 1 y 2 que pude captar creo en un 70%, siento que voy progresando en oir. (S1. Self-assessment of Online Class Participation. Survey 2. Original)

> En la clase de Inglés he tratado de atender las indicaciones y utilizar el vocabulario en el transcurso de la clase empleando los términos aprendidos y utilizarlos al máximo. (S4. Survey 2. Self-assessment on Class participation. Original)

Due to the fact that self-assessment was not exclusively focused on performance on structured tasks or skills, students could also reflect on topics they have studied and study habits or strategies. Thus, the next excerpts will show how participants monitored their learning and progress in relation to using specific learning strategies to practice English. Additionally, by the end of the course, they were also able to recognize what was learned or reinforced in terms of language use and strategies related to the process of learning a foreign language.

Aunque la temática en primera instancia ya la conocía, hubo temas que fueron reforzados

(physical appearance, comparative and superlative adjectives), que usaba pero sin la total

contextualización (daily routines, clothing, modal verbs,), y otros que permitieron conocer

mejor sus usos, sobre todo en el contexto habitual. (S3. Student Journal 2. Original)

Aprendí el tema de verbos modales, sobre estrategias de aprendizaje y sobre todo a ser

conciente de mi proceso y nivel de aprendizaje; también a reconocer mi compromiso como

estudiante. Este curso me ayudó muchísimo a conocer algunas estrategias que me sirvieron

y servirán para mejorar el aprendizaje de inglés, especialmente en listening, speaking.

También, me ayudó a perder el temor a hablar en inglés y ser conciente que un idioma

extranjero se aprende practicando frecuentemente. (S2. Students' Journal 2. Original)

These findings are coherent with research done by Coleman and Webber (2002), in

that by observing and recording their own behaviour, students comprehend the material and

contents more thoroughly, observed in the first sample above. In this regard, learners were

first aware of the course content and then were able to get a clearer idea of the materials

already covered (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 104). In addition, considering the second

sample, Zimmerman (1998) also indicates that self-monitoring enhances learners' self-

efficacy of the learning process. Bandura has defined self-efficacy as referring to "beliefs in

one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given

attainments" (1997, p. 3). This also provides students with a sense of agency to motivate

their learning through use of such self-regulatory processes as goal setting, self-monitoring,

self-evaluation, and strategy use, which are components of self-regulation.

On the other hand, the second cyclical phase of Zimmerman's (1998) model of self-regulation is that of performance/volitional control. One specific strategy here is time management, a process that involves self-monitoring and is a component that has been included in several programmes related to student success and achievement (ibid?, Bonner, & Kovach, 1996). According to Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1992), to manage time effectively, students should set specific goals, attribute outcomes to strategy use, and feel efficacious to learn a task within the allotted time. In the particular case of this study, all participants reported having some difficulties organizing time within their busy schedules, as shown in the excerpts below:

Realmente no tuve dificultades en el componente virtual, el hecho de no presentar todas las actividades a tiempo fue por congestión con todas mis actividades varias. (S1. Student Journal 2. Original)

En algunas ocasiones no pude cumplir a tiempo debido a mi falta de organización del tiempo para generar el espacio y desarrollar las actividades dentro del cronograma establecido. (S4. Student Journal 2. Original)

Algunas veces, por tiempo es muy difícil cumplir con la realización de actividades en línea en los plazos establecidos por la profesora. (S2. Survey 2. Self assessment of Online Class Participation. Original)

Time management is indeed a crucial learning skill. According to Zimmerman (1998), self-regulated methods are not only useful in learning, but once mastered

techniques can be useful throughout life to function effectively in informal contexts and different disciplines. In this regard, a self-regulated learner schedules daily studying and homework time, which is challenging, but doable if learners are trained and engage in self-regulated processes. This specific feature of self-regulated learning was not observable in this study, which shows that even when participants managed to monitor their learning and progress, their lack of effective time management may affect their level of engagement and achievement in current or future learning experiences.

This subcategory has described the way participants monitored their learning outcomes and individual progress, and how specific constraints might have induced the level of involvement in their own learning process. However, learner involvement is increased when a student feels responsible for his or her learning and therefore wants to continue learning on his or her own. In this way, learners' motivation increases, as will be described in the following subcategories.

5.9.2.2. Planning and setting individual goals

The researcher considered that specific features of learner's external and internal motivation were observable. To begin with, this subcategory will show intrinsic motivation, which was identified as a goal during learners' planning.

As learners monitored and reflected on their learning process, they felt encouraged to become more actively involved in their own process and set simple plans or goals to overcome weaknesses, improve their competence, and continue learning. Indeed, self-

monitoring activities give students a sense of personal control that has been shown to be a

major source of intrinsic motivation to continue learning on their own (Chang, 2007). The

excerpts below are examples of internal motivation that was increased; participants

intended to achieve short- and long-term goals not suggested by the teacher.

Mi meta…conocer y aprender más vocabulario y la pronunciación de las combinaciones en

el idioma. (S1. Student Journal 1. Original)

I should study and practice vocabulary 15 minutes everyday. I should review audios or

videos 20 minutes everyday (S2 Journal Entry 1. Original)

Practicar con las tutoras de inglés, tratando de establecer todo contacto usando el inglés.

Buscar información tecnológica en inglés, revistas, periódicos. Usar los servicios de

postcasting que hay habilitados en internet y que tratan temas en inglés (entre otras) (S3.

Student' Journal 2. Original)

Evidently, self- assessment practice encouraged learners to become independent and

autonomous, inferred from the last excerpt. As noticed by O'Malley and Valdez, (1996, p.

5) when students self-regulate, they "have control over their learning, they can decide how

to use the resources available to them within or outside the classroom". In addition, when

teachers help learners identify short-term goals and reflect on their progress and

achievements, they are facilitating motivation and helping learners take charge of their

learning (Marshall, 2002). In this way, self-assessment complements learning goals and

helps students maintain high levels of self-efficacy (Schunk & Ertmer, 2000).   In addition,

Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1988) listed goal setting and planning as effective self-

regulated learning strategies consisting of students' setting of educational goals or sub-

goals, and planning for sequencing, timing, and completing activities related to those goals.

However, as Bandura and Schunk (1981) concluded, self-motivation can best be created

and sustained by attainable sub-goals that lead to larger goals, something that participants

from this study would need to work on by engaging in active self-monitoring processes and

establishing individual learning plans.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that intrinsic motivation was a relevant factor in this

particular context, as taking or completing this course was not compulsory, and participants

did not receive any academic credit and were not required to complete the course.

