

**The Use of Blogs to Help Intermediate Students Improve Their Formal Letter
Writing Skill**

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This research report is the result of my own work and includes nothing that was done in collaboration with others.

(Signature)

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We are convinced that the disposition to study...the consequences of our own teaching is more likely to change and improve our practices than is reading about what someone else has discovered of his teaching.

(Corey, 1953, p. 70)

ABSTRACT

This action-research project was carried out with 11 English intermediate students, majoring different careers. The project, which lasted six lessons plus independent work, aimed to help to improve formal letter writing skill by using blogs. Students created blogs, posted and self-corrected their products and filled in a reflection log. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered and trend analysis was implemented to evidence that it is possible to improve this skill by increasing motivation for writing through the use of blogs, developing an autonomous learning behavior and self-correction routines. This research proved helpful for English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts and opens doors for further research about Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the classroom.

Key words: writing skill, formal letter writing, teaching with ICT, blogs to teach writing.

RESUMEN

Este proyecto de acción-investigación se realizó con 11 estudiantes de inglés intermedio de diferentes carreras. El proyecto, seis sesiones más trabajo independiente, buscó ayudar a mejorar habilidad en escritura de cartas formales utilizando blogs. Los estudiantes crearon blogs, publicaron y corrigieron sus productos, y llenaron un diario de reflexión. Se recogieron datos cualitativos y cuantitativos y se implementó un análisis de patrones de actividad para evidenciar que es posible mejorar esta habilidad incrementando la motivación para escribir, usando blogs, y desarrollando un comportamiento de aprendizaje autónomo y rutinas de auto-corrección. El proyecto, útil para contextos de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), permite futuras investigaciones con Tecnologías de la Información y de la Comunicación (TICs) en el aula de clase.

Palabras clave: habilidad de escritura, escritura de cartas formales, enseñar con TICs, blogs para enseñar escritura.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	8
Statement of the problem.....	8
Research question.....	9
Research objectives.....	9
Rationale.....	9
 CHAPTER 2: Theoretical framework.....	 13
Writing skill.....	13
Formal letter writing.....	16
Teaching writing with ICT.....	20
Use of blogs to teach writing.....	23
 CHAPTER 3: Research design.....	 27
Type of study.....	27
Researcher's role.....	30
Context.....	30
Participants.....	32
Data collection instruments.....	33

Data collection procedures.....	36
Validity.....	39
Reliability.....	39
CHAPTER 4: Pedagogical intervention and implementation.....	41
CHAPTER 5 Data analysis and findings.....	45
ACR question # 1: What did I do?.....	45
ACR question # 2: What changes occurred regarding the achievement targets?.....	56
ACR question # 3: What was the relationship between actions taken and any changes in performance on the targets?.....	76
CHAPTER 6.....	81
Conclusions.....	81
Pedagogical implications.....	83
Limitations.....	84
Further research.....	85
REFERENCES.....	86
APPENDICES.....	90
Appendix A: Letter of consent.....	92

Appendix B: Diagnostic survey.....	93
Appendix C: Pre-test.....	94
Appendix D: Formal letter writing rubric.....	95
Appendix E: List of conventions.....	96
Appendix F: Letter of consent.....	97
Appendix G: Students' reflection log.....	98
Appendix H: Teacher's reflection log.....	99
Appendix I: Sample of student's works.....	100
Appendix J: Final survey.....	107
Appendix K: Post-test.....	108
Appendix L: Lesson plan sample.....	109

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Statement of the problem

When thinking about this challenging opportunity to improve my teaching practice, to help my students better their performance and what is more, to contribute to the educational field development, it was not easy to make the decision about what the project was going to be focusing on. While observing my teaching context, which at the moment was an English intermediate level with eleven students majoring different programs at a private university, I thought about involving technology in my book-based class to make it more appealing for my students because, even though they were attending classes every week, most of them were suggesting to explore different materials in class besides the book.

An additional aspect that helped me decide what to do was that one of the goals stated in the English program for this course was that by the end of the course students were going to be able to write formal letters for different purposes following the specific formats, and as a teacher-observer, I realized that their weakest skill as well as the one that made them feel less motivated to work in class, was indeed writing, since long and sad faces always followed my instructions about a class devoted to this skill. Additionally, after the end of the classes, it was clearly evident that not only were they reluctant to engage in a writing activity, but also that their written products were poor in quality and content. After sharing experiences with some colleagues, this is a problematic situation not only in my course, but also in various other courses, so this evidence the requirement of taking actions on students' development of formal letter writing skill.

Therefore, identifying students' needs, noticing that they coincided with the course objectives and having Hyland's words in mind, when saying that "in addition to knowing what students must write, we also need to know what they do when they write and how they can be helped to do it better" (2002, p.154), in other words not only giving instructions to students, but also checking their progress in order to guide them appropriately and help them improve their skills, I felt motivated to develop this research project. These observations and experiences helped me to realize that one way to positively influence the context in which I was involved was to make use of blogs as tools to improve the formal letter writing skill, which was one of the main topics in the writing program of the course.

Research Question

How will the use of blogs help intermediate students improve their formal letter writing skill?

General objective

To develop adequate general skills in formal letter writing through the use of blogs

Specific objectives

- To increase students' motivation towards formal letter writing through the use of blogs
- To provide students with various tools to independently edit and self-correct their writings
- To encourage students to develop autonomous learning behavior

Rationale

The leading inspiration of this research project is to contribute to the qualification of educational language processes in general, and the improvement of the writing skill in a different language from the native one, in particular. Therefore a strategy, such as using blogs to improve formal letter writing which merge language learning with technology, can be applicable in the language teaching-learning processes and can serve as basis for future research projects in any field. This idea is supported by Witte (2007, p.92) when asserting that “by combining writing with online technology, teachers can provide opportunities for students and future educators to develop their digital fluency while also strengthening their traditional literacy skills”. With this in mind, I aimed to help the students in their writing learning process, specifically, in their formal letter writing skill, for this is one of the aims of the English 7 course. In this manner, I decided to research about the use of blogs to help intermediate students improve their formal letter writing skill.

Within the course program, with which I was working at that time, writing was a fundamental topic to work with. One of the main objectives for this course was to help students to write formal letters in a proper way. In this way, I decided to use technology for educational purposes, in order to motivate students to write formal letters and to make them aware about autonomous behaviors. I decided to use blogs as a pedagogical tool to follow the writing process, because in this way students were going to be able to track their own progress, realize their weaknesses and act towards a better performance from there on.

After observing that the students did not feel motivated towards writing and that they were not getting good results in the writing activities suggested, I decided to work on encouraging them to improve their formal letter writing. It had already been proved in a survey

applied during the pre-stage of this project, that the students were having many difficulties and were not feeling neither comfortable nor motivated enough when writing. In the same way, few students answered positively when being asked to write, while most of them received writing tasks without interest. Regarding formal letter writing, students expressed not to feel confident when writing such formal letters, but they nevertheless demonstrated enthusiasm to learn how to do it appropriately. This was manifested by most of them, when expressing in the survey that they were aware of the necessity to practice and learn this skill in order to be able to perform adequately in future situations. Some of them were about to graduate and they were interested in getting a job overseas, so developing this skill in formal letter writing was going to help this students familiarize themselves with application letters which are the ones required to get jobs. Students were going to be familiar with the format and were going to analyze autonomously their letter and decide if all the requirements needed were included in their versions.

I consider that the completion of the project is essential for my students to appropriately develop their formal letter writing skill and for them to increase their motivation and performance towards the writing skill while doing so. Such skill might help them to express their ideas, requests and points of view in an accurate and straightforward way while using an adequate and within standards format, useful for the current necessities of any professional. Concerning my personal experience, this opportunity was of utmost importance since it allowed me to implement and assess a new strategy for teaching formal letter writing in my teaching context. At the same time, I was able to implement different tasks and activities for the students' benefit and after reflecting, draw conclusions. Additionally, this project is a clear example of the current possibility, present to us all, of taking the leap towards these types of ICT tools, such as

blogs, webpages and wikis, which are already available and most of which might play a fundamental role in the development of educational purposes.

In this action research report six chapters can be found. In the first chapter, the statement of the problem, the research question, the research objectives and the rationale are presented. This chapter will lead to the second one, the theoretical framework, in which constructs and state of the art support the project. Consequently, in chapter three the type of study, the researcher's role, the context, the participants, the data collection instruments and procedures are enlightened. In chapter four, the pedagogical intervention and implementation are explained. Then, in chapter five data analysis and findings are expounded and in chapter six conclusions, pedagogical implications and further research are pointed out.

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundations of the current research project are in essence the following four: writing skill, formal letter writing, teaching writing with ICT and using blogs to teach writing. First, I delve into the writing skill and the formal letter writing notions in order to ascertain some of the required features of this project. Second, the significance of using ICT when teaching writing is highlighted giving space to support the last construct, using blogs to teach writing. All the constructs take also into account the equivalent state of the art or different research samples carried out in Colombia and/or abroad.

Writing Skill

This is one of the four compulsory skills in the teaching and learning processes of a foreign language. Nowadays, in most EFL English courses, teachers and educational authorities in decision making processes are following a growing trend towards a communicative environment; thus, putting aside this fundamental skill. Now, as this trend is followed, learners are getting in trouble whenever they have to demonstrate their language awareness in real contexts throughout their lives, for example when applying for a job overseas or when taking an international exam.

This idea can be supported by the following quote taken from “Good writing skills essential for student success” (2007, ¶1): “The basic literacy skills [referring to reading and writing] of high school students have been lamented in a plethora of education reports in recent times. One of them, an Achieve report in 2005, found that only 32 percent of students who graduate high school in four years have mastered basic literacy skills such as reading and

writing. Employers bemoan the literacy skills of their workers, too. In a 2005 survey, the National Association of Manufacturers found that 36 percent of manufacturers had workers with “insufficient reading, writing and communication skills”. With this quote in mind and acknowledging the essential role of reading and writing for lifelong learning processes, plus the necessity to further analyze and implement strategies to assure that basic levels of proficiency are met, it is time to address, more specifically, some important aspects about the writing skill.

Rogers (2005, p.2) considers writing as “the use of graphic marks to represent specific linguistic utterances”. He also highlights that its importance is in “the opportunity human beings have to communicate, to get a message across beyond the immediate moment, [it] allows us to exchange words at a distance, either at a distant place or at a distant time” (p.1). In fact, this research project has its roots in the idea of engaging students with the writing process and allowing them to recognize its importance. Another author who presents the impact of writing in our lives, is Hyland (2002, p.1) when saying that writing “has multiple roles in social, professional and academic contexts and that it has a great importance in determining our life chances. Writing is central to our personal experience and social identities, and we are often evaluated by our control of it”. Our students need to understand that what they are learning day after day is not only for the class purpose, but for their lifelong learning process. In this study, I found important to open students’ mind into a different way of learning how to write formal letters, I found useful to make them know that it is not only through the use of pencil and paper that you learn, but that it is also possible to use different tools, such as blogs, to improve and make the learning process a more enjoyable act.

This significant skill, without underestimating the other ones, has its own process and characteristics, depending on the purpose of the writing piece. Students need to be conscious about the importance of writing and teachers need to foster its learning and practice by offering different opportunities to write inside and outside the classroom. Nation (2009, p.113) states the significance of making “sure that the uses of writing cover the range of uses that learners will perform in their daily lives. These can include filling forms, making lists, writing friendly letters and business letters, note-taking and academic writing. Each of these types of writing involves special ways of organizing and presenting the writing and this presentation also deserves attention.” Usually, within the language learning process, writing is one of the abilities that needs more attention, since there can be some established writing rules related to the way of performing in the target language.

One of the studies done in relation to the writing skill is the one that “presents the results of a research project carried out with a group of second-year English students at the University of Costa Rica during the first semester of 2006. Its purpose was to find out if explicit grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary instruction based on feedback provided by journal entries improved the students writing skills. The results and recommendations are addressed mainly to the staff of the School of Modern Languages and to any teacher interested in helping his/her students become better readers and writers of the English language” (Hernandez, 2007, p.2). Likewise, the current study is done with university students and it differs in the purpose of the study. Hernandez’s study aimed to improve writing skills through feedback provided by journal entries and this study aim to improve writing skills too, but through the use of blogs, through the development of an autonomous learning behavior and through a self- correction practice.

Another study presented by Huang (2009) “attempted to examine the extent to which students in the Department of Applied English in one selected university learn to sustain their English writing by using wordless picture books, and the effectiveness of using wordless picture books in terms of students’ English language learning. In this study, a qualitative case study methodology was used to gather data from the perspectives of the participants involved. This study employed the following techniques to collect data in this study: teacher observations of student participation in whole-class and small-group activities; students’ writing sample; informal interviews; class presentations; pre-test writing sample; students’ reflective writing; and questionnaires. The benefits of using wordless picture books showed that students improved their visual literacy and oral to written expression, promoted their creative writing and thinking skills, and enhanced their enjoyment of the writing process. It is significant to emphasize that in this study one of the purposes was to enhance students’ enjoyment when writing by using wordless picture books and one of the secondary objectives of the current study is to increase students’ motivation towards formal letter writing through the use of blogs. It is essential to have always present that students need to like and enjoy what they do, because if they do not like or want what they do, it can be a constraint for their learning process success.

Formal Letter Writing

In many contexts of today’s world, formal writing is needed to be able to deal with different situations for example, when complaining, when applying for a job, or when requesting information. Having this background, it is necessary to know that although its importance, sometimes formal writing is not taken in to account as a useful tool to be taught not only for academic purposes but also for life. Just as it is mention by Coffin et al. (2003, p.3), “Academic

writing continues to be at the centre of teaching and learning in higher education, but is often an invisible dimension of the curriculum; that is, the rules or conventions governing what counts as academic writing are often assumed to be part of the ‘common sense’ knowledge students have, and are thus not explicitly taught within disciplinary courses”.

Different writing practices can be considered within formal writing. For example, in the latter reference the authors also state that “evidence [from the National Committee of Inquiry into higher Education, 1997] indicates that the most traditional of practices – that of essay writing – continues to hold sway across many disciplines”. Likewise, there are reports, case studies, and reflective journals, between others that can be written using the formal academic writing style. However, it is formal letter writing, the writing practice associated with the purpose of this project.

One may think that formal letters are old-fashioned with all the technological tools available nowadays, but the reality shows the contrary. Kolin (2009, p.153) affirms that “even in this age of the Internet, letters are still vital in the world of work”. He mentions various reasons to highlight the importance of formal letters, within them that “letters represent your company’s public image and your competence”, that “letters constitute an official legal record of agreement” and that “a letter is the official and expected medium through which important documents and attachments (contracts, specifications, and proposals) are sent to readers”. According to Nevala and Palander-Collin (2005, p.2), a letter is understood today as “a written message from one person to another. This message has a certain function, which the reader interprets from the writer’s formulation of the topic(s) in order to respond to it. The meaning of the message can, however, be negotiated, and it may vary according to the person receiving it. [...] The process of

letter writing consists of many stages, and these often influence the choice of language used in it.”

In relation to the format of the formal letter, Kolin (2009, p.154) states that “letter format refers to the way in which you print a letter [...] and several formats exist. Two of the most frequently used [...] are full block and modified block”. For this research project, the full block will be used. In this format the writer’s address is at the right of the letter or centered, the date is at the right side but it can also go at the left side, the complimentary close, the signature and the name are always placed at the right side as well as the inside address, the salutation and the body of the letter as presented in Kolin (2009, p.154) and as it is seen in figure 1.



Figure 1: Full Block format

As part of the state of the art for this construct, it was not easy to find recent research studies related to formal letter writing directly, but there are some related to formal writing in general. For example, Myskow and Gordon (2009, p.1) show “how a genre approach has been used in an EFL high school writing course to teach the university application letter genre to students preparing for post-secondary studies. The authors discuss specific classroom materials to illustrate how a genre-based approach can be employed, not simply to teach static textual patterns, but to help learners gain a richer understanding of the complex relationship between written texts and the social contexts in which they are situated. The article begins with a brief overview of L2 writing scholarship, and as the authors acknowledge, some overlap exists between contemporary genre-based pedagogies and earlier product approaches. The authors argue, however, that awareness of the (somewhat slippery) distinction between these approaches is essential, if teachers are to present genres as resources to be drawn on to help learners achieve specific social purposes rather than inflexible text templates to be prescriptively imitated”.

For the purpose of this study three different genres are considered in relation to formal letter writing: application, request and complaint. These three formats have been chosen because of their role in society. For instance, these are the most used when applying for further studies, for getting a job and/or for complaining about services. The authors of this study have also pointed out (2009, p.4) that “despite the importance of this genre for the graduate admissions process, there has been little research and instruction in academic writing courses [...] and that the lack of research on application letters written specifically by high school students applying for university presented a challenge in the initial planning stages”.

Cotterall and Cohen (2003, p.158), also describe in their paper “how a group of intermediate learners of English were guided through the process of producing their first academic essay in English. The approach applied the concept of scaffolding to the academic writing process by providing flexible support for the learners throughout the writing of their essays. Scaffolding included a number of features, each of which is discussed in the paper. The writers argue that the approach they adopted promotes learner autonomy by focusing on an authentic task, making the expectations of the task explicit, and providing flexible support for the learners as they approximate the target performance”. In the current study, also done with intermediate students, the idea of guiding and providing flexible support in the writing process was also followed. Moreover, the plan of promoting autonomy was taken into account, too.

Teaching writing skills with ICT

Nowadays in the context of language learning and teaching, there are many different technological tools available to support the different processes that take place in this environment. As it is expressed by Black (2009, p.689), the “rapid technological advances [...] have given rise to serious consideration of the goals and responsibilities for institutions of formal learning in the 21st century”. Educational institutions have the need and the responsibility of assessing and including innovative ideas to be able to provide learners with variety and high educational quality, and ICT plays an important role.

One UNESCO document (2007, p.22) highlights that “information and communication technologies (ICT), refers to forms of technology that are used to transmit, store, create, display, share or exchange information by electronic means. This broad definition of ICT includes such technologies as radio, television, video, DVD, telephone, satellite systems, computer and

network hardware and software; as well as the equipment and services associated with these technologies, such as electronic mail and videoconferencing”. Another UNESCO document (2002, p.13) establishes that “Information and communication technology, or ICT, is defined as the combination of informatics technology with other, related technologies, specifically communication technology”. Different gadgets such as computers, cellphones, iPods, and many other digital devices are now persuading the 21st century performance of learners and teachers during their lessons.

From McKay’s points of view, “information and communication technology (ICT) has been found to be one of the most potent tools for promoting equity and access to education, and a great resource in bridging the gap of digital divide” (2007, p.xi). He also states that ICT affects almost all of our everyday activities and that the educational enterprises also benefit from the learning tools offered by ICT. It seems that using technology in the classroom to motivate students to work for academic purposes and to support their lifelong learner attitude is a strategy to take into consideration.

These information and communication resources in the classroom can influence positively the language learners. Fotos & Brown (2004, p.70) state that “our access to information resources on computers [...] expand our cognitive worlds and resources to a virtually unlimited degree”. Varied opportunities are at hand to learn different languages therefore the language education sector needs to take advantage of this benefit to help students improve their performance in the target language. For example in the case of writing, Knapp & Watkins (2005, p.16), express that “when teaching students to write in English, it is important for the teacher and the student to have a basic understanding of how English operates and functions as writing”. In

order to achieve this goal many tools exist. The same authors state that “since teachers necessarily employ a range of strategies to best cater for the needs of their students, there has been a shift in emphasis away from teacher-directed methodologies to student-centered and computer-assisted learning” (p.76). Learning writing through the use of ICT can motivate the learner to the point of making him/her improve his/her performance in a faster way. “The on-line teaching of writing covers a range of activities, from electronic mail to websites to synchronous and asynchronous conferencing” (Coffin et al. 2003, p.8). According to Stapleton (2005, p.135), “using the World Wide Web [...], has become an increasingly viable way to source information in academic writing” and this is making the educational field a more interesting and attractive one.

The state of the art for this construct makes reference to two studies. In the first one, Wheeler and Wheeler (2009, p.1) present their study in which they “investigated undergraduate teacher trainees' use of wikis, focusing on the use of shared spaces to communicate ideas and generate course specific content. [They] explored how students, through such activities, were able to improve their academic writing skills. We discuss writing as a social practice and discuss how wikis might promote better academic writing. [...] findings indicate that most students raised their skill level in writing as a result of using the wiki space. From this study it is important to highlight that it differs from the current one in that it uses wikis as a space to communicate ideas and generate course specific content, while in this study blogs are used and with the aim of having students control their writing progress.

In the second study, Gilmore (2009), states that “large corpora such as the British National Corpus and the COBUILD Corpus and Collocations Sampler are now accessible, free of charge,

online and can be usefully incorporated into a process writing approach to help develop students' writing skills. This article aims to familiarize readers with these resources and to show how they can be usefully exploited in the redrafting stages of writing to both minimize the teachers' workload and encourage greater cognitive processing of errors. An exploratory investigation comparing the use of these two online corpora in Japanese university writing classes is then described. This suggests that the participants in the study were able to significantly improve the naturalness of their writing after only a 90-minute training session and that the majority of students found these online resources beneficial, although there was a marked preference for the COBUILD Corpus and Collocations Sampler". This study motivated the use of different technological devices as pedagogical tools to foster writing and encourage students to develop an autonomous learning behavior to learn a language.

Use of blogs to teach writing

Many different technological tools are being implemented in the teaching and learning context, specifically in the language learning environments. For the sake of this study, the technological tool that will help students to improve their formal letter writing skill is the blog. According to Budd et al. (2006, p.27), 2004 was the big time for blogs after being around for many years. Before this date, the word "blog" was used only by experts and did not appear in the dictionary. Richardson (2009, p.17) mentions that "the earliest blogs were literally "Web logs" or lists of sites a particular author visited on any given day [...] But soon, the Internet Greeks who maintained these sites developed software to automate the process and allow other people to collaborate". According to Lamshed (2002, p.9) "a blog (or weblog) is a web-based space for writing. Blogs can be thought of as an online journal where all the writing and editing of

information is managed through a web browser [...] a blog is a personal web site managed by an individual who compiles lists of links to personally interesting material [...] The user can instantly place their words and thoughts onto their own web log site through one of the many pieces of blogging software available. Like a journal, a blog can be a continually updated resource that grows over time with the accumulation of writing and other content”.

Connecting blogs with the classroom atmosphere, allow professionals to explore many different teaching possibilities. For example, Richardson (2009, p.20) points up that “the early adopters of Weblogs in the classroom have already created a wide variety of ways to use them, and they have shown that blogs can enhance and deepen learning. Even at this still-early stage of development, blogs are being used as class portals, online filing cabinets for student work, e-portfolio, collaborative space, knowledge management, and even school websites”. In the same line, Descy (n.d.) mentions that “the purpose or content of a blog varies according to the purposes and interests of the blogger. Blogs may take the form of a diary or journal, mini-essay, photo-essay, project updates, even fiction or non-fiction works”. Huffaker (2005, p.96), states that “blogs can be used to promote reading and writing, to showcase the work of students, or to exchange ideas among students, teachers, or school administrators”.

Using blogs to enhance the writing skill makes students’ language learning context more appealing and it fosters the improvement of various skills at the same time and the development of an autonomous learning behavior. Witte (2007) highlights that “by combining writing with online technology, teachers can provide opportunities for students and future educators to develop their digital fluency while also strengthening their traditional literacy skills”. Implementing different strategies to help students to improve writing is necessary and blogs are

motivating this process. Zhang (2009, p.67) states that “one might expect blogs to offer many reading and writing incentives for English learning and writing because blogging places emphasis on content, the possibility of speedy feedback, the option of working with both words and images, and the ability to link one post to another. Scholars who use blogs also say that because students know they are going to have an audience by publishing their writing on the Web, they often produce higher quality work”. The aim of using blogs for this study is to allow students to discover one of its uses, which in this case is a pedagogical tool that will help them to keep track of their writing process, just as it was mentioned in the above lines, blogs are used as an online filing cabinet for student works to help them improve their formal letter writing.

As part of the state of the art, Yang (2009, p.11) presents in his article that the aim of his study “was to explore the use of blogs as a reflective platform in the training processes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student teachers, who were learning to teach English for future employment in Taiwan. They made use of blogs as a platform to critically reflect on their learning processes as well as to gauge the impact of blogs on their own professional growth. [...] Two instructors created a blog for use as a discussion forum so that the student teachers could engage in and examine their own reflection process. The data collected was qualitative in nature, consisting of student teachers’ posting messages and comments on the blog, surveys on the student teachers’ reflective experiences using blogs as reflection tools, and group reflective dialogues recorded by instructors in class meetings over the implementation of blogs during the course. The results showed that the student teachers actively discussed teaching theories and their implications through blogs.

Another relevant study is the one found in Armstrong and Retterer (2008, p.233) in which the use of a blog and its effects upon students is examined in an intermediate level Spanish class. The main aim was “to have students participate in two different blogs: a community blog and a personal blog, with each serving very different functions. Students posted their more formal writing assignments in their personal blogs. This would serve as an e-portfolio during the semester, and students could look back on earlier postings/essays. The community blog would be a discussion board at the start of the semester and the students would post commentaries about a variety of topics and to which the other students would respond. [...] The overall experience proved to be a positive one for students leading the authors to conclude that this generation of computer literate students found blogging an appealing way to communicate in a foreign language”.

After reviewing information related to the constructs of this action research project and realizing that researchers, such as Zhang (2009), Witte (2007), Huffaker (2005), Richardson (2009) and Stapleton (2005) agree with the use of blogs as a tool to help to improve writing skills and some of them consent, at the same time, the importance of motivating formal letter writing, the following information can be concluded. Even though many of the studies done related to the use of blogs to improve writing skills are based on the idea of interaction, in this case it is related to students posting their products, re-writing them and looking back on previous postings to check their own progress, so they can keep track of their own process and they can also be able to review their works to perform better in future occasions.

CHAPTER 3: Research Design

This chapter makes the design of the action research project evident. It will refer to the type of study carried out, the researcher's role, the context in which the study took place, the participants involved and it will also offer an account of data collection instruments and data collection procedures.

The table below reviews information related to this chapter and it is followed by an in-depth analysis.

Type of study:	Action research
Context:	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana
Participants:	Service courses – English 7 - 11 university students, between 18 and 25 years old, majoring different careers.
Data collection instruments:	Diagnostic survey, pre-test, rubric, and list of conventions; students' and teacher's reflection log and, samples from students' work; final survey and post-test.

Table 1: Research design framework

Type of Study

The type of study applied in this research project was action research, since the point was to find a solution to an ongoing problem present in an educational context and to improve students' achievements. In Ferrance words, (2000, p.1) action research “specifically refers to a disciplined inquiry done by a teacher with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practices in the future [...] is carried out within the context of the teacher's environment

[...] on questions that deal with educational matters at hand”. She mentions five phases of inquiry: identification of problem area, collection and organization of data, interpretation of data, action based on data and reflection. The followings are the action research steps proposed by Ferrance (2000, p.9)

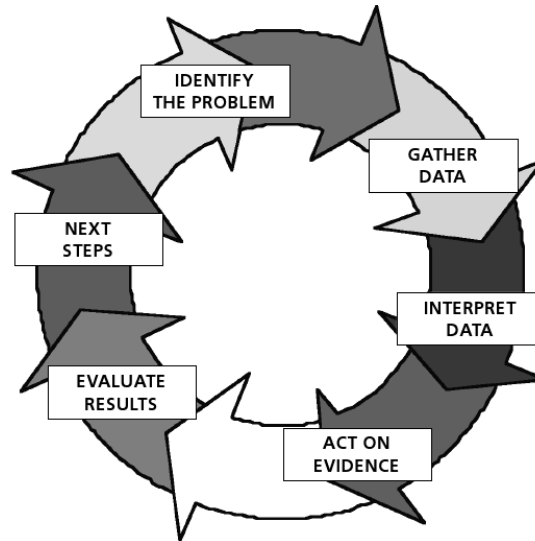


Figure 2: Action research cycle

Regarding the first step of this cyclical process, “identify the problem”, Ferrance (2000, p.10) makes reference to the importance of coming up with a question with the following features: it has to “be a higher-order question—not a yes/no, it needs to be stated in common language, avoiding jargon, to be concise, to be meaningful and not already answered. For the second step (Ferrance, 2000, p.11), she presents a list of possible vehicles to collect data and highlights the value of selecting the appropriate tools according to the issue being researched. In the data interpretation step, it is essential to identify and analyze major themes according to the research question in order to continue with the next step, “act on evidence”, in which by “using the information from the data collection and reviewing the current literature, a plan of action is

designed in order to make changes and study those changes (Ferrance, 2000, p. 12). Then, the point is to assess the intervention to determine if improvement has occurred to finally identify additional question or suggest possible further studies. This cycle was the one chosen to follow for carrying out this action research project because the steps fitted perfectly with the features of the environment I was going to apply my research on.

Following the same position, Sagor (2005, p.4) defines action research as “an investigation conducted by the person or people empowered to take action concerning their own actions, for the purpose of improving their future actions”. Wallace (1998, p. 1) also describes it as a “systematic collection and analysis of data relating to the improvement of some aspect of professional practice”. As well Burns (1999, p.30) presents in her book a collection of definitions referring to action research from different authors and summarizes the main aspects as follows:

1. “Action research is contextual, small-scale and localised – it identifies and investigates problems within a specific situation.
2. It is evaluative and reflective as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice.
3. It is participatory as it provides for collaborative investigation by teams of colleagues, practitioners and researchers.
4. Changes in practice are based on the collection of information or data which provides the impetus for change.”

There are three different approaches to research: quantitative, qualitative and mixed. According to Creswell (2003, p.18) descriptions, the current study was based on the mixed

methods approach. He mentions that the “mixed methods approach is one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds [...] and collect data simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems”. Johnson & Christensen (2008, p.455) state that “mixed research is still an emerging field. [It] now appears to be accepted by most as the third major research or methodological paradigm, and mixed research studies are increasing dramatically in the literature”.