5.9.2.3 Subcategory: Responding to scaffolded instruction

This subcategory has to do with teacher's skills and class atmosphere, conditions

that may influence learners' motivation. With the use of appropriate teaching skills or

strategies, teachers may increase or decrease motivation. In other words, the teacher's

actions have a motivational, formative influence on students. Teacher behaviour is a

powerful "motivational tool" (Dornyei, 2001, p. 120). Furthermore, a relaxed and helpful

atmosphere can support students who are unlikely to develop motivation to learn (Good &

Brophy, 1994, p. 215). In this regard, Dornyei (2002) claims that the learning environment

may affect a learner's attitude, effort, and achievement. The excerpts below will address

the learner's extrinsic motivation generated by the classroom environment or by the tutor:

> Me he sentido a gusto en clase, he logrado avanzar en mi proceso de aprendizaje y me
>
> anima a seguir adelante. (S4. Survey 1. Self-assessment of Face-to-face class participation.
>
> Original)

> Las estrategias que utilizó facilitaron el aprendizaje y comprensión de los temas. También
>
> me ayudó a mejorar aspectos como speaking y listening. Me mantuvo motivada para
>
> asistir y desarrollar las actividades presenciales y virtuales. (S2. Student Journal 2. Original)

On the other hand, Mckenzie (2000) points out that scaffolded instruction has to do

with providing clear direction and guidelines to reduce student confusion by explaining to

them what to do to meet expectations, clarifying lessons or tasks, keeping students on task,

incorporating assessment and feedback, and providing students with helpful sources. The

following excerpts show participants' reactions towards the teacher's skills in regards to

giving feedback and monitoring and teaching strategies, which affected their motivation:

> La profesora siempre estuvo atenta a nuestras inquietudes, a realizar seguimiento a nuestro
>
> proceso de aprendizaje y a enseñarnos estrategias para autoevaluar dicho proceso. Ésto
>
> aumenta nuestra motivación para aprender una nueva lengua. (S2. Survey 2. Self-
>
> assessment of Online class participation. Original)

> La tutora siempre brinda realimentación del proceso académico dentro del curso, dando a
>
> conocer las falencias y resaltando las fortalezas que se posee, sugiriendo los cambios que se
>
> deben realizar en el trabajo con el fin de realizar los ajustes y volverlos a enviar para

verificar que se cumplió con lo solicitado en las observaciones. (S4. Survey 2. Self-

assessment of Online class participation. Original)

When designing activities for both online and face-to-face sessions it is important to

consider scaffolded instruction. Learners need guided and flexible support, which must be

adjusted to the learner's needs and the tasks. In a blended learning environment, the design

of online language activities must use a pedagogical approach and provide students with

support and resources to facilitate their engagement in online tasks (McLoughlin, 2002).

Findings presented in the category *Increased learners' involvement in their*

individual progress show there was a gradual progress in students' involvement in the

language learning process when using self-monitoring and self-reflection strategies.

Overall, participants monitored their individual progress, set learning goals, and responded

positively to scaffolded instruction. These findings are supported by Boud and Falchikov

(1989), who claim that self-assessment refers to the involvement of learners in making

judgments about their own learning, particularly about their achievements and the outcomes

of their learning. Likewise, this broad category is related to the fact that self-assessment

increases the role of learners as active participants in their own learning (Boud, 1995), and

is mostly used for formative assessment to foster reflection on one's own learning processes

and results.

This chapter has described the data analysis method and procedures followed in this

research study. It also presented findings from the analysed data. The next chapters will

reveal the main conclusions that arose at the end of this research study, as well as some

limitations observed during the implementation. Additionally, the pedagogical implications

on the application of this study in other teaching contexts and suggestions for further

research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions and Limitations

The goal of this study was to analyse to what extent self-monitoring and self-reflection strategies affected the learning experience of a group of A1 adult learners in a blended learning environment. Data collected allowed the researcher to identify a core category that described how the use of the above-mentioned strategies affected participants. Participants in this study increased their awareness of and involvement in the language learning process.

Since this English course was not a requirement for these learners, they were not required to complete it or give evidence of achievements or progress. Therefore, self-assessment helped them become more involved in the learning process. As Baldwin (2000) points out, reflection can help students understand that far from responding to an event that happens and finishes with a grade, learning is a process. In this way, participants were given the opportunity to monitor their own performance, identify their weaknesses, and evaluate their individual progress and accomplishments. Thus, when students were able to identify weaknesses, their awareness of the learning process was increased, and eventually their level of responsibility for the learning process was also raised.

At the same time, introducing self-assessment as a component of this course allowed students' learning styles and prior experiences to emerge, showing that some learners are more easily involved in self-assessing their performance, while others take time to adjust to the self-assessment culture. As Van Eekehen, et. al (2005) state, teachers' self-

regulation may be considered an assumption, since teachers expect their own learners to be self-regulated. Similarly, this group of distance teachers usually expect their students to respond effectively to the course requirements; however, being involved in a blended learning environment in which they had to assume a high level of engagement, some had trouble with time management and organization. It can be observed that when it comes to learning, assumptions may differ from real experiences or perspectives. Thus, teachers need to become learners and engage in a lifelong learning process.

Indeed, these participants managed to develop self-regulated learning to some extent, as they made progress on gaining some control over their learning. This enabled some of them to "decide how to use the resources available to them within or outside the classroom" (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996, p. 5). It was also evident that participants increased involvement in their individual learning by monitoring their progress and augmenting their motivation to learn a foreign language by planning future learning goals.

Finally, this study also reported findings on students' response to scaffolding instruction, their perceptions of a blended learning course, and the most evident constraint that affected learner engagement in the learning process. A common challenge, time management, faced by many individuals in different contexts, was also evident during the implementation of this study. When it comes to online learning success, the ability to effectively manage learning time is considered an essential element in online learning success (Kearsley, 2000). On the other hand, a significant finding was participants' satisfaction with the blended learning modality, and the benefits they saw with this methodology, despite the fact they have been working as fully online instructors for the past three years on average.

Limitations

Although findings of this research project were significant, the study was not done

without some limitations. One limitation included that the sample was small due to

personal constraints faced by other participants who initially registered for the course or

those who had time management issues which affected their attendance and higher

participation. Another limitation was in regards to data collected in the self-assessment

checklists for units 1 and 2 and on the first survey on face-to-face-class participation. Some

participants completed the self-assessment forms but did not provide or expand their

comments, so that not a lot of qualitative data was obtained from these three initial

instruments. Additionally, the researcher found it would have been helpful to have another

instrument, such as focus groups or interviews, to follow-up the initial instruments.

Interviews or focus groups may have obtained relevant and significant information in

addition to what was already obtained in this study. For example, surveys on face-to-face

and online classes could have been followed by a focus group to further explore

participants' perceptions on individual performance and progress as well as to share their

feelings and perceptions during the implementation of the self-assessment component.

Finally, participants were experienced distance tutors with high computer and

technological skills, so the level of satisfaction with the blended environment might not

represent the same feelings of other participants from different professional contexts.

Therefore, future researchers in this area should consider students' prior learning

experiences with online learning environments and their potential difficulties while

adapting to a blended course methodology.

Chapter 7: Pedagogical implications and further research

Overall, this study was an accomplishment of the researcher's goals in the project, but some improvements could be made to the procedure when implementing a similar research study.

Despite the fact that self-assessment is an effective tool to promote learning, it is still challenging to accustom students and have them fully engaged in this assessment culture. Thus, it may not be always easy to implement self-assessment within a language education programme, as it depends on other factors including cultural, psychological, and pedagogical issues that might interfere with this approach in the classroom.

However, teachers of English must find ways to incorporate self-assessment in their teaching and provide scaffolded instruction when introducing self-assessment practices within the classroom. Further instruction proves to be helpful during the implementation of self-assessment strategies. Some recommendations are as follows:

- Clearly explain the purposes of self-assessment to learners and remind them of the importance of giving complete answers.
- Take time to guide students while they complete forms and activities and provide practice and training in assessment so they know how to judge their work and submit formats in a timely manner.
- Consider the fact that learners may feel less anxious and more secure if they can use their first language to write their answers and /or reflections on their learning.

In one activity planned in the course syllabus, participants of this project self-assessed their performance when writing an informal letter to a pen pal friend. However, this activity did not have a long implementation and was not taken into consideration for research purposes. Nevertheless, this type of classroom activity might help students familiarize themselves with the idea of judging their own work or having peers review and give feedback, which can support self-assessment practices and provide students with more tools to actively participate in formative assessment. Thus, future researchers in this area are advised to investigate self-assessment on specific performance of a particular language skill or task, an aspect that was not incorporated in the current research design.

It is also recommended to use a larger sample when studying this phenomenon, as distinct cultural backgrounds and varied personality features may provide the researcher with a sufficient amount of information for a deeper, more enriching data analysis. Moreover, the links between self-assessment, self-regulation and self-efficacy in language achievement could be more deeply explored.

Finally, novice researchers wanting to consolidate research proposals in the field of blended language are advised to design self-assessment tools to provide learners with opportunities to express their reactions towards this methodology. In addition, it is convenient to guide learners on the use of specific language learning strategies that support their learning process. A blended level course might suit different training programmes offered by higher education universities or non-formal education institutions. However, it is relevant to first get a deeper understanding of the context and anticipate possible difficulties or problems, such as time management issues and prior learning experiences. At the same

time, a project targeting self-assessment in a blended learning environment would benefit

greatly from implementing virtual or physical language resource centres that provide

counselling to students' independent learning plans in this specific learning context.

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9. Appendixes

Appendix 1

Excerpt from Survey results
Learner Profile

RESPUESTAS	
Pregunta:	
Do you consider yourself an autonomous learner? Why - Briefly explain ¿Se considera usted un aprendiz autónomo? Explique brevemente por qué	
Opción:	
Do you consider yourself an autonomous learner?	
Alta ▲	Respuesta
19/02/2011 8:27:03	Yes, I can learn with the help of a good book
21/02/2011 14:33:04	Si me considero un aprendiz autónomo, porque uno mismo es el artífice de su propio desarrollo y aprendizaje, pero entendieno este aprendizaje dentro de un contexto social, porque como seres humanos somos sociables por naturaleza y aprendemos del otro y con los otros.
21/02/2011 21:27:48	Si, sot especialista en esta pedagogia, y el 90% de mis estudios los he realizado en la modalidad a distancia
21/02/2011 21:52:57	Cuando me interesa un tema, investigo y busco la forma de aprender.

22/02/2011 9:20:37	Sí, soy disciplinado y comprometido con las metas que me propongo. y creo que esa el la primera herramienta del aprendizaje autónomo.
22/02/2011 19:24:54	Si, regulo mi aprendizaje, realizo auto evaluaciones para conocer mis desaciertos y corregirlos.
22/02/2011 19:28:51	Si, porque cuando estoy interesado o me corresponde aprender sobre lo tema, investigo y analizo la información relacionada al mismo.
22/02/2011 22:26:02	Si, pues se organizar mi tiempo y cumplir con tareas específicas por medio de la autoregulación de mi conocimiento.
23/02/2011 15:27:07	A veces pienso que no soy un buen aprendíz autónomo porque requiero de mucha motivación y me falta disciplina.
23/02/2011 19:10:25	Experiencias previas de aprendizaje relacionadas con el modelo pedagógico de la UNAD que se enfocan en el aprendizaje autonomo me han permitido desarrollar actitudes positivas hacia dicho modelo y me han demostrado la eficacia del mismo.

RESPUESTAS

Pregunta:

14. Would you be interested in self-monitoring and self-assessing your own progress in the learning process in this course ? YES NO Briefly explain. ¿Estaría interesado en monitorear y auto-evaluar su propio progreso en el proceso de aprendizaje en este curso ? SI NO Explique brevemente

Alta ▲	Respuesta
19/02/2011 8:30:51	Yes, I see that with the right tool we can self-assesing, but sometimes it's important the interaction because the practice, the interaction, they confirm s if we have learn
21/02/2011 14:45:27	Si estaría interesada en monitorear y auto-evaluar mi propio progreso en el proceso de aprendizaje de este idioma con el apoyo y acompañamiento de usted, porque así podría establecer estatregias de aprendizaje para subsanar las debilidades y afianzar aquellos aspectos que presente fortalezas. Así que estaré dispuesta a asumir este reto.
21/02/2011 21:35:52	Si, esto permite encontrar las fallas de estudio-aprendizaje, de alli se pueden generar nuevas estrategias y tacticas de aprendizaje
21/02/2011 21:57:45	SI, para conocer mis debilidades y mejorar.
22/02/2011 9:34:20	Si, es la forma de revisar la fortalezas y falencias en el proceso de aprendizaje.
22/02/2011 19:29:07	si.. estas dos actividades hacen parte de el aprendizaje autónomo.
22/02/2011 19:33:38	Si, para detectar mis debilidades y por ende superarlas y las fortalezas me impulsen a lograr la meta de aprendizaje del idioma Inglés.
22/02/2011 22:28:44	Si, pues es importante para tener una percepción más real del avance en la formación...
23/02/2011 15:41:40	SI. Si me dan a conocer metodologías de seguimiento al autoaprendizaje estaría muy interesado porque podría mejorar mis logros en el curso con la UNAD y a su vez aplicarlas a cualquier curso ahora que en internet se ofrecen varios que parecen ser de buena calidad.
23/02/2011 19:14:52	Si estoy interesada en monitorear mi proceso de aprendizaje para identificar las debilidades oportunamente y poder progresar en el uso adecuado de esta importante lengua

| 01/03/2011 8:38:21 | Si,puesto que es muy importante tener en cuenta los propios avances y autoevaluarlo. |

Survey hosted at http://www.encuestafacil.com/Default.aspx

Appendix 2
Consent Letter

Bucaramanga, 24 de Marzo de 2011

Estimado (a) Estudiante
Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia
Bucaramanga

Apreciado(a) Estudiante:

Actualmente como parte de mi trabajo de grado de la Maestría en *Didáctica del Inglés* de la Universidad de la Sabana estoy realizando una investigación titulada "Promoting self-assessment in adult language learning in a blended learning environment", cuyo objetivo es aplicar herramientas de auto-evaluación como componente de un curso de Inglés con modalidad combinada (blended learning) en un grupo de estudiantes adultos.