Researcher's Role

In this study, the researcher's role was that of teacher-observer when guiding intermediate students' class and observing the process of the project designed and conducted by the researcher. It is important for teachers to move “from lesson plans, activities, and students to research-oriented questions, data analysis, and findings [...] that can transform both the teacher and the classroom” (Freeman, 1998, p. 178). In consequence, the teacher-researcher role was played at the same time, since observation aimed to analyze participants' performance based on a trend analysis, to improve the teaching practice and to be able to help the students move forward in one specific area of study.

Context

This project was held at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, a well-recognized private higher education institution. Its main facilities in Bogotá city are available for anyone interested in taking one of the programs offered. Individuals can choose between 40 undergraduate programs, 122 professional specializations, 22 masters, and 4 PhDs. The university counts with 18 faculties with its corresponding departments. Within them, there is the Language and

Communication Faculty with three different departments: Information's science, Communication and Modern Languages. This later, the Modern Language Department, has the goal of motivating people to use languages taking into account the role in the human and social development. This department has different programs to enroll, a well-equipped language resource center and useful bibliographic material available.

At this university, every student has the possibility of choosing between presenting an English international exam and enrolling specific English levels as a graduation requirement. The level in which this research project took place was within the eight levels offered by the Modern Language Department for students from different majors. It was English 7 in which students have to accomplish the following requirements per skill in order to achieve B1 level from the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (2001).

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (2001, p.26) which is followed by the Modern Language Department, by the end of the course students, regarding the listening skill, will be able to “understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.” they will be able to “understand the main point of many radio or TV programmed on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear”.

Concerning the reading skill students will be able to “understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. [...] They will understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters”. In terms of speaking they will be able to “deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken”. They will be able to “enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal

interest or pertinent to everyday life”. They will also be able to “connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions”. They will be able to “briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans [...] and narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe reactions”.

Regarding writing students will “write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest and can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions”. Following the theory of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages and the program supported with the book (Obee & Evans, 2003), one of the aims in terms of writing, which is the focus of this project, is having students write formal letters appropriately.

Participants

This research project was carried out with eleven intermediate students. They belong to English 7 form one of the programs offered by the Modern Language Department. The group has three main features: there are students from electronic and system engineering, ecology, business administration, visual arts, literature studies and architecture; they range from the fourth to the tenth semester and they are between 18 and 25 years old. In consequence, they have different needs, wants, beliefs, attitudes, abilities and learning styles. However, they all share the same objective of achieving the university requirements regarding the English language, to be able to obtain their diploma. They are attending English classes at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana twice a week. According to the Common European Framework of Reference (2001, p.24), they are capable of understanding “the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.; they can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest and they can describe experiences and events,

dreams, hopes and ambitions briefly giving reasons and explanations for opinions and plans”. Some of the linguistic and affective needs students have are: to hear English in different contexts, to understand and communicate, to express feelings and opinions, to feel motivated, to pronounce properly, to increase lexical repertoire and to develop lifelong learning skills.

Data collection instruments

In order to give validity to the data collected before, while and after the intervention, it is a must to describe the data collection instruments and their purpose in relation to this project. For this concrete study, the following instruments were used to collect the appropriate data during workdays and while students were simultaneously induced to become aware purposefully and actively of their own learning progresses. One of the main reasons for choosing the instruments was Sagor’s words about the importance of using “instruments that could provide encouragement, directions and motivation for the learners”. (2005, p. 91)

Surveys.

According to Elliot, S. (1995, p.37) surveys are defined as a “research technique in which the investigator asks subjects questions about a particular issue, usually with structured questionnaires”. I decided to use surveys, at the beginning and at the end of the project, because I founded them appropriate since they were going to provide information necessary to support the reason why I was carrying out this project and in the same way, they were going to help answering the question related to the effectiveness of the use of blogs to improve formal letter writing in the English intermediate level. Sagor (2000, p.104) states that surveys are popular thanks to its efficient and versatile essence. In this case, open-ended items were used in the

surveys to be able to “explore the informant’s own perceptions, beliefs or opinions” (Burns, 1999, p. 131) related to different issues within the current project. According to Cohen et al. (2000, p.169) “typically, surveys gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events”.

Pre- and post- tests.

These instruments were helpful to determine the knowledge students had, in relation to formal letter writing, at the beginning of the project implementation and at the end. Cohen et al. (2000, p. 322) describe diagnostic testing as “an in-depth test to discover particular strengths, weaknesses and difficulties that a student is experiencing”, which was the main inspiration for the creation and application of these instruments. The validity of the instruments is, according to Cohen et al. (2000, p.334), “the extent in which the test tests what is supposed to test”. In both examinations, students are required to write a formal letter following the corresponding format and features. The reason of choosing this tool is to evidence my students’ formal letter writing level at the beginning and compare it with their performance at the end of the project, to be able to confirm my hypothesis, that the use of blogs helps intermediate students improve their formal letter writing skill.

Henning et al. (2008, p.128) indicate that “pre-and post-tests, offer a helpful method to spot strengths and weaknesses of courses, individuals, or subgroups”. A pre-test was provided before beginning a project, for the teacher-researcher to adjust the instruction in advance and be able to compare results with the post-test to provide further insights. The reason of choosing this tool is to evidence my students’ formal letter writing level at the beginning and compare it with

their performance at the end of the project, to be able to confirm my hypothesis, that the use of blogs helps intermediate students improve their formal letter writing skill.

Students' works.

Sagor (2000, p.100) presents students' works as the most valid source and states that "an actual students paper will always contain far more robust data regarding writing competence than any possible grade". For the purpose of this study, students' works were collected to provide feedback, to check students' improvement and for students to follow their own writing process.

Documents.

The project program, presented at the beginning, invited and oriented students to follow the project process. The list of conventions helped the teacher to provide part of the feedback necessary and allowed students to self-correct their work.

Rubrics.

Rubrics are written guidelines by which student work is assessed, and they articulate the standards for how student work should be judged (James et al., 2007, p.91). It was appropriate for the project to assess students work and allow them to realize the aspects they needed to improve in their writings and the points missing to achieve the standards.

Teacher and student reflection logs.

As Wallace mentions (1998, p.59), "field-notes can be kept in a highly-structured way, following a particular format. [They can be also called] "logs" to distinguish them". I chose to create one for the students and one for me in order to make it appropriate for the project and

collect accurate data from them. The reflection logs were filled and collected after each session for further analysis.

Data collection procedures

After getting the corresponding permission from the institution through a consent letter (Appendix A) as strategy to guarantee the development of the study, three stages characterized the process of data collection during this study and for each stage different instruments were created. In the **pre-stage** the key instruments were:

1. a diagnostic survey, (Appendix B)
2. a pre-test, (Appendix C)
3. the rubric, (Appendix D)
4. the list of conventions and (Appendix E)

The implementation of these instruments was done at the language resource center for students to get familiar with the setting for the following four sessions. The diagnostic survey was created using a useful Internet tool for carrying out any kind of survey. Then, they were concentrated in the pre-test, which was done by hand to check students' performance in the layout and the format, between other aspects related to formal letter writing. Finally, the program of the project was presented to make students aware of their tasks and their independent work for the following four lessons, and to give them an idea about the objectives to be accomplished after each lesson. At the end of this same lesson, a letter of consent (Appendix F) signed by

students, provided the teacher with the permission required to carry out the project with the group of participants and to use the data collected from them.

In the following stage, the **while-stage**, the implementation of the project's program took place. The following were the assignments for the project:

DATE	TASKS	PRODUCTION
April 9 th 2009	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carry out the diagnostic survey provided. 2. Take the pre-test. 3. Consider the project proposal. 4. Agree with the letter of consent. 	<p>Student: Diagnostic survey. Pre-test. Letter of consent.</p> <p>Teacher: Reflection log.</p>
April 14 th 2009	<p>First task</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a blog for the project. 2. Set up the layout of the blog. 3. Look for information about <i>letters of complaint, letters of application, and request letters</i>. 4. Share and complete information with classmates' contributions and answer possible emerging questions. 5. Make a post with the most relevant characteristics of each category to review when writing the letters. 	<p>Student: Blog creation. A post with the main characteristics of formal letters. Reflection log.</p> <p>Teacher: Support and comment on students' work. Reflection log.</p>
April 16 th 2009	<p>Second task</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a formal letter to the mayor of your city. You are not happy about the dirty parks and streets around. 2. Refer to the post with the most relevant characteristics of formal letters, proof-read your letter and post it in your blog. 3. Check your e-mail for comments, rewrite your letter using the list of conventions and the rubric provided, and post the final version in your blog. 	<p>Student: A letter of complaint. Reflection log. Blog post.</p> <p>Teacher: Feedback. Reflection log.</p>
April 21 st 2009	<p>Third task</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Check the classified ad section of an e-newspaper and find a job that interests you. Then, write a letter of application as if you were applying for the job. 2. Refer to the post with the most relevant characteristics of formal letters, proof-read your letter and post it in your blog. 3. Check your e-mail for comments, rewrite your 	<p>Student: A letter of application Reflection log. Blog post.</p> <p>Teacher:</p>

	letter using the list of conventions and the rubric provided, and post the final version in your blog.	Feedback. Reflection log.
April 23 rd 2009	<p>Fourth task</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You would like to take the Cambridge Proficiency Exam, but you're not sure exactly what the exams test, how they test, when the exams are, how much they cost, and where you can take them. Write an appropriate letter to the Cambridge examinations board asking for information. 2. Refer to the post with the most relevant characteristics of formal letters, proof-read your letter and post it in your blog. 3. Check your e-mail for comments, rewrite your letter using the list of conventions and the rubric provided, and post the final version in your blog. 	<p>Student: A request letter. Blog post.</p> <p>Teacher: Feedback. Reflection log.</p>
April 28 th 2009	<p>Final task</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Choose an option (letter of complaint, letter of application or request letter) and write a formal letter. 2. Fill out the final survey. 	<p>Student: A formal letter. Final survey</p> <p>Teacher: Feedback for the letter. Final feedback. Reflection log.</p>

Table 2: Project assignments

The instruments implemented during the while-stage were:

1. students' reflection log, (Appendix G)
2. teacher's reflection log and, (Appendix H)
3. samples of students' work (Appendix I)

From these instruments mentioned above, the students' and the teacher's reflection logs and part of the samples from students' work were picked up before the next lesson began, and the other part of the samples was collected during the lessons.

Finally, in the **post-stage**, to evidence whether the students were improving their formal letter writing skill, a final survey (Appendix J) and a post-test (Appendix K) were created. The teacher had to fill out the reflection log after this lesson for further analysis. The post-test was designed for students to write a formal letter about a specific topic, after choosing between a letter of complaint, a letter of application and a request letter, the three types studied during the project.

Validity

It refers to the essential truthfulness of a piece of data. By asserting validity, the researcher is asserting that the data actually measure or reflect the specific phenomenon claimed (Sagor, 2000, p.110). At the beginning of the project, a careful observation and investigation was held in order to give evidence of the problematic situation. Then, during the project some instruments such as students' works and reflection logs, were use to collect accurate data to achieve the aim of internal validity, which seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data can actually be sustained by the data. (Ibídem) and which, according to Merriam (1998, p.210) "deals with the question of how research findings match reality". Taking into consideration that Merriam (1998, p.207) also mentions that "external validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations", it can be said that this study can be applied in a wide variety of educational contexts, since it is related to the use of technology in the classroom.

Reliability

According to Cohen et al. (2000, p. 334) “reliability concerns to the degree of confidence that can be places in the results and the data”. It relates to researcher’s claims regarding the accuracy of their data. In this aspect triangulation process, which is the comparison of one data set to another (Cresswell, cited in James, 2007, p.91), was completed and within it time triangulation, which is the similarity of data gathered at the same time and methodological triangulation, which is using the same method on different occasions or different methods on the same object of study (Cohen et al., 2000, p.113) were considered.

CHAPTER 4: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

The pedagogical intervention took place in six ninety-minute lessons and another ninety minutes of independent work among classes. The pedagogical approach that can inform the decisions and actions taken as an instructor is the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) approach. As it is defined by Levy (1997, p. 1), CALL is “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning”, and it guided this study from the beginning. The objectives established were the following: through an online project, based on the use of blogs, students were going to practice their formal letter writing in order to improve their writing skill, and students were also going to become familiar with three different types of formal letters: letters of complaint, letters of application, and request letters. They had to create a blog individually, so that they were able to work during class, post individual products, wait for teacher’s feedback via e-mail, correct their work taking into account the rubric and the list of conventions given, upload their final product, answer questions from the reflection log and send it to the teacher’s e-mail account. For the purpose of this study, blogs are essential pedagogical tools to follow the writing process, to make it continuous and thanks to the structure of the blogs, they allow students to show improvement in their works.

Regarding the lesson plans, they were useful to structure the objective of each of the lessons and at the same time, to organize the activities involved in the project. They were created by the teacher for the students to follow the activities suggested during the class time and finish them as individual work. It was necessary to plan six ninety-minute sessions, in which students were going to work autonomously, but with the teacher’s guidance. All the sessions were held at

the language resource center, where students had enough computers available to carry out the suggested activities.

The teacher was in charge of giving the feedback necessary for students to correct their formal letters using the rubric and the list of conventions. The teacher corrected mainly writing, spelling and format, providing students with their work with corrections and the rubric with a grade corrected under twenty points and some comments to improve their works. Students, as independent work, had to check their writings and to understand the feedback from the teacher to be able to correct the letter taking also into account all the comments.

The first lesson planned had four parts. In the first one, students were filling out the diagnostic survey then, in part two, they were taking the pre-test. In part three, the students were reflecting on the project proposal and finally, in part four, they were signing the letters of consent. Students had to fill out a reflection log using a specific format and send it to the teacher's e-mail. **The second lesson** planned had three parts. For the first part, students were watching three videos related to writing letters and answering specific comprehension questions. For the second part, they were creating their blogs, searching for information related to formal letters on Internet and sharing it to understand as much as they could the main characteristics for each style. For the third part, as independent work, students had to review their notes, to post in their blogs the relevant information collected related to formal letters and to fill out and send to the teacher's e-mail a reflection log.

The third lesson (Appendix L) planned had two parts and the independent work. For the first part, students were working on an exercise reviewing the use of collocations and an exercise checking mild and strong expressions that could have help in the letter writing activity. In the

second part, after reviewing the information about formal letters in their blogs, students were writing a complaint letter, posting their first version in their blogs and sending it to the teacher's e-mail. Then as independent work, before posting the final version on their blogs, students had to correct the letter taking into account the teacher's comments and corrections sent to their e-mails. Finally, students had to fill out and send to the teacher's e-mail a reflection log. In the same way, **the fourth lesson** had two parts and the independent work. In the first part, students were watching two videos, reviewing their notes, and choosing one classified ad. In the second part they were writing a letter applying for a job, posting the first version on their blogs and sending it to the teacher's e-mail. As independent work, they had to wait for comments and corrections to correct it and post the last version of the letter on their blogs. Finally, they had to fill out and send to the teacher's e-mail a reflection log.

The fifth lesson planned had as well two parts and the independent work. For the first part, students had to discuss and share some ideas with the partner sited next to them about two formal letters provided. For the second part, they were writing a request letter to post it in their blogs and to send it to the teacher's e-mail. In addition, as independent work they had to correct the letter with the comments and corrections provided and to post the final version on their blogs. Finally, they had to fill out and send to the teacher's e-mail a reflection log. In **the sixth lesson** students were filling in the final survey and they were also taking the post-test.

At the end of each lesson, the students had to fill out their reflection logs, in which they had to answer four questions related to the purpose of the activity, to the way they carried out the activities, to their blogging experience, to what they learnt and to their possible comments. The teacher also filled out a reflection log with information related to the students' performance,

blogging experience, and participants' feelings after the lessons. Finally, students works were collected to enrich the further analysis presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5: Data Analysis and Findings

In this section of the action research project, a reflection upon both qualitative and quantitative data is presented. The point of using a mixed method for this study was to collect and corroborate findings from different data sources through the triangulation strategy. There was given equal importance to quantitative and qualitative data. According to Sagor (2005, p.110), the two goals are “tracing any and all changes in performance that occurred in the effort to reach your priority achievements targets and understanding whatever pertinent factors or circumstances contributed to those changes”. To accomplish these goals trend analysis was used. It is defined as a “versatile strategy that can easily be modified and adjusted for use with an array of data sources and should help you answer a broad range of action research questions” (ibídem). It is a generic approach to data analysis that is conducted with the data collected in response to the three ACR research questions. As presented by Sagor (2005, p.76) the three generic ACR action research questions, which referred to their foci: “A” for action, “C” for change, and “R” for relationships, that can provide valuable professional insight when used with nearly any project are the followings:

- What did I or we do? (This focuses on action)
- What changes occurred regarding performance on achievement targets? (This focuses on change)
- What were the relationships, if any, between actions taken and the changes in performance? (This focuses on relationships)

Sagor (2005, p.76)

I ACR question: What did I do?

According to Sagor (2005, p. 113), this first ACR question presents three steps to synthesize the data:

- allocating time,
- looking for patterns
- creating a timeline

Allocating time.

In the first step a time priority tracking form, the matrix presented in table 3 and the line graph form figure 3, show the actions carried out during each week and the time estimated per activity during the 90-minute lessons.

Actions	Intr. lesson	1st lesson	2nd lesson	3rd lesson	4th lesson	Final lesson
Diagnostic survey,	10					
Pre-test,	30					
Project and letter of consent.	40					
Watch three videos and answer comprehension questions,		15				
Create a blog,		20				
Look for information, share information and post in the blog.		55				
Independent work Fill in the reflection log and send it to the teacher's e-mail.						
Fill in using for, at, of, in, about, to, by, with, decide which expressions are used for mild or strong complaints.			30			
Write a letter of complaint, post it in the blog,			60			

Independent work Correct your writing after receiving feedback and post the final version in your blog. Fill in the reflection log and send it to the teacher's e-mail.						
Watch two videos related to application letters, check notes, choose one classified ad,				30		
Write an application letter and post it in the blog,				60		
Independent work Correct your writing after receiving feedback and post the final version in your blog. Fill in the reflection log and send it to the teacher's e-mail.						
Look at two samples and comment on their similarities and differences in pairs,					30	
Write a request letter and post it in the blog,					60	
Independent work Correct your writing after receiving feedback and post the final version in your blog. Fill in the reflection log and send it to the teacher's e-mail.						
Final survey						10
Post-test						20

Table 3: Time priority tracking form

In figure 3, the time estimated per activity plus the time estimated to prepare and send the feedback using the list of conventions and the rubric after the lessons is pointed up.

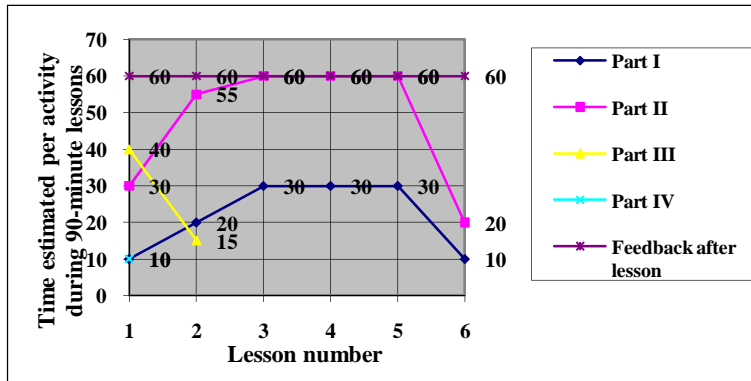


Figure 3: Time estimated

In figure 4, the real time invested per activity during class time and the real time invested in preparing and sending the feedback is illustrated.

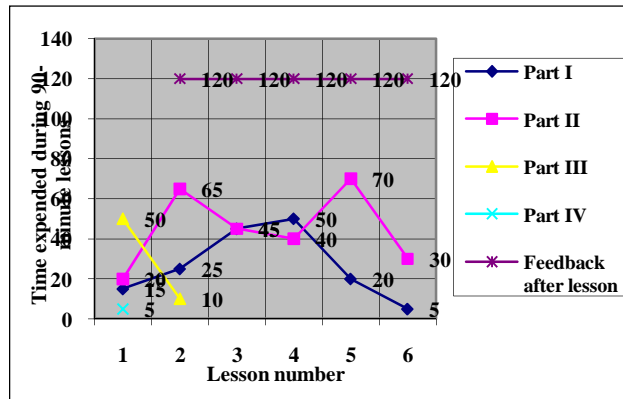


Figure 4: Time expended

In the time allocation line graph, table 4, it can be observed that, as a notable pattern, the ninety minutes of class time spent were enough to carry out the activities prepared for each of the lessons planed. The time was consistent throughout the project as well as time expended by the teacher to prepare and provide feedback.

120 minutes			Feedback	Feedback	Feedback	
70 minutes					Part II	
65 minutes						
60 minutes		Part II				
55 minutes						
50 minutes	Part III			Part I		

45 minutes			Part I & II			
40 minutes				Part II		
35 minutes						
30 minutes						Part II
25 minutes						
20 minutes	Part II	Part I			Part I	
15 minutes	Part I					
10 minutes		Part III				
5 minutes	Part IV					Part I
	Intro. lesson	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Final lesson

Table 4: Trends in time use

After collecting all the data needed to complete step 1 from the first ACR question, it is necessary to summarize the data in the following bulleted statements:

- The project took place having two ninety-minute sessions per week.
- Overall, class time was spent engaged in work on the activities suggested.
- Between lesson 1 and lesson 4, most of the time spent during class was on part II in which students wrote their letters.
- Overall, the teacher had to spend twice the time expected to correct, comment on students’ work, using the list of conventions and the rubric, and send feedback to each student.
- All of the activities were within the ninety minutes of class, but the time planned for each activity changed according to the students’ attitude, mood.

Looking for patterns.

The second step is supported with the data collected mostly in the teacher's reflection log during the pedagogical intervention. In the following activity analysis form (Table 2), patterns are highlighted.

Event or activity. Students ...	Dates of occurrence April	Frequency	Comments. Occurs...
...expressed the need to improve a lot in the writing skill	9 th , 14 th , 16 th , 21 st , 23 rd , and 28 th .	6 times; 1 per day.	...while carrying out the tasks and it was expressed in the surveys.
...didn't feel comfortable when receiving a writing task	9 th , 14 th and 16 th	3 times; 1 per day.	...in the pre-test and when beginning to write a letter and it was expressed in the surveys.
...develop the activities by looking for information on Internet, checking the information on their blogs, comparing and sharing, writing their letters, posting them, correcting them and posting the final version	14 th , 16 th , 21 st and 23 rd	4 times; 1 per day.	...during and after the lesson and it was expressed in the surveys.
...suggest the need of updating the computers, having teachers encouraging the use of technology and using computers room frequently	16 th , 21 st , 23 rd , and 28 th .	4 times; 1 per day.	...after the lesson and during it when the computer was slow.
...are motivated towards using the computers and there was commitment when working concentrated in the different tasks suggested	14 th , 16 th , 21 st , and 23 rd	4 times; 1 per day.	...in every session.
...have a positive performance	16 th , 21 st , and 23 rd .	3 times; 1 per day.	...during the lessons and when evidencing their individual work.
...are good at technology	9 th , 14 th , 16 th , 21 st , 23 rd , and 28 th .	6 times; 1 per day.	...in every lesson when carrying out the activities and it was expressed in the surveys.

...have not use blogs before	14 th , 16 th	2 times; 1 per day.	...during the lesson and it was expressed in the surveys.
...have problems creating blogs or posting their letters	14 th , 16 th and 21 st .	3 times; 1 per day.	...during and after the lessons, it was expressed in the reflection logs.
...didn't know how to use blogs and at the end they say it was, easy, nice and fun to use them in the class	9 th , 14 th , 16 th , 21 st and 23 rd	5 times; 1 per day	...at the beginning and at the end of the project. It was expressed in the surveys.
...learnt about how to use blogs	9 th , 14 th , 16 th , 21 st and 23 rd	5 times; 1 per day	...in every lesson.
...are enthusiastic about using blog to improve your formal letter writing skill	9 th , 14 th , 16 th , 21 st , and 23 rd	5 times; 1 per day	...in every session.
...are engaged with and interested about blogs	9 th , 14 th , 16 th , 21 st , and 23 rd	5 times; 1 per day	...in every session.
...think blogs are useful	16 th , 21 st , 23 rd , and 28 th .	4 times; 1 per day	...in every session and it was expressed in the surveys.
...are not familiar enough with the format of a formal letter	9 th , 14 th , 16 th , 21 st , and 23 rd	5 times; 1 per day	...during the pre-test.
...are learning how to write application-complaint-request letters appropriately	14 th , 16 th , 21 st , and 23 rd	4 times; 1 per day	...during the lesson
...feel more confident when writing a formal letter.	28 th	1 time;1 per day	...at the end of the project and it was expressed in the surveys.
...find letters important for their future lives	9 th , 14 th , 16 th , 21 st , 23 rd , and 28 th .	6 time;1 per day	...in every lesson and it was expressed in the surveys.
...find rubric and conventions useful	14 th , 16 th , 21 st , 23 rd , and 28 th .	5 time;1 per day	...in every lesson and it was expressed in the surveys.

Table 5: Activity Analysis Form

In this opportunity, the matrix (figure 2) shows specific information about the patterns.

Summarizing, the matrix, it is possible to say that students:

- expressed the need to improve a lot in their writing skill,
- didn't feel comfortable when receiving a writing task,
- develop the activities by looking for information on internet, checking the information on their blogs, comparing and sharing, writing their letters, posting them, correcting them and posting the final version,
- suggested the need to update the computers, to have teachers that encourage the use of technology and to use the computers' room more frequently,
- were motivated towards using the computers,
- had a positive performance when writing the letters,
- expressed that they were good at using technology,
- mentioned that they had not use blogs before,
- had problems creating blogs or posting their letters,
- didn't know how to use blogs at the beginning and at the end they say it was easy, nice and fun to use blogs in the class,
- learnt about how to use blogs,
- seemed to be enthusiastic about using blog to improve their formal letter writing skill,

- were engaged with and interested about blogs,
- expressed that they consider that blogs are useful,
- were not familiar enough with the format of a formal letter,
- were learning how to write application-complaint-request letters appropriately
- expressed that they feel more confident when writing a formal letter.
- found letters important for their future lives.
- found rubric and conventions useful.

Most of the patterns already illustrated and mentioned were present during and after the lessons taught throughout the development of the project. In the same way, these information was expressed in the surveys, in the reflection log in the pre-test or at the end of the project.

Creating a timeline.

In the third step, and the last one to finish answering the first ACR question, a timeline which is presented below, is necessary.

Week	Students...
Intro. lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fill out diagnostic survey. • carry out the pre-test activity. • consider the project's program. • Agree and sign the letter of consent.
First lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watch three videos and answer comprehension questions. • create a blog. • look for information about three types of formal letters and summarize it. • post the main characteristics in their blogs.
Second lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fill in twenty four words with their appropriate collocation. • decide which phrases are used for mild or for strong complaints.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write a complaint letter to the Mayor of the city. • proofread their letter. • post the letter in their blogs. • wait for corrections and comments after the lesson via e-mail. • correct their letter using the list of conventions and the rubric. • rewrite their letter if necessary. • post the final version in their blogs.
Third lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watch two videos. • review their main characteristics of formal letters in their blogs and their book. • choose a classified ad. • write a letter of application. • proofread their letter. • post the letter in their blogs. • wait for corrections and comments after the lesson via e-mail. • correct their letter using the list of conventions and the rubric. • rewrite their letter if necessary. • post the final version in their blogs.
Fourth lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comment similarities and differences about two formal letter samples. • write a letter of request. • proofread their letter. • post the letter in their blogs. • wait for corrections and comments after the lesson via e-mail. • correct their letter using the list of conventions and the rubric. • rewrite their letter if necessary. • post the final version in their blogs.
Final lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fill in six questions from the on-line final survey. • carry out the post-test activity.

Table 6: Instructional timeline

The project took place having two ninety-minute sessions per week and meeting the students at the language resource centre in class time from 6:15 to 7:45 pm. It was characterized by a comfortable atmosphere with no more than seven students per class out of eleven. Overall, class time was spent engaged in work on the activities suggested. From what it was planned, between lesson 1 and lesson 4, most of the time spent during class was on part II in which students wrote their letters. However, in 50% of the lessons, part II took less time than the one planned. All of the activities were within the ninety minutes of class, but the time planned for each activity

changed according to the students' attitude, mood. On the other hand, overall the teacher had to spend twice the time expected to correct, comment on students' work, using the list of conventions and the rubric, and send feedback to each student. During the lesson time, more than once and more than half of the class students were expressing their motivation and commitment to improve their formal letter writing skill using blogs. Students seemed motivated for being at the language resource centre using the computers for the class, but four of them were absent not only during the project, but for the whole semester. The main purpose of the lessons was having students improve their formal letter writing using their blogs to check their progress, so almost the whole class was devoted to achieve this objective throughout the different activities suggested.

II ACR question: What changes occurred regarding the achievement targets?

I continued assembling all the data collected to clarify the question of this action research project which is:

How will the use of blogs help intermediate students improve their formal letter writing skill?