Por lo anterior, comedidamente solicito su consentimiento para realizar mi propuesta de investigación durante el desarrollo del curso de Inglés que usted está realizando. El proyecto implica recolectar datos relacionados con la implementación de actividades de auto-evaluación tanto en las sesiones presenciales como en las virtuales, y explorar el efecto de las mismas en el desarrollo del curso.

Su identidad se mantendrá en el anonimato en mi reporte del proyecto, y se garantiza estricta confidencialidad con la información que se recolecte. Su participación en este proyecto es voluntaria. Si tiene alguna duda respecto al proyecto, puede comunicármela mediante correo electrónico a dianalujan2000@gmail.com

Agradezco de antemano su valiosa colaboración para llevar a buen término mi investigación.

Atentamente,
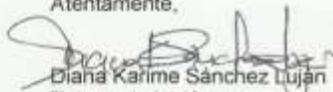
Diana Karime Sánchez Luján
Tutora de Inglés

Por favor complete la siguiente información y entréguela a la tutora en la próxima sesión.

He leído la información sobre el proyecto de investigación descrito arriba. Doy mi consentimiento para participar en este proyecto.

Nombre: Luz Marina Rueda R

Firma: *(firma manuscrita)*
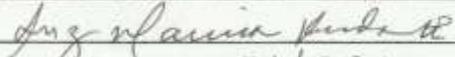
Fecha: Marzo 31/2011

Appendix 3
Sample of Unit checklist

Unit 1 Self-assessment Checklist

Dear Student,

*The purpose of this self-assessment checklist is to help you to monitor your learning
progress, in relation to language skills and unit contents.*
*Please fill in this checklist to record what you think you can do in English and assess your
progress on the contents and skills regarding Unit 1.*
*You can revisit the contents and activities for this Unit in the virtual course to help you fill
in this format. Thanks for your time.*

Name: XXXXXXXXXXXX	Date: 17 abril 2011 Unit 1		
After this unit I can :	**Easily**	**Need More Practice**	**Not At All**
Listening			
I can understand specific information and details related to personal information and daily activities.		X	
I can understand simple classroom instructions.	X		
Speaking			
I can ask for and give personal information (name, where from, telephone number, age and occupation)	X		
I can ask people questions about their daily activities and answer such questions addressed to me.		X	
Writing			
I can write about myself and others' personal information and daily routines in simple phrases and sentences.	X		
I can use verbs noun collocations and adverbs of frequency to write about my daily routines.		X	
Reading			
I think about what I know about the topic and make predictions about the content of the text.	X		
In everyday situations I can understand simple messages written by friends or colleagues	X		

Read and Complete the following statements
The classroom materials and activities for this unit were. interesting and allowed me to expand my knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and more confidence to listen and speak...
The online activities for this unit were. ..allowed me to express what I learned.
What I enjoyed the most was… the description of persons.

Adapted from
http://www.nald.ca/library/learning/btg/ed/evaluation/general.htm
http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/appendix2.pdf

Appendix 4

Instrument: Survey (Hosted in Moodle Questionnaire)

Name: Self-Assessment of Online Class Participation

Dear Student,

As you know this is a blended course, meaning that we have two face-to-face sessions and one online session. Therefore, the purpose of this questionnaire is to find out how you are doing with your learning process in relation to the online component.

There are 12 multiple choice questions in which you have to select the answer that best describes your situation, or opinion according to the following frequency:

-Always (100%)
-Often (80%)
-Sometimes (50)
-Seldom (30%)
-Never (0%)

There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. There are also three (3) open questions in each section. Please be assured that your responses will be treated with a high degree of confidentiality and will only be examined for research purposes. Thanks for taking the time to fill in this format.

Self-Assessment of Online Class Participation					
1. Attendance and participation					
1. I check course materials and updated resources.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
2. I follow the guidelines given for each assignment.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
3. I complete the different assignments every week in the due date.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
4. I keep my tutor notified of any problems, issues, or questions	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

that arise.					

Comments: Please feel free to complement your answers by writing any comment related to this category. Your comments will be helpful for your tutor.

2. Interaction

5. The content of my post (in the forums) responds to the guidelines provided.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
6. I read my classmate's contributions in the forums and respond to at least two of my peers' postings.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
7. In collaborative tasks, I am willing to give frequent contributions to revise and develop the final product with my peers.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

Comments: Please feel free to complement your answers by writing any comment related to this category. Your comments will be helpful for your tutor.

Activities and teacher's support

8. Each online activity has clear guidelines that facilitate task development.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
9. The tutor gives feedback and support for all online activities	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
10. Online activities encourage me to think of what I learn and need to learn.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
11. Online activities are helpful for my learning process	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

Comments: Please feel free to complement your answers by writing any comment related to this category. Your comments will be helpful for your tutor.

Appendix 5

Survey: Self-assessment of Class participation

Self-assessment on Class Participation Weeks 1-7
Part I – Face to –face sessions

Please fill out this questionnaire by marking the appropriate box:

☐ Always   ☐ Often   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Seldom   ☐ Never

Individual

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1. I come to class on time	Always	Often ✓	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
2. I usually ask the teacher questions	Always	Often	Sometimes ✓	Seldom	Never
3. I usually answer the questions that the teacher or my classmates ask	Always ✓	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
4. I take notes about key vocabulary expressions, and other important things.	Always ✓	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
5. I use the new vocabulary in class	Always	Often	Sometimes ✓	Seldom	Never
6. I do the writing exercises in class	Always ✓	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

Comments:
Se me dificulta preguntar, ya que temo error en la pronunciacion
Debo practicar más el vocabulario

Interaction

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
7. In group work activities I offer my opinion and cooperate with my peers.	Always ✓	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
8. I use English when I work with one or more of my classmates	Always	Often	Sometimes ✓	Seldom	Never
9. In class discussions I make comments and I clarify things someone else says.	Always	Often ✓	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
10. The tutor listens to my questions and monitors my work in class.	Always ✓	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
11. The tutor explains clearly and encourages my participation in class.	Always ✓	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
12. I feel that I learn and practice my English in each class.	Always ✓	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

Comments:
En las clases me siento tranquila y con confianza para interactuar y comunicarme con mis compañeros y profesoras