I skimmed throughout the data gathered trying to consider some possible categories for sorting it. Then, I created the categories by giving them a name after seeing some repetitions or patterns and having in mind the main constructs of my research question. Afterwards, I continue sorting my data into the categories to be able to look for significant trends and insights. In consequence, after an analysis made based on open coding, where breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data was taking place, I present the research

question and then the two categories along with their linked subcategories in the following figure:

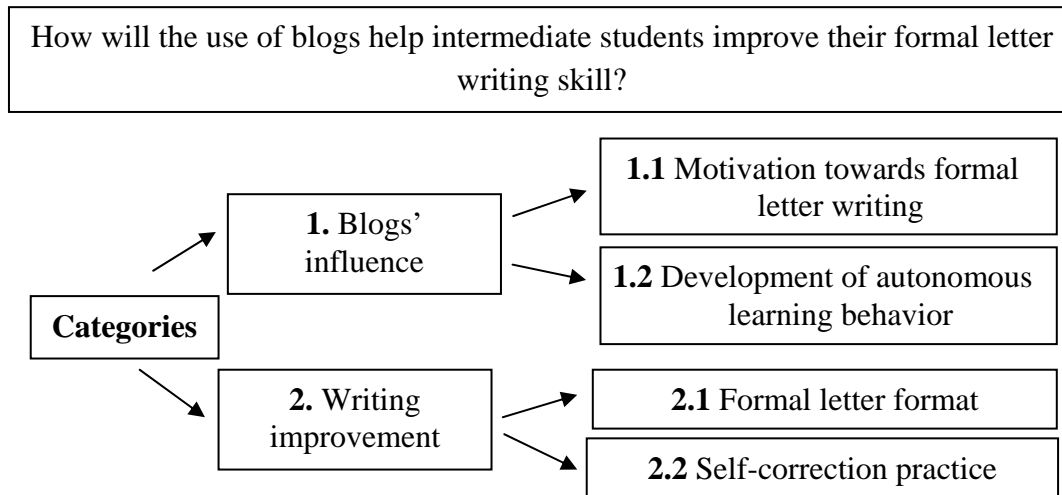


Figure 5: The categories and subcategories

1. Blogs' influence.

This first main category was considered after observing and reflecting on students' performance during the project. Students were using technology, specifically blogs, to improve their formal letter writing skill, which was the core objective for this project. They were checking their blogs to look for specific information related to the main characteristics of the three different types of formal letters studied and they were also using them to post the initial and final versions of their letters. Moreover, they were checking by themselves their progress whenever they wanted. This category points out that technology, more specifically blogs, can improve the formal letter writing skill influencing students' performance when increasing the level of motivation for writing formal letters and when developing an autonomous learning

behavior by expending time wisely to carry out the activities and self-correct their initial products.

In the following subcategories excerpts will be presented and the information will be coded using S1 for student 1; S2 for student 2; S3 for student 3; S4 for student 4; S5 for student 5; S6 for student 6; S7 for student 7; S1-7 for all the students; and T for teacher. The other 4 students are not taken into consideration because they were always absent, not only for the project, but also for the whole semester. In the same way the excerpts will be presented with the corresponding specific information. For example: (Excerpt 1, diagnostic survey, question 1).

1.1 Motivation towards formal letter writing.

I have identify “motivation towards formal letter writing” as a subcategory in response to the main question and the main category that refers to blogs’ influence towards the improvement of the formal letter writing skill. The following samples can be taken into account to support this subcategory.

As seen in excerpt 1, in the diagnostic survey, all of the students expressed their interest by answering positively to question 5, “*Would you like to blog in order to improve your formal letter writing?*” since the beginning students were expressing their desire for improving their formal letter writing by using blogs, which was their main purpose when working in the project program.

(Excerpt 1, diagnostic survey, answer question 5)

<p>S1: Yes S2: Of course S3: Yes, formal letters are useful in my job. S4: Why not.</p>
--

S5: Yes
S6: Yes, sure
S7: Sure.

In the following excerpt, taken from the final survey, students' answers for question 2, "*Did you find the formal letter writing project useful? Please explain*", are presented. These answers show that at the end, students recognized the importance of the project and expressed the results of their motivation to work during the project. Phrases like "I improve my writing skill", "it made me see some of my mistakes and helped me to correct them" and "in my future I would use it" are evidence of students motivation towards formal letter writing.

(Excerpt 2, final survey, answer question 2)

S1: Yes, I do. I think this activities could give us knowledge. Also, the idea to create a blog was so good.
S2: Yes, I improved my writing skill.
S3: I did, because a very important part of learning a language is to know how to write letters, and you can also use it if you are applying for a scholarship or something like that.
S4: The little it that I did, really was usefull, because it made me see some of my mistakes and helped me to correct them.
S5: Yes, because when you are looking to a job you should know how to apply, and in other occasions.
S6: Yes I find it useful, because it some aspects of life we have to do a formal letter and having this activity help to develop this skill.
S7: Yes, I did. I think that was a good experience and really useful because maybe in my future I would use it, that would be useful.

From the students' reflection logs, in which one of the questions was "What did I learn?", students were also expressing their motivation towards formal letter writing by saying that they "learnt about how to use blogs and how to write application-complaint-request letters

appropriately”. They expressed their pleasure for visiting their blogs to review the differences between the initial and the final version of their letters.

In the next excerpt, the teacher-researcher had to comment on students’ performance, on blogging, on students and teachers feelings and had to add other useful information in the corresponding log. So, the following comments can evidence students’ motivation towards formal letter writing. However, there are some other comments in relation to the motivation towards using blogs.

(Excerpt 3, Teacher’s reflection log)

<p>T: They were expressing their ideas about the project: “It seems nice” “I want to do it” “I like to post my letters, so I have to write correctly”</p> <p>T: Students were motivated for being at the Language Resource Center, for being using the computers and for being learning about formal letters.</p> <p>T: Students were anxious about creating their blogs to post their products and to write the formal letters appropriately.</p> <p>T: Students were concentrated on the tasks, especially when writing their letters.</p>

1.2 Development of autonomous learning behavior.

This subcategory describes marked forms in which students prove the development of autonomous learning behavior. Students took advantage of the time given to work on the project, asked for help with any problem, resolved their doubts in relation to blogs and formal letter writing by asking or looking for information and they self-correct their products after feedback. Students mentioned it in different opportunities as seen in the following excerpt taken from the students’ reflection log.

(Excerpt 4, Students' reflection log, "comments")

- S1:** I think that the use of blogs will be an interesting way not only to the course but learn about actual ways of communication and publishing.
- S2:** This time at class, I try to take advantage of the time because the university semester it's getting harder, so there is no time enough. I realized that I was wasting time because of the speed of the pc, so I decided go to my house and finish there.
- S3:** I asked for help to my partners to fix my letter at the blog.
- S4:** I take advantage of the time, I'm getting used to the method.
- S5:** I didn't know how to post something new but now I know it.
- S6:** It was good. Now I am an expert to write letters, blogging, posted information.
- S7:** It is a good material to use in class. I learn a lot when looking my mistakes.

In the teacher's log, some comments could also indicate the presence of this subcategory on students involved in the project. If we link the comments from students above with the ones from the teacher below, it can be affirmed that students were really developing an autonomous learning behavior.

(Excerpt 5, Teacher's reflection log, comments)

- T:** Students were checking their own blogs to extract useful information before writing a new letter.
- T:** Students helped each other to solve doubts related to letter structure and blog posting.
- T:** Students got interested in looking for another job advertisement to apply.
- T:** Most of the students worked on the assigned homework.
- T:** At first, students were asking how to use the rubric and the list of conventions to correct their formal letters. Then, they were using them with any problem.

2. Writing improvement

This second main category pertains to the ways in which students demonstrated improvement in their formal letter writing skill. Students show improvement after correcting

their formal letters using the rubric and the list of conventions. The most significant samples were the ones taken from the pre- and the post- tests. And in the same way, this category could be evidenced on students' blogs.

2.1 Formal letter format.

Regarding this subcategory, the following samples can confirm that students improved the structure of the formal letter after working during the project. This was one of the main difficulties I observed in students works. There was a change in the way they were presenting their formal letters, but after insisting a lot on it. The following excerpts show the difference in the format between the way they wrote their formal letters before and after carrying out the project.

(Excerpt 6, Pre-test samples)

Dear NASA director,

This letter it is for you to know and cherish the idea of having one of my great students in your great company. She is the best student that I have ever had. At first classes she wasn't very interested, she went, But not in the best mood, Then, she changed her attitude when I claimed to her that I was not having a student with a bad attitude in my class.

Once, she get used to the class so much, that her mood changed completely.

What I am trying to say here, it is, that she is very flexible, she it is one of the most brilliant minds that I have ever known.

As a person I can say that she is kind, nice, patient, and all the cualities that a NASA worker should have.

Dear Mr Jones,

My name is Nathalie A., I am an student at Universidad Javeriana and I want to recommend Farid Z. to occupy the vacant that you have opened this summer.

He is very intelligent and responsible, and he is currently finishing his degree in electronic engineering; he have remarkable abilities in the control area and is very fond to the develop of new technology, wich could be very usefull for the space program.

In terms of his dissposition to work, I can say he get used to the work routine very easy, and as he used to live and work in a warm clime, like yours, it won't be a problem.

Finally, I want to than you, for this offering and hope you success in every plan you have for the future.

(Excerpt 7, Post-test samples)

7321 Lincoln street
 Orlando, Florida
 e-mail: jozefbryan@hotmail.com
 April 30th, 2009

4351 Oak street
 Texas, Nevada

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Information about summer course

My name is Jozef Rodriguez and I am really interested in joining the summer English course you offered in yesterday's newspaper. That's why I would be grateful if you could send me an e-mail explaining the main details of the course, including cost, place, methodology and general program.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request, I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,
 Jozef Rodriguez
 Jozef Bryan Rodriguez Bohorquez

Trs. 4 # 43-09
 Chapinero, Bogota
 e-mail: lirmanid@hotmail.com
 April 30th, 2009

55517
 San Diego, california
 206

Dear Mr. Eyre,

Re: Information about summer English course.

I have known about the English course that you are offering for this summer and I am really interested on it.

So I am writing to you looking for information about this: how much it costs, when and where it begins, and what requirements I have to present the exam.

I hope you send me the information as soon as possible, to make all the arrangements to travel.

Thank you for your time and you can send all the information to my e-mail.

Yours sincerely,
 Lina Pardo
 Lina Pardo Parra

Here are some other samples from the students' blogs, which evidenced the improvement on the formal letter format.

(Excerpt 8, Student's blog, formal letter)

JUEVES 23 DE ABRIL DE 2009

● ● ● Letter of request without correction

Flat K, 30/F
Block 5,
Ulrich Villa Shatin
H.K
Email:andreadelgadocollazos@gmail.com.hk

April 23, 2009

Cambridge University Room 383, Modern Language Building
112-114 Prince Road England. U.K.

Dear Sir/Madam:

Cambridge Proficiency Exam

I am a student at Howard School, and I want to present the Cambridge Proficiency Exam.

My English teacher told me about the exam, but she does not really know the date, how much it costs and where can I take it, I do not know neither about the skills or how much time it would take.

I am in the process of preparing myself for the exam, but I need to know more about this exam for having a good result.

Thank you for considering my request.

Yours Faithfully,

Andrea Delgado.
Andrea Delgado

Publicado por andreadelgado en [17:15](#) [1 comentarios](#)



In the excerpts above, the place of the addresses, the date and the parts of a formal letter are evidenced. Students were able to understand that there are various formats for writing formal letters, but they were also conscious about the one that the teacher was requesting and follow it, after realizing that it was the one most used in the business sector according to some research during the introductory lesson.

2.2 Self-correction practice.

Letting students spend time self-correcting themselves following some guidelines, in this case the list of conventions and the rubric, is a valuable way to make them aware of their opportunity of taking action one way or another on their learning process and to incorporate them in their own language learning process.

An important evidence of self-correction practice is on students own work. These excerpts show their initial product and their final ones, after checking by themselves the corrections made by the teacher following the rubric and the list of conventions.

(Except 6, sample of students' work, initial product)

1130 Patterson Drive
Orlando, Florida 34234
U.S.A.

April 18, 2009

Mr. Samuel Johnson (Major)
400 S Orange Avenue
Orlando, FL 67548
U.S.A.

Dear Mr Johnson

I write to tell you my opinion about what you have done since you are the commanding head of this city and unfortunately I am afraid I am not completely happy with it. Although we have reached a huge improvement in education and health programs, I am seriously concerned about how the city actually looks. This is because garbage managing is becoming a real problem in most of the city's parks and streets, giving the city the appearance of a dirty place, which, I think, is going to reduce eventually the affluence of tourists and consequently affect our city's gross incomes. I have already organized a series of cleaning marathons in my own neighborhood in order to solve this problem. However we don't have enough money or people to develop this program in the whole city, in fact, we are also running out of resources to keep doing this in the neighborhood. That is why this complaint is so serious and requires your attention immediately. It is you responsibility to take care of this issues so it would be fantastic if you can help us maintain our local program, improve it and bring it to the whole city with the objective of recovering the natural beauty our beloved town had once. I look forward to your reply and a resolution to my problem. Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (01) 7192742.

Yours Sincerely

Jozef Bohórquez

(Except 7, sample of students' work, feedback for initial product)

1130 Patterson Drive
Orlando, Florida 34234
U.S.A.

April 18, 2009

Mr. Samuel Johnson (Major)
400 S Orange Avenue
Orlando, FL 67548
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I write to tell you my opinion about what you have done since you are the commanding head of this city and unfortunately I am afraid I am not completely happy with it. Although we have reached a huge improvement in education and health programs, I am seriously concerned about how the city actually looks. This is because garbage managing is becoming a real problem in most of the city's parks and streets, giving the city the appearance of a dirty place which, I think, is going to reduce eventually the affluence of tourists and consequently affect our city's gross incomes. I have already organized a series of cleaning marathons in my own neighborhood in order to solve this problem. However we don't have enough money or people to develop this program in the whole city, in fact, we are also running out of resources to keep doing this in the neighborhood. That is why this complaint is so serious and requires your attention immediately. It is your responsibility to take care of this issues so it would be fantastic if you can help us maintain our local program, improve it and bring it to the whole city with the objective of recovering the natural beauty our beloved town had once. I look forward to your reply and a resolution to my problem. Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (01) 7192742.

Yours Sincerely,

_____ Bogota _____

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez Bohórquez

Comment (A1): Punctuation

Comment (A2): Punctuation

Comment (A3): Vt.

Comment (A4): Rephrase

Comment (A5): Rephrase

Comment (A6): Punctuation

Comment (A7R6): Punctuation

Comment (A8): ✓

Comment (A9): ✓

Comment (A10): ✓

Comment (A11): ✓

Comment (A12): WW

Comment (A13): Punctuation

Comment (A14): WW

Comment (A15): ✓

Comment (A16): What? Please specify.

Comment (A17): Spelling

Comment (A18): Punctuation

Comment (A19): ^

Comment (A20): ^

Comment (A21): ^

Comment (A22): WW

Comment (A23): Punctuation

Comment (A24): WW

Comment (A25): -

Comment (A26): Signature is missing

Comment (A27): Paragraphs need to be separated.

FORMAL LETTER WRITING RUBRIC

Teacher Name: Adriana Agudelo

Student Name: Jozef Rodriguez

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Format	Complies with all the requirements for a formal letter.	Complies with almost all the requirements for a formal letter.	Complies with several of the requirements for a formal letter.	Complies with less than 75% of the requirements for a formal letter.
Salutation and Closing	Salutation and closing have no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 3 or more errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and/or closing are missing.
Ideas	Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized way. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.	Ideas were expressed in a pretty clear manner, but the organization could have been better.	Ideas were somewhat organized, but were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.	The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.
Grammar & spelling (conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.
Capitalization and Punctuation	Writer makes no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.

Date Created: Apr 03, 2009 07:41 am (COT)

http://ivivistar4teachers.com/index.php?screen=CustomizeTemplate&bank_rubric_id=34§ion_id=55

Total: 13 / 20

(Except 8, sample of students' work, final product)



Let's consider another example.

(Except 9, sample of students' work, initial product)

Andrea Delgado
Representative
Bogotá, Colombia

18 April 2009
Mr. Samuel Moreno
Major. Bogotá City Hall
Central Square
Bogotá, Colombia

Dear Mr. Moreno,

I am writing to inform that streets in the city everyday are dirtier and parks too.

On 20 January 2009, you hired a company called "ATESA" for cleaning streets, parks and in general all the city. This company doesn't carry out with their obligation and just they keep up the rubbish from the dustbin but they don't clean really the city how we expect. This incompetence from them make that we don't want this company more time managing the city, because the only thing, that we see, is the city dirtier than years ago, for example in the principal avenue we never saw garbage on the street now we see it very frequently.

I am writing to ask you to please look for another company that can make the same activity but in a good way, with response and with a good manage. You can ask for some curriculum vitae and why not to think about in another company. We will be too grateful for your help and a good decision.

I look forward to receiving your decision and your consideration for change this company.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Delgado Collazos.
Representative

(Except 10, sample of students' work, feedback for initial product)

Andrea Delgado
Representative
Bogota, Colombia

18 April 2009

Mr. Samuel Moreno
Mayor, Bogota City Hall
Central Square
Bogotá, Colombia

Dear Mr. Moreno,

I am writing to inform that streets in the city everyday are dirtier and parks too.

On 20 January 2008, you hired a company called "AIBSA" for cleaning streets, parks and in general all the city. This company doesn't carry out with their obligation and just they keep up the rubbish from the dustbin but they don't clean really the city how we expect. This incompetence from them make that we don't want this company more time managing the city, because the only thing that we see, is the city dirtier than years ago, for example in the principal avenue we never saw garbage on the street how we see it very frequently.

I am writing to ask you to please look for another company that can make the same activity but in a good way, with response and with a good manage. You can ask for some curriculum vitae and why not to think about in another company. We will be too grateful for your help and a good decision.

I look forward to receiving your decision and your consideration for change this company.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Delgado Collazos, Bogotá
Representative

Comment [A1]: ^

Comment [A2]: ^

Comment [A3]: Ask. This sentence can be organized better.

Comment [A4]: January 20th 2008

Comment [A5]: ↕

Comment [A6]: ↕

Comment [A7]: WF. Remember the use of contractions in formal letters.

Comment [A8]: ↪

Comment [A9]: WW. The company...their?

Comment [A10]: WW

Comment [A11]: Who?

Comment [A12]: ↪ word order.

Comment [A13]: WW

Comment [A14]: American (garbage) or British (rubbish) context?

Comment [A15]: Check commentary (A14). Trash can or dustbin?

Comment [A16]: WW. You are adding more...

Comment [A17]: WF

Comment [A18]: ↪ word order.

Comment [A19]: Can you think in another...

Comment [A20]: ↪

Comment [A21]: Spanish construction

Comment [A22]: WF

Comment [A23]: Managing what exactly in...

Comment [A24]: Ask. Unclear. Please...

Comment [A25]: ↪

Comment [A26]: ^

Comment [A27]: ^

Comment [A28]: ↕

Comment [A29]: WF

Comment [A30]: WF

Comment [A31]: ^

Comment [A32]: WF

Comment [A33]: Ask. Rephrase please.

Comment [A34]: WW

Comment [A35]: WW

Comment [A36]: WW

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FORMAL LETTER WRITING RUBRIC

Teacher Name: Adriana Agudelo

Student Name: Andrea Delgado

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Format	Complies with all the requirements for a formal letter.	Complies with almost all the requirements for a formal letter.	Complies with several of the requirements for a formal letter.	Complies with less than 75% of the requirements for a formal letter.
Salutation and Closing	Salutation and closing have no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 3 or more errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and/or closing are missing.
Ideas	Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized way. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.	Ideas were expressed in a pretty clear manner, but the organization could have been better.	Ideas were somewhat organized, but were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.	The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.
Grammar & spelling (conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.
Capitalization and Punctuation	Writer makes no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.

Date Created: Apr 03, 2009 07:41 am (COT)

<http://blogs.pearsoned.com/teachers/agudelo/entry/CustomizeTemplateBlankRubricIdeasActionIdeas>

Total: 12 / 20

(Except 11, sample of students' work, final product)

LUNES 20 DE ABRIL DE 2009

● ● ● Letter of complaint, with the correction.

Andrea Delgado
Representative
Bogotá, Colombia

18 April 2009
Mr. Samuel Moreno
Major. Bogotá City Hall
Central Square
Bogotá, Colombia

Dear Mr. Moreno,

I am writing to inform about streets and parks state. They are too dirty.
On January 20th 2009, you hired a company called "ATESA" for cleaning basically streets and parks. This company does not fulfill the company obligation and ATESA just keeps up the garbage from the trash but they do not really clean the city like we expect. This incompetence does that we do not want this company more time managing the city cleanliness, because the only thing that we see, is the city dirtier than 10 years ago, for example in the principal avenue we never saw garbage on the street but now we see it very frequently.

I am writing to ask you to please look for another company that can make the same activity, but in a good way, with responsibility and with a good management.
You can ask for some CV and why not to try to hire another company. We will be too grateful for your help for taking a good decision. I look forward to receiving your decision and your consideration to change this company.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Delgado Collazos.
Representative

In conclusion, the categories and their subcategories tell us that using blogs to improve formal letter writing helped students to enhance their formal letter writing skill through the writing process which triggered the different formal aspects of formal letters whilst fostering a self-correction practice and an autonomous learning behavior.

The second ACR question needs to be also answered using the records kept over the term of the project. Here are some examples from some of the students who were present during most of the project implementation and showed improvement in his performance:

Lesson	Letter	Initial product (Rubric /20)	Final product (Rubric /20)
3	Complaint	13	19
4	Application	17	20
5	Request	19	20

Table 6: Jozef's records

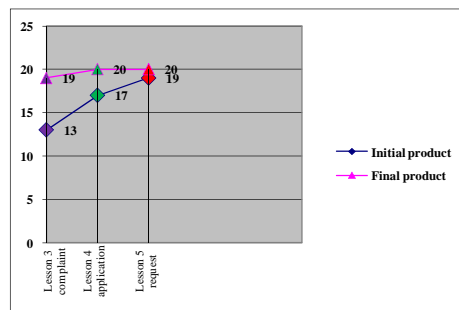


Figure 6: Jozef's initial and final product records

Lesson	Letter	Initial product (Rubric /20)	Final product (Rubric /20)
3	Complaint	12	17
4	Application	14	19
5	Request	16	19

Table 7: Andrea's records

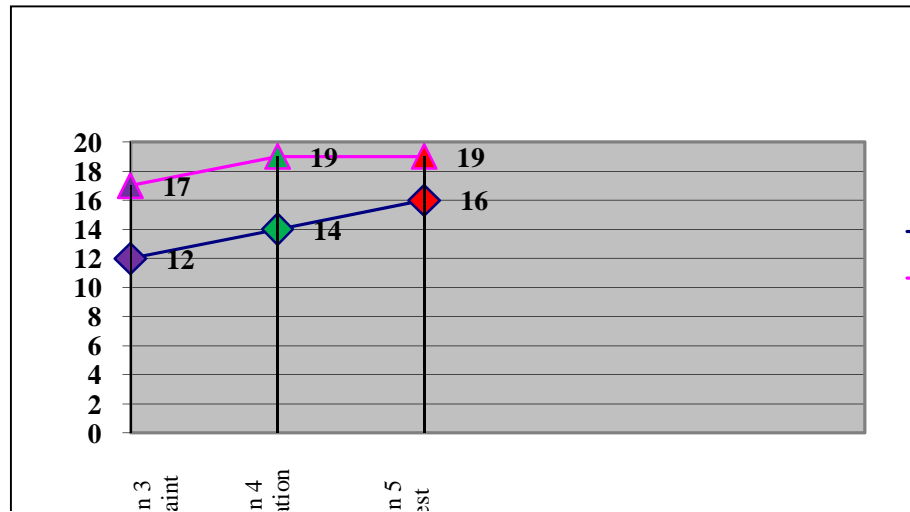


Figure 7: Andrea’s initial and final product records

After adding each student’s grades and dividing by the number of grades and then adding all the students’ grades and dividing the result by the number of students present during the project the following average could be extracted.

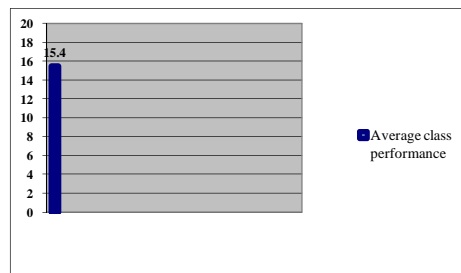


Figure 8: Average class performance

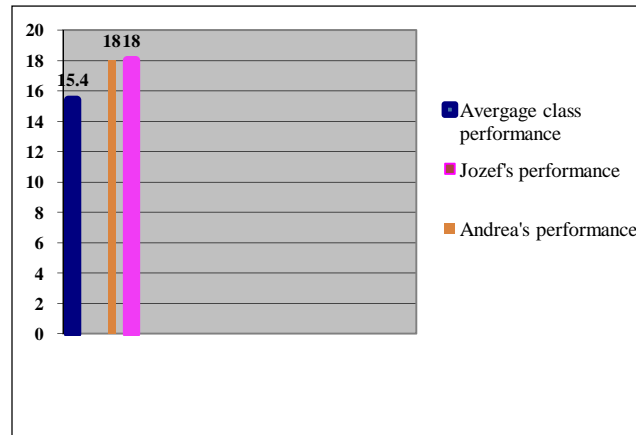


Figure 9: Comparison of averages

To summarize these findings, the following bulleted aspects are pointed up:

- Jozef's and Andrea's grades, according to the rubric, were improved during the project implementation.
- Jozef went, according to the rubric, from getting 13, 17 and 19 in his first letter version to get 19, 20, and 20 in the last version respectively.
- Andrea went, according to the rubric, from getting 12, 14, 16 in her first version to get 17, 19, 19 in the last version respectively.
- During the project, the average grade for the class was 15.4, while Jozef's and Andrea's average was 18.

III ACR question: What was the relationship between actions taken and any changes in performance on the targets?

Regarding the third ACR question, it is necessary to graph and point up performance vs. annotated daily lesson plans/comments as follows:

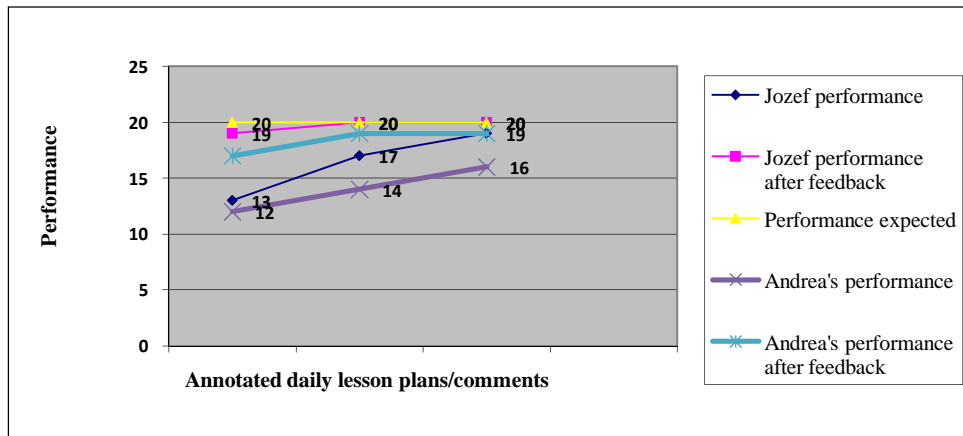


Figure 10: Performance achieved and performance expected.

Lesson	Teacher's instructional Timeline Students...	Comments collected about Jozef's behavior. Jozef...
Introductory lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fill in five questions from the on-line diagnostic survey. carry out the pre-test activity. listen to the teacher's presentation. sign the letter of consent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> was working with a bit of laziness, answering the questionnaire and carrying out the pre-test. was very attentive to the project presentation and at the end showed a very positive attitude toward it. signed the letter of consent. went out of the classroom with some of the classmates. was happy working in the computer and in the language resource centre.
First lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> watch three videos and answer two questions. create a blog. search information about three types of formal letters. summarize the information found. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> followed the instructions presented in the on-line version of the lesson plan provided by the teacher was working on the tasks assigned. was happy working in the computer and in the language resource centre. shared his information with a partner using first Google docs and then face

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • solve question and post the summary in their blogs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to face interaction. • asked the teacher if it was right to post what they had. • did not ask any question later. • was the first to leave the classroom.
Second lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fill in twenty four words with their appropriate collocation. • decide which phrases are used for mild or for strong complaints. • write a complaint letter to the Mayor of the city. • proofread their letter. • post the letter in their blogs. • send the letter to the teacher's e-mail. • wait for corrections and comments after the lesson via e-mail. • correct their letter using the list of conventions and the rubric. • rewrite their letter if necessary. • post the final version in their blogs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did have some problem with collocations. Out of 24, he got 15 right. • had no problem deciding which phrases are used for mild or for strong complaints. • seemed motivated towards writing a complaint letter to the Mayor of the city. • did proofread carefully his letter and ask his partners about the correct spelling of some words. • post the letter in his blogs with any problem, but asking the teacher if he was doing right. • sent the letter to my e-mail on time. • corrected his letter, posted it in his blog and sent it to my e-mail out of the class time and on time.
Third lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watch two videos. • review their summary and their book. • solve any question. • choose a classified ad. • write a letter of application. • proofread their letter. • post the letter in their blogs. • send the letter to the teacher's e-mail. • wait for corrections and comments after the lesson via e-mail. • correct their letter using the list of conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • worked very concentrated today. • seemed to be in a rush. • worked on the first tasks very quickly and spent most of the time writing carefully his letter of application. • proofread his letter and use an on-line dictionary to check the spelling of some words. • posted and sent his letter very quickly. • went out running from the classroom. • corrected his letter, posted it in his blog and sent it to my e-mail out of the class time and on time.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and the rubric. • rewrite their letter if necessary. • post the final version in their blogs. 	
Fourth lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comment similarities and differences about two formal letter samples. • write a letter of request. • proofread their letter. • post the letter in their blogs. • send the letter to the teacher's e-mail. • wait for corrections and comments after the lesson via e-mail. • correct their letter using the list of conventions and the rubric. • rewrite their letter if necessary. • post the final version in their blogs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • was interacting actively with his partner. • touched another topic and can't stop talking to his partner, but after some minutes he got concentrated on the task. • was happy working in the computer and in the language resource centre. • wrote his letter without pronouncing a word. • was very concentrated proofreading his letter and checking the spelling of some words on-line and the use of some expressions in his blog. • corrected his letter, posted it in his blog and sent it to my e-mail out of the class time and on time.
Final lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fill in six questions from the on-line final survey. • carry out the post-test activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did the tasks today very fast. • expresses he was on his week of exams and that he has to leave very quickly.

Figure 10a: Teacher's instructional timeline vs. comments collected about Jozef's behavior

It is also necessary to graph the performance of those students who had been average performers with the low and high performers.

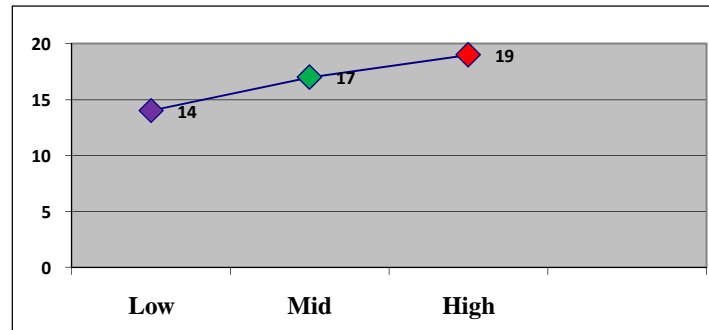


Figure 10b: Students' records

NOTE: These scores are based on a twenty-point rubric.