Appendix 6
Samples from learners' journal 1

1. Ha aprendido / practicado Inglés durante las pasadas clases (semana 1-7)? SI_X___NO___ Si la respuesta es SI, por favor especifique.	1. HAVE you learned /practiced English during the past lessons (Week 1-7)? YES____ NO____ IF YES, PLEASE INDICATE
Considero que he aprendido y practicado porque los temas vistos en los encuentros tuvieron con base inicialmente el marco disciplinar, luego la práctica y por último la autoevaluación de lo realizado.	Yes. I learned and practiced: - Asking and answers about personal information. - Daily routines: Verb-noun, vocabulary. - Physical descriptions. - Present progressive or continuous. - Family: Family Tree, my family. - Comparative and superlative adjectives.
2. ¿Tiene alguna dificultad? SI___NO___ Cuales ¿Por qué? / Si no hay dificultades, en qué áreas necesita trabajar más? ¿Por qué?	2. Are you having difficulties? YES___NO___ which ones Why? If there are not difficulties, which areas do you need to work on? Why?
Considero que debo mejorar el escuchar y la conversación.	Yes. I need to work vocabulary and listening about Physical descriptions and daily routines. Because, vocabulary is important for I can speak and understand english language.
3. ¿Cuál es su plan para hacer frente a esta (s) dificultad (es) / para trabajar en dichas áreas?	3. What is your plan to deal with this (these) difficulty (difficulties) /to work on those areas?
Conocer y aprender mas vocabulario y la pronunciación de las combinaciones en el idioma inglés.	I should study and practice vocabulary 15 minutes everyday. I should review audios or videos 20 minutes everyday.
4. ¿Está utilizando una estrategia de aprendizaje o recurso sugerido en este curso? Si es así, ¿cuál? Explique. La escala, de las listas de chequeo: siempre, frecuentemente, algunas veces, rara vez, nunca.	4. Are you using any learning strategy or resource suggested in this course? If so, which one? Explain
En cuanto a pronunciación relacionar pronunciaciones de silabas con palabras ya conocidas como school y Schedule. Conocer que el sonido de una palabra determina su extensión, por ejemplo, large como la e final no suena es de una sola silaba.	Yes. Strategy A: 1. I'm reading texts. 2. I'm learning new vocabulary of texts.
5. ¿Qué tipo de orientación o apoyo – si es el caso-ha sido más útil para usted hasta ahora?	

Cuando se esta socializando en el grupo porque despejo dudas y confirmo los conocimientos del idioma ingles.	3. I'm understanding contents of texts. 4. I try to pronounce text. Strategy B: 1. I choose a song (lyric) of youtube. 2. I listen to song and read text (simultaneously) 3. I sing song. (Repeat) 4. I identify new vocabulary. 5. What kind of guidance or support – if any- has been more helpful for you so far. Learning strategies and self-assessment.

Appendix 7
Samples of learners' journal 2

9. Por favor exprese sus impresiones y percepciones con relación al desarrollo de las actividades de auto-evaluación (self-assessment) asignadas tanto en las sesiones presenciales como en las virtuales. *-Siempre es una falta de cultura en esta parte del aprendizaje, así que siempre representa un esfuerzo el auto-evaluar, sobre todo para mí que no tengo la costumbre de revisar el camino recorrido, pero ha sido un esfuerzo interesante, una introspección adecuada y bueno, ahí voy aprendiendo Yo también sobre ese proceso.* *-Me ayudaron como medio de reflexión sobre mi proceso de aprendizaje, motivación y compromiso como estudiante o aprehendiente. La evaluación formativa me permitió analizar mi proceso de aprendizaje durante cada fase y de forma continua en este curso.*	7. ¿Las actividades de auto-evaluación realizadas después de completar cada unidad (*Self-assessment Unit checklist*) le ayudaron a identificar en cada unidad lo aprendido y/o en lo que necesitaba mayor práctica? SI_X__ Por favor explique. NO___ Por favor explique. *-Sí, me ayudaron muchísimo. Identifiqué los temas que debía mejorar y en los que necesitaba más práctica, por ejemplo: A describir una persona de forma correcta.* *-Las actividades de autoevaluación realizadas después de completar cada unidad me ayudaron a identificar que había aprendido y en qué áreas necesitaba más refuerzo para lograr el aprendizaje del tema.*
1. En comparación con los cursos de Inglés que previamente haya tomado (sean estos virtuales o presenciales) ¿qué opina de haber tenido en este curso una metodología combinada: dos sesiones presenciales y una virtual cada semana? ¿Le gustó? ¿Le pareció apropiado? SI_X_ NO__ Por favor explique. *-Es una muy buena combinación, pues a pesar de todo, el inglés puede ser aprendido totalmente en línea, pero hay algunos tópicos que como la pronunciación, el analizar el contexto, etc son apropiados para asimilar ya en sesiones presenciales, pues aún falta ese proceso de realimentación que se genera de forma sincrónica* *-La metodología combinada para aprender Inglés en mi concepto es más efectiva que la totalmente presencial o virtual porque permite realizar una interacción cara a cara con el tutor y con los compañeros para afianzar el aprendizaje y así como también a asumir un rol más dinámico e interactivo. Me gustó mucho porque fue una experiencia muy significativa y enriquecedora.*	6. ¿Las actividades de auto-evaluación de las clases presenciales (*Self-assessment on Class participation- Face to -Face)* le ayudaron en su proceso de aprendizaje? SI_X__ Por favor explique. NO___ Por favor explique. *Si, las actividades de autoevaluación me permitieron diagnosticar como era mi participación en la clase y proponer esforzarme más en la participación activa y concreta en cada una de las actividades.* 5. ¿Las actividades de auto-evaluación de las clases virtuales (*Self-assessment on Online Class participation*) le ayudaron en su proceso de aprendizaje? SI_X__ Por favor explique. NO____ Por favor explique. *-Las actividades de autoevaluación de las clases virtuales me ayudaron mucho en el proceso de aprendizaje porque me permitió valorar mi proceso de aprendizaje y determinar cómo estaba avanzando y cuáles eran las deficiencias detectadas con el fin de tomar las medidas correctivas necesarias.*

Appendix 8
Lesson Plan (Face-to-Face session)

Name of teacher: **Diana K. Sánchez Luján**	

Institution: Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia –UNAD –Bucaramanga

Date of Observation: DAY MONTH YEAR 17 05 2011	**Time of observation** 8:00 -9:20 a.m.	**Length of class** 80 minutes

Class/grade: Adults	**Room: Auditorio Guane**

Main Aim(s):

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Use modal verbs to give advice and express possibilities and responsibilities for prospective online tutors and students.

Subsidiary Aims:

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Practice writing recommendations and share opinions in a power point presentation.
- Review form and function of modal verbs of advice, possibility and obligation.

Personal aims:

- To increase group work and discussion.
- To encourage students' to reflect on their own teaching context.

Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Time and interaction
<u>Warm –Up</u>	To get students interested in the topic and activate prior knowledge.	Students will watch a video: *23 things every distance education student needs (available at* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srwKs s-snds&feature=related (2 minutes)). The video has images and subtitles. Prior to this, the teacher will ask the students to think of 3 things distance learners are able to do. While watching the video, students will have a handout, to complete five sentences using the most convenient modal verb form based on ideas taken from the video. (See appendix 1)	SS 10 '
<u>Checking the structure /Introducing the lesson topic</u>	To check students' understanding of the meaning and use of Modal Verbs	The teacher will introduce some sentences using different modal verbs. She will ask students to identify the form and function of the modals (Can-Can't – Be Able to-Must-Mustn't –Should--Have to). They will first discuss in pairs and then with the whole class. The teacher will guide students' contributions during class discussion.	SS 15'
<u>Controlled Practice</u>	To allow students to use language to give advice and/ or express obligations.	Teacher will tell students that they have been assigned to give advice to a group of prospective online tutors and students. Therefore, they will work in groups to prepare a power point presentation, with two slides. The first one to express responsibilities and duties for both students and tutors, and the second one with advice.	T-SS SS-SS 25'

		Laptops will be provided, as well as the template for the presentation that includes one sample of what they are expected to do. (See Appendix 2) Students can review information from the web site they previously read about, but they will be encouraged to use their own observations and experiences as distance tutors. Students will work in two groups; one group will do the presentation for tutors, and the other one for students. The teacher will monitor each group's work.	
Production/ Evaluation	To give students the opportunity to use the language in a meaningful context.	Each group will share their presentation and the teacher will ask the students on the other group their opinions about their peers' ideas. At the same time, the teacher will select some samples and ask students to analyse them in terms of the use of modal verbs. The teacher and peers from each group will provide feedback.	SS T-S 20'
Closure	To provide students with instructions about follow up activities.	The teacher will ask students to revise and upload the power point presentations to the forum opened in the virtual course. Also, she will ask students to post their reading activity (*topic: Tips for online tutors and students*) in another forum, so that students can review and comment on other posts.	SS 10'

Appendix 9
Lesson Plan – Online and face-to-face sessions

Session	Aim	Procedure
Online Session 6-9 May	. E-tivity 1 To give learners the opportunity to contribute to class development by preparing a presentation on a grammar point. To encourage learners' to study a grammar point of their own, use resources and share what they have learned.	Students will prepare an individual contribution on the grammar point they were previously assigned: **Modal Verbs to express possibility, ability, prohibition, obligation, responsibility, necessity, advice and suggestions**. Each student was given a different modal verb. Each student's presentation will include**:** **Form: Sentence structure** **Meaning : What the modal means in Spanish** **Use: Concept and use of the modal verb, 3 examples connected to personal lives.**
Face-to-face Session 10 May	To give learners the opportunity to use language to communicate and take the role of the teacher by giving explanations and examples on the topic assigned. To get learners actively involved by let them be responsible for the class development and give their presentation to the whole class. To offer peer feedback to classmates' presentations.	Each student will give his/her presentation on the modal verb assigned, following the guidelines indicated in the assignment. Peers will ask questions if necessary and offer feedback. The teacher will monitor the activity. Learners will post their presentations on the forum.
Face to face session 12 May	To identify and use the right modal verbs for specific situations. To practice giving recommendations and advice To practice expressing obligations and responsibilities To offer advice and give	Learners will review the use of the modal verbs studied. Learners will work in groups to do specific exercises (worksheet) intended to identify and use the right modal verb for different situations. They will discuss with their peers on which modal is the correct one to use in any given sentence and why. Learners will be classified in two

	recommendations, in response to a person's problem (Teenage problems)	groups. Each group will read the situation given, and will start thinking of the possible sentences to offer advice and recommendations in regards to a person's problem (Teenage problems).
Online Session 13-16 May	E-tivity 1 To offer advice to teenager's problems and practice giving recommendations. To understand other people's advice and offer some more recommendations E-tivity 2 To self evaluate the use of modal verbs by taking an online quiz. E-tivity 3 To read some short articles related to the responsibilities, necessary skills and recommendations related to distance online education.	Each student will visit the forum opened to post his/her advice to the teenager's problem previously assigned (Forums) Learners can visit the other group's forum to know the situation posted and give advice if they want. Learners will take an individual online quiz on Modal verbs. They will revise their score and will be able to retake the quiz if they want. Learners will choose one of the articles posted and will do skimming and scanning reading activities to fill in a reading comprehension format. (a required activity for next f2f session)
Face-to-face session 17 May	To use modal verbs and give advice to prospective online tutors and students. To practice writing recommendations and share opinions in a power point presentation. To review form and function of modal verbs of advice, possibility and obligation. To increase group work and discussion. To encourage students' to reflect on their own teaching context	After a warm up activity, students will identify the form and function of the modals. Then, they will work in two groups to prepare a presentation for prospective online tutors and students, expressing responsibilities and duties for both students and tutors, and giving advice. Students can review information from the readings they previously did, but will be encouraged to use their own observations and experiences as distance tutors. Each group will give their presentation; the teacher will ask the students on the other group their opinions about their peers' ideas. At the same time, the teacher and peers from each group will provide feedback. Finally both reading activities and power point presentations will be uploaded to the forums.

Appendix 10

Timeline of Implementation

Stage /Month-Week	Activity	Data Collection Instrument(s)
Pre- Stage February	- Definition of research topic and question Literature review, finish studying the context. -Design of a blended learning course in a virtual platform. -Pre-learning activities: Diagnosis and Survey to get to know the learners. -Course Design: Syllabus, contents, resources and activities. -Information about the project for the participants	None
While-Stage March : Week 1-4	-Consent letter to the participants -Consolidation of the project and final revision for implementation. -Validation of instruments	Design and validation of data collection instruments: -Checklists -Journal 1 -Journal (teacher) -Surveys
April: Weeks 1-4	Start implementation. Implementation of data collection instruments	Unit checklists 1. Survey: F2F and Online class participation. Journal 1 Teacher's journal
May: Weeks 1-4	Edit questions for second journal. Start reading and analyzing data trough open coding.	Unit checklists 2. Surveys: F2F and Online class participation. Journal 2 Teachers' journal

Post-Stage June –July	-Read data collected and improve understanding of grounded theory and other relevant literature.	None
August – September	-Improve Open coding -Move to axial coding and triangulation process. -Refine data analysis -Work on selective coding -Improve writing thesis	
October - November	-Prepare a presentation and outline an article. -Submit final research report	