For this section the following significant points can be highlighted:

- A progress in the average class performance during the beginning and the end of the project was observed.
- There was no big significant change in performance of the high-performers during the project.
- Low performers improved until an average level and mid performance improved until a high one.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions, Pedagogical Implications and Further Research

As a result of gathering and analyzing data during the project, based on clear established objectives, this chapter presents the conclusions, the pedagogical implications, the limitations and possible further research to consider.

Conclusions

Having analyzed the data gathered through a trend analysis approach in response to answering the three ACR research questions and having used the mixed method to collect and corroborate findings from different data sources through the triangulation strategy, the discovery of the two following categories is evidenced: blog's influence and writing improvement. Each of the categories took out two subcategories respectively: motivation towards formal letter writing and development of autonomous learning behavior, and formal letter format and self-correction practice. The categories and subcategories were verified with specific data gathered after applying the data collection instruments.

Taking into account the first category, blogs' influence, it can be said that this category revealed that technology, more specifically blogs, can improve the formal letter writing skill influencing students' performance when rising the level of motivation for writing formal letters and when developing an autonomous learning behavior by using time cleverly to complete the tasks and by self-correcting their first products, using the list of conventions and the rubric with the feedback provided by the teacher. Its first subcategory, motivation towards formal letter writing, shows that by the end of the project implementation, students accepted the importance of the project and expressed the results of their motivation to work during the project as well as

their pleasure for visiting their blogs to review the differences between the initial and the final version of their letters. For the other subcategory, development of autonomous learning behavior, students took advantage of the time given to work on the project, asked for help with any problem, resolved their doubts in relation to blogs and formal letter writing by asking or looking for information and they self-corrected their products after feedback.

Regarding the second category discovered, writing improvement, students show progress after correcting their formal letters using the rubric and the list of conventions. For the first subcategory, formal letter format, it was evident a change in the way they were presenting their formal letters. Students were able to comprehend that there are various formats for writing formal letters, but they were also conscious about the one that the teacher was requesting and followed it, after realizing that it was the one most used in the business sector according to some research made during the introductory lesson. For the second subcategory, self-correction practice, it is important to highlight that letting students spend time self-correcting themselves following some guidelines is a valuable way to make them aware of their opportunity of taking action one way or another on their learning process and to incorporate them in their own language learning process.

In conclusion, the categories and their subcategories tell us that using blogs to improve formal letter writing helped students to enhance their formal letter writing skill through the writing process which triggered the different formal aspects of formal letters whilst fostering a self-correction practice and an autonomous learning behavior.

Reviewing the general and specific objectives, which were to develop adequate general skills in formal letter writing through the use of blogs and to increase students' motivation towards formal letter writing through the use of blogs, to provide students with various tools to

independently edit and self-correct their writings and to encourage students to develop autonomous learning behavior, it is possible to say that there were accomplished satisfactorily to the extent of having improve students' performance, but opening doors for further applications and research related to the topic.

In consequence, the answer for the central question which was “How will the use of blogs help intermediate students improve their formal letter writing skill?” is, through self-correction practices, through the motivation towards formal letter writing by means of technology, specifically blogs, and through the development of an autonomous learning behavior.

Pedagogical implications

Within the pedagogical implications I had in mind after carrying out this action research project, I will highlight the following. First of all, my colleagues and other language teachers should take into consideration the usage of different available tools, and within them all the technological tools, that with some mediated and well planned interventions, could help students to improve their second language skills, to be motivated to engage in learning tasks and to accept their autonomous role as fundamental in their learning process. It is very difficult to expect students to write perfect formal letters if practice is not promoted. It is also necessary to realize the importance of allowing students to self-correct and check their improvements after each task through the use of blogs or any other technological tool, such us wiki or webpages, so they can notice their strengths and weaknesses.

In the same way, I consider that the writing skill should be taken as a more serious area for students to learn and improve their level in order not to have problems in their daily performance as students or professionals. As we already reviewed, many professionals are

constantly struggling, for they are not able to appropriately write within certain accepted standards, and do not have the basic skills to express their ideas in an accurate and straightforward manner.

Likewise, the use of blogs to improve writing can be considered as an educational tool by any other field within the educational area, since students with low levels of written literacy or students that require their written skills to increase can also profit from using this e-tool as a part of their formal educational courses. Additionally, as most university students have to undertake standardized proficiency exams as requirements to either enroll on a specific course or to be able to graduate, it is undeniable that a well developed formal letter writing skill might help them to succeed during the application of these types of tests. Teachers should have in mind, that if students practice in advanced these types of tasks they can be prepared enough to face these assignments.

Limitations

The data collection process took place during six lessons, without many problematic situations. Since there was only one computer available in the classroom where my students and I held our classes, this aspect was the first one to be addressed. In this manner, students started working at the language resource center, where sufficient computers were readily available for them to individually work on the project. Resources were made available for every lesson and most distracting factors were kept to a minimum. The rhythm of work might have been too much for a few students, who, in a couple of classes, felt helpless and frustrated when not being able to finish their work as fast as expected. Some were as tired as to barely write a few sentences, while expressing their commitment to finish the activities at home. In general terms, most of the

students were able to carry out the project without any relevant problems. Out of the eleven students belonging to this level, only seven were present and attended to most classes during the development of the project. The remaining four students, were absent before, during and after the project was held. Most of the activities performed during classes, not independent work, were done within the ninety minutes of class available, but the time planned for each activity changed according to the students' attitude and mood. What concerns the time I initially calculated as appropriate for the teacher to provide and send feedback to all the formal letters created by students, it was definitively not accurately planned, for the assessment process took twice the time expected.

Further research

Some recommendations for possible further research that can be offered in relation to the use of blogs to improve formal letter writing skills are the following:

- Further research is needed about the different ways to improve the quality of the writing teaching practice.
- Further investigations about different ways to motivate students and help them to improve their formal letter writing skill are desired.
- Additional studies are required into weather the use of blogs can help students to improve their formal writing.
- More data are needed in relation to the pedagogical application of different technological tools (ICT) and among them the pedagogical application of blogs.

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Appendix A

Consent letter

Bogotá, D.C. 23 de marzo de 2009

Señora:
Liliana González
Directora del Departamento de Lenguas
FACULTAD DE COMUNICACIÓN Y LENGUAJE
Cursos de Servicio – inglés
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana
Bogotá

Apreciada señora:

Actualmente estoy realizando una investigación titulada “The Use of Blogs to Help Intermediate Students Improve Their Formal Letter Writing Skill” dirigida a estudiantes del programa de inglés de la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, la cual intenta contribuir y enriquecer los procesos de aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera y al mismo tiempo reorientar las prácticas docentes en escritura académica.

El objetivo de este estudio es examinar la forma como los estudiantes desarrollan y mejoran el proceso de escritura de cartas formales en inglés, a través del uso de blogs. Cabe anotar que dicha investigación hace parte de mi trabajo de grado de las Maestría en Didáctica del inglés con énfasis en ambientes de aprendizaje autónomo que curso actualmente en la Universidad de La Sabana.

Por lo anterior, comedidamente solicito su consentimiento y colaboración para realizar mi propuesta de investigación, que se llevará a cabo durante el primer semestre académico del presente año. Esto implica recolectar datos y analizar los resultados.

Igualmente, a los participantes se les garantizará el uso de nombres ficticios para mantener su identidad en el anonimato a menos que expresen lo contrario, así como estricta confidencialidad con la información que se recolecte. El proyecto no tendrá incidencia alguna en las evaluaciones y notas parciales y/o finales del curso.

Agradezco de antemano su valioso aporte para llevar a buen término mi investigación.

Atentamente,

Adriana A. Agudelo A.
Adriana Alejandra Agudelo Arana
Profesora de inglés
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana

V.B. *Liliana González*

Appendix B
Diagnostic survey

Name: _____ **Level:** _____ **Date:** _____

Hello dear students,

The purpose of this survey is to get familiar with your knowledge, opinions and experiences about blogs and writing. Please answer the following questions:

1. What can you say about your writing skill? (Strengths – Weaknesses)

2. Do you feel comfortable when receiving a writing task?

3. What can you say about your skills for using technology?

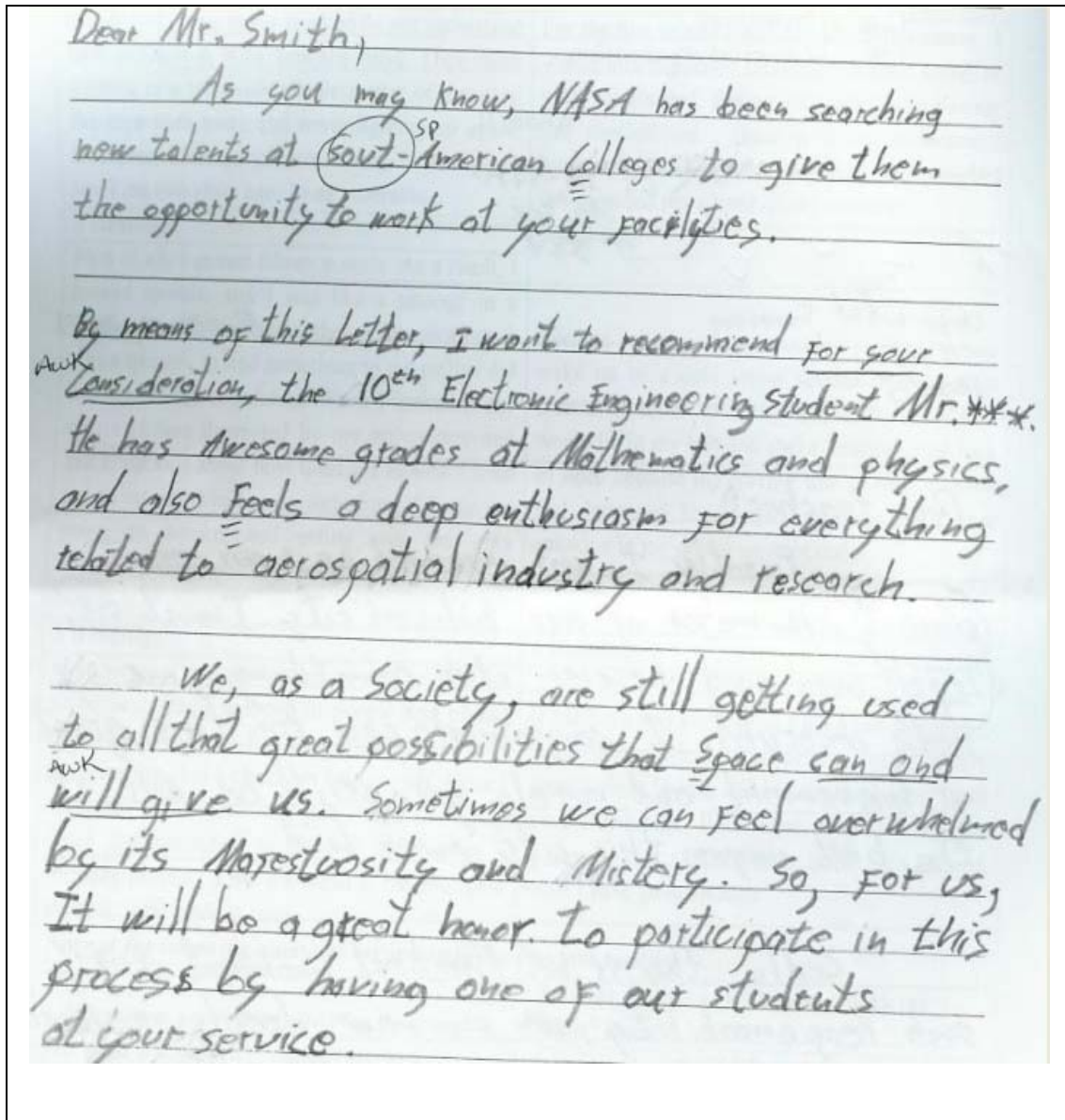
4. Have you ever blogged? If so, please explain your experience.

5. Would you like to blog in order to improve your formal letter writing skill?

Appendix C

Pre-test (Student 5)

Write a formal letter to NASA recommending one of your classmates.



Appendix D

FORMAL LETTER WRITING RUBRIC

Teacher Name: Adriana Agudelo

Student Name: Student 5

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Format	Complies with all the requirements for a formal letter.	Complies with almost all the requirements for a formal letter.	Complies with several of the requirements for a formal letter.	Complies with less than 75% of the requirements for a formal letter.
Salutation and Closing	Salutation and closing have no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 3 or more errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and/or closing are missing.
Ideas	Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized way. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.	Ideas were expressed in a pretty clear manner, but the organization could have been better.	Ideas were somewhat organized, but were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.	The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.
Grammar & spelling (conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.
Capitalization and Punctuation	Writer makes no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.

Agudelo, A. (2009). Formal letter writing rubric. Retrieved April 3rd, 2009 from http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php?screen=CustomizeTemplate&bank_rubric_id=34§ion_id=5&

Total: 10 / 20

Appendix E

LIST OF CONVENTIONS

Symbol	Meaning
↵	insert a comma
✓	apostrophe or single quotation mark
^	insert something (Adj., Adv., Art., Vb., Pron., Prep, ...)
↵ ↵	use double quotation marks
●	use a period here
✂	delete
~	transpose elements
○	close up this space
#	a space needed between lines
¶	begin new paragraph
No¶	no paragraph
?	sense unclear, vague or unconvincing
	insert a space between letters
Abbreviation	Meaning
Awk	awkward expression or construction (correct grammar, style, word usage)
=	capitalization mistake
CLW	check linking word
- ed	problem with final -ed
	problem in parallel form
Rep	unnecessary repetition
< > R-O	divide run-on sentence
○ Sp	spelling error
S/V	subject/verb agreement
Vt.	verb tense problem
Wdy	wordy
WW	wrong word
WF	wrong form
WO	Word order

Appendix F

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Student Volunteer,

During this semester, I am engaged in the process of using blogs to help intermediate students' improve their formal letter writing skill.

Your participation will involve carrying out different activities during five ninety-minute sessions using the computer as the main source, spending some time at home receiving feedback and correcting your work, being videotaped when necessary and allowing the copying of your written work for research purposes.

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. It will not affect your grade. The results of the research may be published, but your name will not be used.

Any videotapes that are recorded and any written work collected as part of this study will be used only with other educators for research or educational purposes. The tapes will be erased or destroyed after the research project is completed.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please reach me by e-mail at amissalejandra@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Adriana A. Agudelo A.

English teacher

I give consent to participate in the above study. I understand that I will be carrying out different activities during five ninety-minute sessions using the computer as the main source, spending some time at home receiving feedback and correcting my work, videotaped when necessary and my written work will be copied as outlined above.

Signature

Date

Name

Appendix G
STUDENT'S REFLECTION LOG

What is the purpose of
this activity?

...

How did I develop
this activity?

...

How was the blogging
experience?

...

What did I learn?