Appendix 11

Screenshots from the virtual platform for the blended course

Hosted at http://englishandautonomouslearning.freewebclass.com/
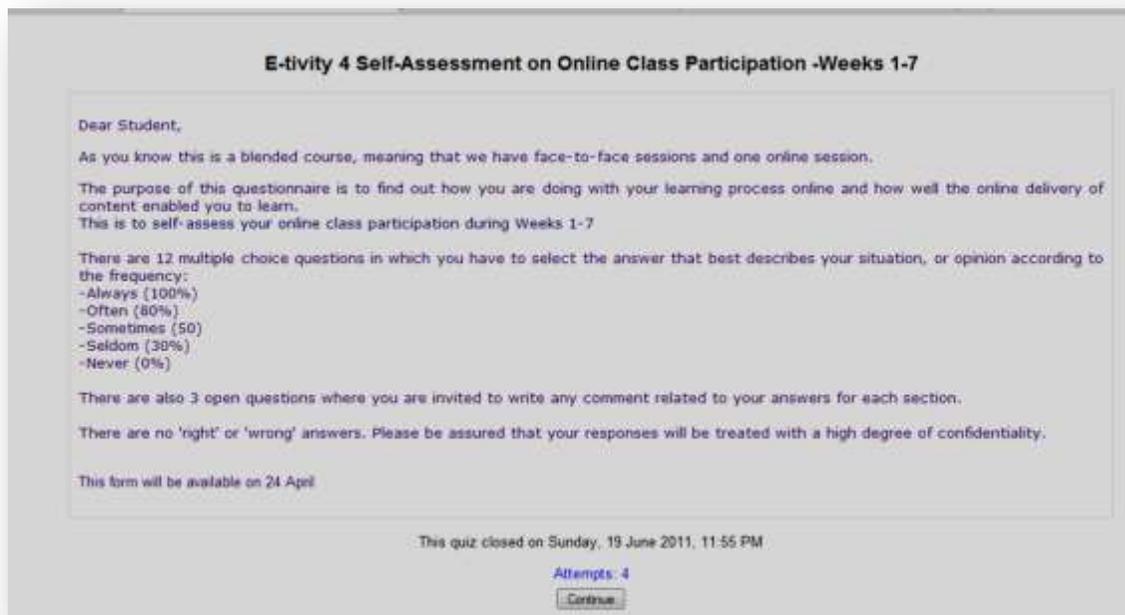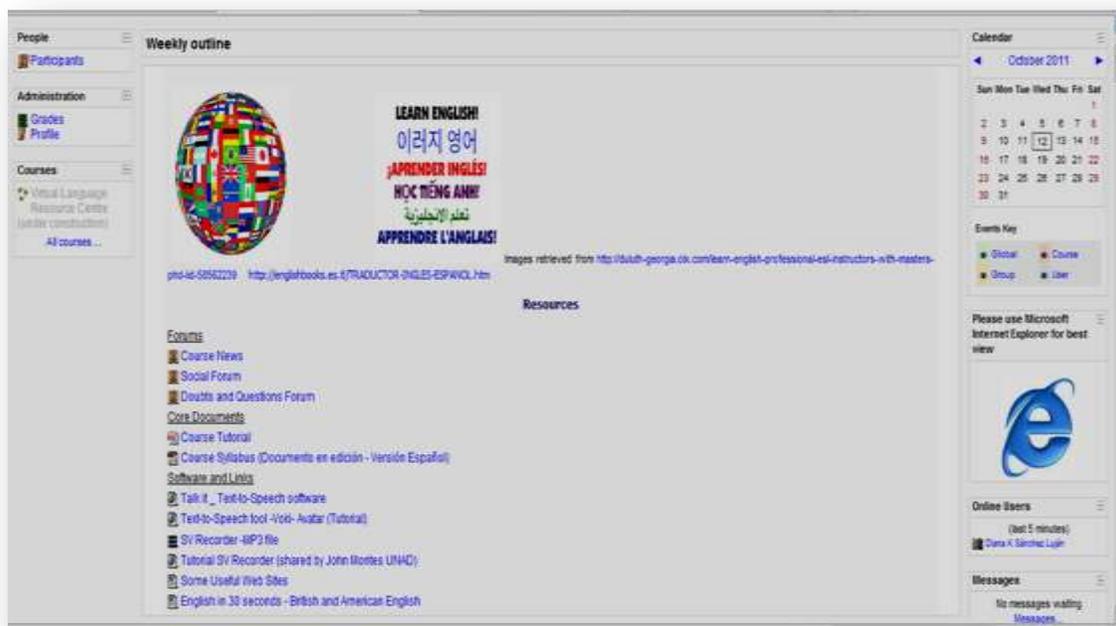
Appendix 11

Survey on Online Class Participation – Screenshot

8 March - 14 March

Week 2

Unit 1B

8 - 10 March
Class materials /activities
📑 Class Overview_Week 2
📑 Class Activity
📑 Video: A day in the life of Dennis Cook
📑 Check your answers and notes with Serene
E-tivities for your Online session 11-14 March

I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand.
— CONFUCIUS

Image retrieved from wellspokenwalls.com

📑 E-tivity 1 Journal Entry 2
📑 E-tivity 2 - Vocabulary Notebook
📑 E-tivity 3 Reading practice and self-assessment

15 March - 21 March

---

17 May - 23 May

WEEK 11- UNIT 4& WRITING TASK

📑 17 May_Class Review
📑 Reading Activity_Week 10_Distance Education
📑 Presentations_ Prospective online tutors and students
📑 Self-assessment Unit 4

Writing Task

📑 Class Material_19 May_Informal Letter
📑 Video 1 How to write a friendly letter ?
📑 Video 2 Jane's friendly letter
📑 Video 3 Recommendations for students writing to a pen friend
📑 Writing an Informal mail or letter
📑 Class Exercises_19 May
📑 Self-check your answers_Exercise 1
📑 For Your Online Session

Elementary English – Blended Course – Weekly Outline

http://englishandautonomouslearning.freewebclass.com/

Physical descrption of one my colleagues
by Hermes Heriberto Vargas Martínez - Tuesday, 22 March 2011, 04:08 AM

She has black hair. She is very attractive and she is medium height.

She has brown eyes and her has narrow eyes. She's 1.65 metres tall.

she is young.

¿What is his name? Please

By Hermes Vargas M

Edit | Delete | Reply

Maximum rating: Satisfactory [Satisfactory ▾]

Re: Physical descrption of one my colleagues
by Miguel Pinto Aparicio - Tuesday, 22 March 2011, 01:04 PM

I need more information; is she an engineer or an economist?

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply

[Rate... ▾]

Re: Physical descrption of one my colleagues
by Luz Marina Rueda Rueda - Tuesday, 22 March 2011, 10:04 PM

Good evening Hermes:

According to the description I think it is Claudia Múnera, bye

Luz Marina Rueda R

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply

Movies
by Luz Marina Rueda Rueda - Sunday, 24 April 2011, 02:11 PM

Good afternoon fellow:
My contribution to the subject of comparative and superlative adjectives are:

1. Rio the movie is as funny as the Ice Age
2. Natalie Portman was the winner for Best Actress Oscars in 2011 for "The Black Swan
3. The Speech of the King won the award for best film at the Oscars 2011
4. "Toy Story 3" was enshrined in the 2011 Academy Award for best animated film also was named the best movie song.
5. The king's speech is as dramatic as Black Swan, because it shows how perseverance and perseverance can overcome fears.

Greetings,

Luz Marina Rueda R.

Reply

Re: Movies
by Miguel Pinto Aparicio - Tuesday, 26 April 2011, 09:25 AM

Good morning Luz Marina

I think that you aren't using the comparative and superlative adjectives in the way that teacher taught us. This is in the phrases 2 and 3, because the expressions "for best actress oscars" and "The award for best film" are the names of awards, not is the part of phrase that do comparative actions

Show pa

Re: Movies
by Luz Marina Rueda Rueda - Tuesday, 26 April 2011, 02:54 PM

Good Night Miguel
Thanks for the comment, I will correct sentences 2 and 3.
Luz Marina Rueda R.

Show parent | Reply

Sample from students' participation in forums

http://englishandautonomouslearning.freewebclass.com/

Appendix 12

Blended Course – Based on Blended Learning @ Simmons College (2008).

Blended Course **Features**
Organization /Information Design
Course Introduction Online orientation Learning sequence Friendly and supportive language in written materials Clear instructions for assignments and assessments
Pedagogical /Instructional Design
Learning objectives, unit objectives specified Integrate online and F2F activities Promote interaction among students and between students and tutor Specific criteria for assessment and evaluation Frequent feedback Self assessment activities to get students' perceptions on the process and the course
Learners support /Resources
Learning strategies recommended Readings on time management skills Links to technological resources and helpful web sites

Appendix 13 Data management
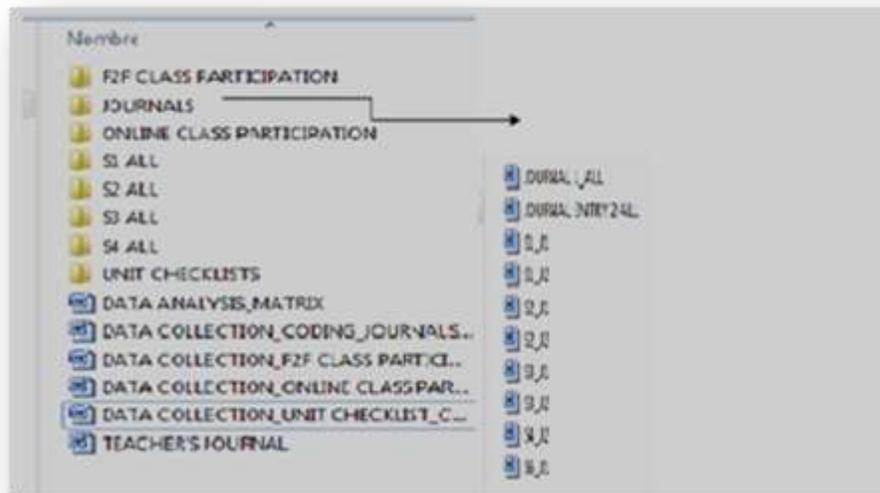
Figure 1. Data management

Appendix 14

Open Coding /Colour Coding: Sample: Self –assessment on Online class participation

Appendix 15

Open Coding – Matrix- Sources of data
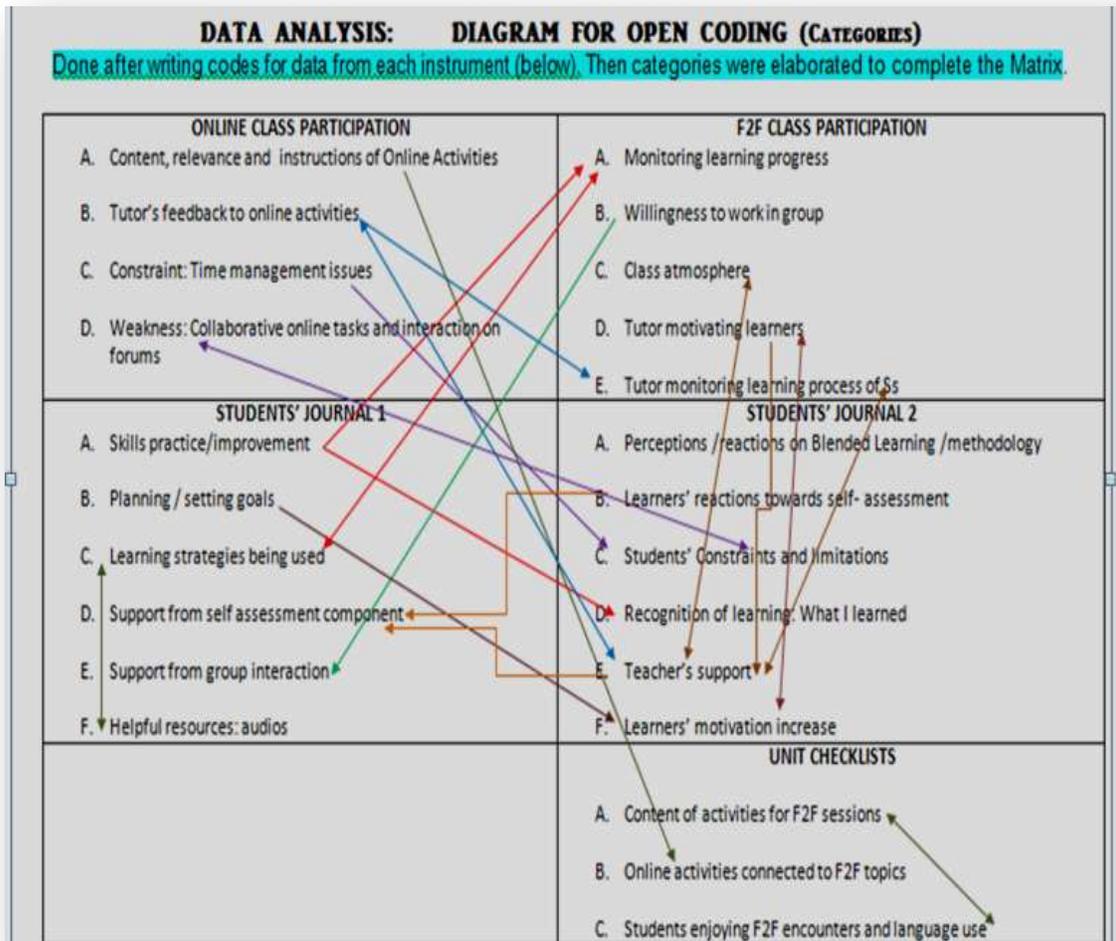
Appendix 16

Axial coding: Diagram

DATA ANALYSIS: DIAGRAM FOR AXIAL CODING

Done after, linking similar codes, finding commonalities and categories that complement each other.

Self assessment on F2F class participation	Self assessment on Online Class Participation	Unit Self assessment checklist	Students' Journal 1	Students' Journal 2
Learners monitoring	Activities being clear and motivating	Online activities linked to F2F instruction	Learners practicing language skills	Learners' reactions towards self assessment
Learners' motivation increase	Tutor giving support	Activities being meaningful to learners	Learners planning and identifying areas for improvement.	Learners perceptions on BL
.	Learners' constraints	Learners enjoying using the language	Tutor providing scaffolding	Learners' constraints
:	:	:	.	Tutor providing scaffolding
:	:	:	.	Learners' motivation increase

Appendix 17

Codes and Categories

Research Question		
To what extent do self monitoring and self reflection affect the learning experience of an A1 English adult learner group in a blended learning environment?		
Relating Codes and Categories in Axial Coding:		
Learners monitoring -Learners practicing language skills -Learners – planning and identifying areas for improvement	-Learners' motivation increase (repeated once) -Learners enjoying using the foreign language	-Learners' constraints (repeated once)
- Online activities linked to F2F instruction	-Tutor giving support/providing scaffolding (repeated twice)-	__
Learners reactions towards self-assessment	Learners' perceptions on Blended learning /methodology	__