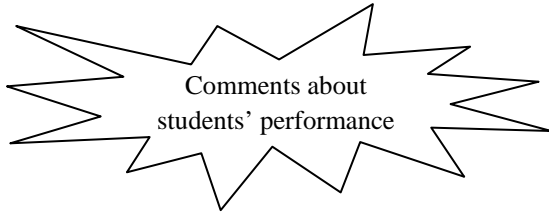
...

Comments

...

Appendix H

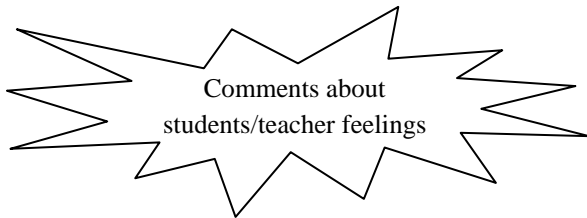
TEACHER'S REFLECTION LOG



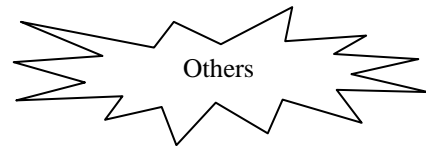
...



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Appendix I

Samples of students' work



improving formal letter writing

897

martes 28 de abril de 2009

Request Letter (Corrected)

1130 Patterson Drive
Orlando, Florida 34234
Tel: 0223 123 4567 Fax: 0223 765 4321
Email: jozefbryan@hotmail.com

April 23, 2009

ESOL Helpdesk
University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU
United Kingdom

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Information about proficiency exam

My name is Jozef Bryan Rodríguez Bohórquez and I am interested in taking the proficiency exam, but I know almost nothing about the terms in which the exam is applied. For this reason, I would be grateful if you could send me a detailed description of these terms, including the skills that are going to be tested, the methodology for qualification, the total cost of the exam and the place where I can take it.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez B.
Jozef Bryan Rodríguez Bohórquez

publicado por [jozef rodríguez](#) en 7:45 0 comentarios

seguidores



Seguir

Google Friend Connect



Todavía no hay seguidores.
[¡Sé el primero!](#)

¿Ya eres miembro? [Acceder](#)

archivo del blog

- ▼ 2009 (7)
- ▼ abril (7)
 - [Request Letter \(Corrected\)](#)
 - [Application Letter \(Corrected\)](#)
 - [Request letter](#)
 - [Application letter](#)
 - [Complaint letter \(corrected\)](#)
 - [Complaint Letter](#)
 - [First activity](#)

datos personales

Jozef Rodríguez

[Ver todo mi perfil](#)

Application Letter (Corrected)

1130 Patterson Drive
Orlando, Florida 34234
U.S.A.

April 21, 2009

Worldwide TEFL
206/76 Soi Town in Town
Central Pattaya Rd.
Pattaya City
Chonburi Tailand

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to apply for the position of English teacher you offered in Monday's newspaper. I would be grateful if you could consider my application for the job, taking into account that I am qualified and skilled enough, as you can notice in my enclosed CV.

Right now, I am finishing my major in literature and I am planning to take a course in pedagogy, so I can improve my teaching skills. In addition, I have already worked in a school as teacher's assistant and the experience was as pleasant for me as for the students I was in charge of. That is why I see this opportunity as the perfect one for me to continue practicing my lessons and move a step forward from my personal experience in teaching.

In regard to my academic qualifications, I can tell you that I am perfectly able to teach at your company and I would gladly send you, if needed, the certificates which prove that I had very good grades during the process of learning English.

On the other hand, I would describe myself as passionate and disciplined when it comes to working, so I always try my best to do any task needed, as faultless as possible. Besides, I have excellent social skills and I enjoy working with people of any age.

I am available at any time to meet with you. Please contact me by phone at (01) 7192742 or via e-mail at jozefbryan@gmail.com. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez B.

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez Bohórquez

publicado por jozef rodríguez en 7:32 0 comentarios

jueves 23 de abril de 2009

Request letter

1130 Patterson Drive
Orlando, Florida 34234
Tel: 0223 123 4567 Fax: 0223 765 4321
Email: jozefbryan@hotmail.com

April 23, 2009

ESOL Helpdesk
University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations
1 Hills Road
CambridgeCB1 2EU
United Kingdom

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Information about proficiency exam

My name is Jozef Bryan Rodríguez Bohórquez and I am interested in taking the proficiency exam, but I know almost nothing about the terms in which the exam is applied. For that reason, I would be grateful if you could send me a detailed description of these terms, including the skills that are going to be tested, the methodology for qualification, the total cost of the exam and the place where I can take it.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez B.

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez Bohórquez

publicado por [jozef rodríguez](#) en 17:18 1 comentarios

Application letter

 <p>WorldWide TEFL</p>	<p>Guaranteed Job & Work Permit</p> <p>Teach English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) TEFL certified approved by Ministry of Education</p>
	<p>Earn 30,000 Baht (Min.) while you practice teaching for 2 months.</p>
<p>206/76 Soi Town in Town Central Pattaya Rd. Pattaya City Chonburi Thailand</p>	<p>Contact: 038 414 861 06 317 0861 E-mail: WorldWideTEFL@teacher.com Website: www.WorldWideTEFL.com</p>

1130 Patterson Drive
Orlando, Florida 34234
U.S.A.

April 21, 2009

Worldwide TEFL
206/76 Soi Town in Town
Central Pattaya Rd.
Pattaya City Chonburi Thailand

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to apply for the position of English teacher you offered in Monday's newspaper. I would be grateful if you could consider my application for the job, taking into account that I am qualified and skilled enough as you can note in my resume.

Right now, I am finishing my major in literature and planning to take a course in pedagogy, so I can improve my teaching skills. In addition to that, I have already worked in a school as teacher's assistant and the experience was as pleasant for me as for the students I was in charge of. That is why I see this opportunity as the perfect one for me to continue practicing my lessons and move a step forward from my personal experience in teaching.

In regard to my academic qualifications, I can tell you that I am perfectly able to teach at your company and would gladly send you, if needed, the certificates which prove that I had very good grades during the process of learning English and my current level fits your requirements.

On the other hand, I would describe myself as passionate and disciplined when it comes to working, so I always try my best to do any task needed, as faultless as possible. Besides, I have excellent social skills and enjoy working with people of any age.

I am available at any time to meet with you. Please contact me by phone at (01) 7192742 or via e-mail at jozefbryan@gmail.com. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez B.
Jozef Bryan Rodríguez Bohórquez

publicado por [jozef rodríguez](#) en [21:31](#) 1 comentarios

Complaint letter (corrected)

1130 Patterson Drive
Orlando, Florida 34234
U.S.A.

April 18, 2009

Mr. Samuel Johnson (Major)
400 S Orange Avenue
Orlando, FL 67548
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I am writing to let you know my opinion about what you have done since you are the leader of this city and unfortunately, I am afraid, I am not completely happy with it. Although we have reached a huge improvement in education and health programs, I am seriously concerned about how the city looks. This is because managing garbage is becoming a real problem in most of the city's parks and streets, giving the appearance of a dirty place which, I think, is going to reduce eventually the inflow of tourists and consequently affect our city's gross incomes.

I have already organized a series of cleaning marathons in my own neighborhood in order to fix this problem. However, we have not enough money and people to develop this program in the whole city, in fact, we are running out of resources to keep doing this marathons in the neighborhood. That is why this complaint is so serious and requires your attention immediately. It is your responsibility to take care of this issues, so it would be fantastic if you can help us to maintain our local program, to improve it and to take it to the whole city, with the objective of recovering the natural beauty our beloved town had once.

I look forward to your reply and a solution to my problem. Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (01) 7192742.

Yours sincerely,

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez B.

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez Bohórquez

publicado por jozef rodríguez en 7:56 1 comentarios

sábado 18 de abril de 2009

Complaint Letter

1130 Patterson Drive
Orlando, Florida 34234
U.S.A.

April 18, 2009

Mr. Samuel Johnson (Major)
400 S Orange Avenue
Orlando, FL 67548
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Johnson

I write to tell you my opinion about what you have done since you are the commanding head of this city and unfortunately I am afraid I am not completely happy with it. Although we have reached a huge improvement in education and health programs, I am seriously concerned about how the city actually looks. This is because garbage managing is becoming a real problem in most of the city's parks and streets, giving the city the appearance of a dirty place, which, I think, is going to reduce eventually the affluence of tourists and consequently affect our city's gross incomes.

I have already organized a series of cleaning marathons in my own neighborhood in order to solve this problem. However we don't have enough money or people to develop this program in the whole city, in fact, we are also running out of resources to keep doing this in the neighborhood. That is why this complaint is so serious and requires your attention immediately. It is your responsibility to take care of this issues so it would be fantastic if you can help us maintain our local program, improve it and bring it to the whole city with the objective of recovering the natural beauty our beloved town had once.

I look forward to your reply and a resolution to my problem. Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (01) 7 192742.

Yours Sincerely,

Jozef Bryan Rodríguez Bohórquez

publicado por jozef rodríguez en 8:54 1 comentarios

First activity

Letters of Complaint

Complaint letters should have the following information:

- Your name and full contact details
- The date and place where the problem occurred
- An outline of the main points of your problem (don't go into too much depth about any unnecessary minor details)
- What action you have already taken to fix the problem
- A request for a reply to your letter within a reasonable time—for example two weeks or 10 business days
- Copies of any other letters you have written about the problem
- Copies of all relevant documents (for example, warranties, receipts and any previous correspondence) do not send the originals.

Letters of application

To write an application letter you should

- Specifically state what it is that you are applying for or interested in applying for (e.g., the position, appointment, student or other visa, extension on a deadline, loan, credit card, etc.).
- Identify the reason that you are applying. Be as specific as possible.
- Give the reasons that you feel you merit or qualify for the position or object/thing you are applying for, if applicable (e.g., your goals, experience, qualifications or accomplishments, positive traits, and so forth).
- Identify what you hope to accomplish by sending your letter and the action that you would like the recipient to take.
- Indicate the date by which you would like a response to your letter or by which you would like the action to be taken.
- Refer to any other documents that you have included with your letter, such as application or other forms, letters of recommendation, resume, samples of your work, etc.
- Include a request for any information that you would like to be sent, if applicable.
- Include your contact information, such as e-mail address or phone number where you can most easily be reached and the time(s) when you are available for calls, etc.
- Close your letter by sincerely thanking the person for his/her time or for any assistance he/she can give you.

Request letters

In order to write a request letter this should be taken into account:

- Be particularly courteous and tactful when writing this letter, as requests are generally an imposition on another's time and/or resources or talents. Put the reader at ease, and help her or him feel that responding will not be burdensome.
- Be brief.
- Be confident and persuasive. Be assertive but not overbearing.
- Don't hem and haw around the issue—be straightforward, and include as much detail as necessary to clearly convey your request.
- Don't be manipulative.
- Avoid the temptation to apologize for your request. Strive to make the person feel complimented that you would ask the favor of him or her.
- Make only reasonable requests.
- Express your willingness to reciprocate the kindness or favor.
- Invite the person to contact you if he or she has any questions or concerns, and thank him or her for taking the time to consider your request.
- Make it easy for the person to respond—tell him or her exactly what can be done to accommodate your request, and do everything within your power so that the request can be granted.

publicado por Jozef Rodríguez en 2:27 1 comentario

Suscribirse a: Entradas (Atom)

Appendix J
Final survey

Name: _____ **Level:** _____ **Date:** _____

Hello dear students,

Please answer the following questions:

*1. How was your performance during the formal letter writing project? Please explain.

*2. Did you find the formal letter writing project useful? Please explain

*3. What is your opinion about the use of blogs to improve formal letter writing? Please explain.

*4. How was your experience using the rubric and the symbols when checking your letters? Did you feel comfortable working with them.

*5. Do you have any comment for future practices?

*6. Do you feel more confident about writing a formal letter?

Appendix L

Lesson plan sample

Date: Thursday, April 16th 2009

Objective: At the end of the lesson students will be able to write a letter of complaint appropriately.

Part I (30 minutes)

1. Fill in using *for, at, of, in, about, to, by, with*. (20 min.)

♣ Afraid _____ something;	♣ Excited _____ something;
♣ Amused _____ something;	♣ Faithful _____ somebody;
♣ Angry _____ somebody;	♣ Friendly _____ somebody;
♣ Annoyed _____ somebody;	♣ Frightened _____ something;
♣ Annoyed _____ something;	♣ Furious _____ somebody;
♣ Anxious _____ something;	♣ Furious _____ something;
♣ Ashamed _____ somebody;	♣ Grateful _____ somebody;
♣ Bored _____ something;	♣ Grateful _____ something;
♣ Brilliant _____ something;	♣ Nervous _____ something;
♣ Close _____ somebody;	♣ Upset _____ something;
♣ Delighted _____ something;	♣ Proud _____ something;
♣ Disappointed _____ something;	♣ Pleased _____ somebody.

Adapted from Obee. (2003). *Upstream Upper Intermediate*. United States: Express Publishing.

2. Look at the phrases in the list. In pairs decide which are used for mild (M) complaints and which for strong (S). (10 min.)

- ♣ ____ There seems to be something wrong with...
- ♣ ____ I want it repair as soon as possible.
- ♣ ____ That's not good enough
- ♣ ____ I'd like to bring something to your attention
- ♣ ____ Can you do something about it?
- ♣ ____ What are you going to do about it?
- ♣ ____ That's unacceptable
- ♣ ____ I have a problem that demands your immediate attention

Adapted from Obee. (2003). *Upstream Upper Intermediate*. United States: Express Publishing.

Part II (1 hour)

1. Taking into account the exercises above, and your formal letter summary, write to the Mayor of your city. You are not happy about the dirty parks and streets around. Give examples. Have you got any tentative solution?

(Modified from Jolly, D. (1993). Writing tasks. CUP: Great Britain.)

2. Proof-read carefully your letter and post it in your blog.
3. Send your letter to amissalejandra@gamil.com.

Independent work

1. After receiving feedback in your e-mail, rewrite your letter appropriately using the list of conventions and the rubric given by your teacher, and post your final version in your blog.

Answer key

Fill in using *for, at, of, in, about, to, by, with*.

* Afraid of something;	* Excited about something;
* Amused by/at/with something;	* Faithful to somebody;
* Angry with somebody;	* Friendly with/to somebody;
* Annoyed with somebody;	* Frightened of something;
* Annoyed about something;	* Furious with somebody;
* Anxious about something;	* Furious about/at something;
* Ashamed of somebody;	* Grateful to somebody;
* Bored with something;	* Grateful for something;
* Brilliant at something;	* Nervous about something
* Close to somebody;	* Upset about something;
* Delighted with something;	* Proud of something;
* Disappointed with something;	* Pleased with somebody.

Adapted from Obee. (2003). Upstream Upper Intermediate. United States: Express Publishing.

Look at the phrases in the list. In pairs decide which are used for mild (M) complaints and which for strong (S).

- * M There seems to be something wrong with...
- * S I want it repair as soon as possible.
- * S That's not good enough
- * M I'd like to bring something to your attention
- * M Can you do something about it?
- * S What are you going to do about it?
- * S That's unacceptable
- * S I have a problem that demands your immediate attention.

Adapted from Obee. (2003). Upstream Upper Intermediate. United States: Express Publishing.